

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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

Thursday, March 10, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Rules of the House First Report

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Vice-Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Rules of the House.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on the Rules of the House—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Rules of the House presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on March 9, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under consideration

Amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS*
- *Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park) (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Hon. Mr. REID (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. SWAN*
- *Mr. WIEBE*

Officials Speaking on Record

- *Ms. Patricia Chaychuk, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*

- *Mr. Rick Yarish, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*

Amendments to Rules Considered and Reported

At the March 9, 2016 meeting your committee agreed to report the following amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba with two amendments:

THAT the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be amended as follows:

THAT these Amendments will come into force on April 20, 2016.

THAT sub-rule 2(24) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed and replaced with the following:

If no Speaker

2(24) If there is no Speaker, the Clerk is to act in the Speaker's place for the purpose of calling the Assembly into session.

THAT sub-rule 4(6) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed and replaced with the following:

Intersessional Committee Meetings

4(6) During intersessional periods, any day on which meetings of Standing or Special Committees are held shall be considered to be a sitting day of the Legislature, but are not to be included in the count of the sitting days for Specified or Designated Bills, and the Clerk shall record the number of sitting days which are Committee days.

4(6.1) Despite sub-rule 89(8), 10 calendar days' notice is required for intersessional committee meetings.

Subsequent Intersessional Meetings

4(6.2) Five calendar days' notice is required for subsequent intersessional meetings of a committee continuing to consider legislation previously referred to it.

4(6.3) Sub-rule (6.2) may be waived if the Clerk receives a written request from the House Leaders of all Recognized Parties at the time additional meetings are scheduled.

THAT Rule 5 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Quorum

5(1) The presence of at least 10 Members of the House, including the Speaker, is necessary to constitute a meeting of the House for the exercise of its powers.

5(2) With the exception of Tuesday mornings in accordance with sub-rule (4), if there is no quorum present at the start of a sitting day, the Speaker is to adjourn the House for the sitting day.

5(3) If a quorum count is requested during a sitting of the House

(a) the division bells shall ring for one minute during which time the doors shall remain open and Members may enter the Chamber;

(b) once the division bells stop, no further Members may enter the Chamber;

(c) the Clerk shall then count and announce the number of Members present in their seats, including the Speaker;

(d) if a quorum of Members is not present, the Speaker must adjourn the House for the sitting day.

5(4) Despite sub-rule (3), no request for a quorum count may be made during Tuesday morning sittings for Private Members' Business.

5(5) With the exception of Friday sittings of the Committee of Supply referred to in sub-rule 74(13), if a quorum count is requested during a sitting of the Committee of Supply:

(a) all sections of the Committee shall recess to allow a quorum count to be requested and conducted in the House, in accordance with sub-rule (3);

(b) if a quorum of Members is not present, the Speaker must adjourn the House for the sitting day.

THAT Rule 12 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Legislative Assembly Management Commission Annual Report

12 Within two weeks after the opening of each session, the Speaker shall table the annual report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission.

THAT sub-rule 13(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Deputy Speaker, Chairperson of Committees of the Whole House

13(1) A Deputy Speaker of the House, who shall also be Chairperson of the Committees of the Whole House, shall be elected by way of motion from among the Members at the commencement of the first session of each Legislature. The Member so elected shall, if present, take the Chair of each Committee of the Whole House.

THAT Rule 14 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Termination of debate before division

14(1) After Members have been summoned to the Chamber for a division, no further debate shall be permitted.

Entering and leaving during divisions

14(2) No Member shall enter or leave the Chamber during the stating of the question, or leave the Chamber after the final statement of the question until the division has been conducted and the result of the vote announced.

Time limit on division bells

14(3) Not more than one hour after directing that the Members be called in, the Speaker shall

(a) order that the division bells be turned off;

(b) state the question again; and

(c) immediately order the recording of the division.

Deferral

14(4) Despite sub-rule (3), and after consulting with the Whips from all Recognized Parties, the Speaker may direct that a division be deferred to a specific time set by the Speaker, with the following divisions excluded:

(a) sub-rules 23(5) and (6) – Private Members' Business;

(b) sub-rule 28(14) – Opposition Day Motions;

(c) sub-rule 32(6) – Budget motion;

(d) sub-rules 44(4) and (5) – Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne;

(e) *sub-rules 47(4) – Time allocation motions.*

Limitations on deferral

14(5) *When pursuant to sub-rule (4), the Speaker has directed that the division be deferred*

(a) *the time for the division once set shall not be altered;*

(b) *no further deferral shall be granted in respect of that division; and*

(c) *no such deferral shall exceed 72 hours.*

Business to be continued

14(6) *When a division is deferred pursuant to sub-rule (4), the House shall continue with the business before it, pursuant to sub-rule 23(2).*

Voting Compulsory

14(7) *Every Member present and in his or her seat shall vote.*

Pairing

14(8) *Despite sub-rule (7), any two Members may indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division held on one or more specified dates by providing advanced notice to the Speaker of their intention to “pair” their votes.*

Declaration of Voting Intentions

14(9) *Following a division*

(a) *the Speaker shall provide an opportunity for Members who filed advance notice of pairing to stand and declare which way they would have voted; and*

(b) *the names of the Members who filed advance notice of pairing shall be printed in the Votes and Proceedings, immediately following the entry for the division.*

Requesting a recorded division

14(10) *A recorded division on any question put in the House may be requested by*

(a) *a House Leader from a Recognized Party; or*

(b) *any Member with the support of three other Members.*

Recording of “Yeas” and “Nays”

14(11) *On a recorded division, the names of Members voting “Yea” and the names of the Members voting “Nay” are to be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.*

THAT Rule 15 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Attendance required

15 *Every Member shall attend the service of the House unless a leave of absence has been given to the Member by the Speaker.*

THAT sub-rule 19(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Decorum on adjournment

19(1) *When the House adjourns, Members shall stand and remain in their places until the Speaker has left the Chamber.*

THAT sub-rule 19(3) be repealed and replaced with the following.

Crossing the Chamber

19(3) *Members may not cross the Legislative Chamber between the Chair and the Mace.*

THAT Rule 20 and the centered heading before it and Rule 21 be repealed and replaced with the following:

CONDUCT OF VISITORS

Visitors

20 *Visitors may be admitted to the gallery and to any other parts of the Chamber that are specified for that purpose by the Speaker.*

Conduct of Visitors

21 *A visitor admitted to the Chamber or the gallery who creates a disturbance, or does not withdraw when directed, shall be ejected from the Chamber or the gallery by the Sergeant-at-Arms, as the Speaker may order. If necessary the visitor may be taken into custody by security staff or the Winnipeg Police Service.*

THAT Rule 22 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Prayer

22 *The Speaker shall read the prayer every day at the meeting of the House before any business is entered upon.*

THAT Rule 24 and the centered heading before it be repealed and replaced with the following:

TABLING OF REPORTS

Tabling of Reports

24(1) Each sitting day, Ministers of the Crown or the Speaker may table reports or other documents required to be laid before the House in accordance with an Act, Regulation, the Rules of the House or a Resolution or Order of the House.

24(2) Ministers or the Speaker must provide sufficient copies of a report or document that is provided to the House for tabling. Sufficient copies will be determined by the Speaker in consultation with the House Leaders of all Recognized Parties.

Intersessional Tablings

24(3) If the House has been adjourned for more than five days, a report or document to be tabled in accordance to sub-rule (1) may instead be deposited with the Clerk.

Referral to Intersessional Committee

24(4) A report or document deposited with the Clerk is to be considered for all purposes to have been laid before the House on the first sitting day after the adjournment, but it may also be referred for the consideration of a committee intersessionally.

No Tabling during Dissolution

24(5) A report or document may not be deposited with the Clerk under this Rule during a dissolution period.

Recorded in Votes

24(6) A record of any report or document deposited with the Clerk must be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.

THAT sub-rules 25(1) and (2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Ministerial Statements

25(1) Each sitting day, Ministers of the Crown may make statements or announcements of Government policy.

Notice of Ministerial Statement

25(2) The Government must provide written notice to the Speaker, all Recognized Parties, and any Independent Member(s) of the intention to deliver a Ministerial Statement 90 minutes before Routine

Proceedings. The notice must include the subject matter of the statement.

THAT Rule 27 be repealed and replaced with the following:

One Grievance per Session

27(1) Each Member may raise one Grievance during a session of the Assembly.

Speaking Time

27(2) Members may speak for no longer than 10 minutes on a Grievance.

No Restriction on Subject Matter

27(3) There shall be no restriction on the subject matter raised in a Grievance.

No Restriction on Number of Grievances Daily

27(4) There shall be no restriction on the number of Grievances that may be raised on any given day.

Terminated Same Day

27(5) A Grievance is terminated when the House adjourns and shall not be continued or resumed at the next or any subsequent sitting of the House.

Restrictions

27(6) Grievances shall not be considered

(a) while the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne is listed on the Order Paper; or

(b) while the motion for approval by the House in general of the budgetary policy of the Government is listed on the Order Paper, but Grievances shall be called on the day the Budget is delivered.

THAT sub-rule 28(2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Distribution of Opposition Days

28(2) The Official Opposition shall be entitled to not less than two Opposition Days in each session and the second largest Recognized Opposition Party shall be entitled to one Opposition Day in each session. If there is only one Recognized Opposition Party it could be entitled to all three Opposition Days.

THAT sub-rule 28(3) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed and replaced with the following:

Filing of Motion During Session

28(3) During a sessional period, an Opposition Day Motion shall be filed with the Clerk on a sitting day before the House adjourns, or before the usual adjournment hour, whichever is later.

Filing of Motion Between Sessions

28(3.1) Between sessional periods, an Opposition Day Motion must be filed with the Clerk before 12:00 noon on the last business day before the sessional period begins.

THAT sub-rules 28(4) and (5) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed and replaced with the following:

Placing on the Order Paper

28(4) An Opposition Day Motion shall be placed on the Order Paper on the first sitting day after it is filed despite sub-rules 60(1) and 64(2).

Consideration of Motion

28(5) Subject to sub-rule (11), an Opposition Day Motion shall be considered on the same day it appears on the Order Paper.

THAT sub-rule 28(11) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Restrictions

28(11) No sitting day shall be designated an Opposition Day during consideration of

- (a) the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne;
- (b) the motion to approve in general the budgetary policy of the Government; or
- (c) a Constitutional Amendment Motion.

THAT sub-rule 30(1) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed and replaced with the following:

Orders not taken up

30 Subject to sub-rule 23(4), any business listed under sub-rule 23(2) not taken up or proceeded with when called may be allowed to stand and retain its precedence.

THAT sub-rule 30(2) be repealed.

THAT sub-rule 31(2) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed and replaced with the following:

Submitting a Resolution

31(2) Each Private Member may submit one resolution in each legislative session to the Clerk, who shall determine if it is procedurally correct. A resolution under this Rule may not have more than one "Resolved" clause.

Moving a Resolution

31(2.1) When moving a resolution in the House, a Member is only required to read the "Resolved" clause, but the entire text of the resolution – including the "Whereas" clauses – shall be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings and Hansard.

THAT sub-rule 31(5) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed and replaced with the following:

Private Members' Resolution Question Period

31(5) Following a Sponsor's opening speech, a question period of up to 10 minutes on the resolution may occur. This 10 minute question period shall count as part of the three hours of debate on the Resolution.

During this question period

(a) questions may be addressed to the Sponsor by any Member in the following sequence:

(i) the first question may be asked by a Member from another party,

(ii) any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties;

(b) each Independent Member may ask one question; and

(c) no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 31(8) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015:

Private Members' Resolutions – Intersessional Notice

31(8.1) Pursuant to sub-rules (6) and (7), and despite sub-rules 60(3) and 64(2), when a sitting period resumes during a week when Private Members' Business would be considered

(a) by 12:00 noon two business days before the sitting period begins, a House Leader or designate shall file with the Clerk's Office the Resolution to be

debated during the first Tuesday and Thursday of the Private Members' Business sitting;

(b) by 4:30 p.m. two business days before the sitting period begins, a copy of the filed Resolutions must be provided by the Clerk's office to the House Leaders of all Recognized Parties and to Independent Members; and

(c) resolutions filed during an intersessional period shall appear on the Order Paper on the first Tuesday and Thursday of Private Members' Business, without appearing on the Notice Paper.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 32(3) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015:

One Amendment and Sub-Amendment

32(3.1) Only one amendment and one sub-amendment may be accepted to the motion for approval by the House, in general, of the budgetary policy of the Government.

THAT Rule 38 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Tabling Documents

38(1) A Member presenting a report or document to the House must state that he or she is "tabling" the report or document.

38(2) Members must provide sufficient copies of any report or document that is provided to the House for tabling. Sufficient copies will be determined by the Speaker in consultation with the House Leaders of all Recognized Parties.

38(3) Members are not required to table reports or documents that have already been tabled or are already part of the public record.

38(4) Any report or document tabled more than once does not need to be recorded again as a Sessional Paper or Tabled Paper.

38(5) Where in a debate a Member directly quotes from private documents, including digital representation or correspondence, any other Member may require the Member who is speaking to table a printed copy of the document quoted.

THAT sub-rule 42(2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Exceptions

42(2) The 30-minute limit does not apply to

- (a) the Leader of the Government or of a Recognized Opposition Party;
- (b) a Minister moving a Government Order; or
- (c) a Member making a motion of "no confidence in the Government", or the Minister replying to the motion.

A Leader of a Recognized Party who has not yet spoken in a debate may, by giving written notice to the Speaker, designate one Member who may speak in that debate with unlimited time. In this instance, the 30-minute limit will then apply to the Leader.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 44 as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015:

One Amendment and Sub-Amendment

44.1 Only one amendment and one sub-amendment may be accepted to the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

THAT Rule 52 be repealed.

THAT sub-rule 60(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

One-day notice of motion

60(1) One day's notice must be given of the following motions:

- (a) to introduce a public Bill other than a supply Bill;
- (b) under Rule 47(1) (time allocation motion);
- (c) to present a resolution;
- (d) to appoint a committee;
- (e) to place a Written Question on the Order Paper.

THAT sub-rule 60(2) as concurred in by the House on June 29, 2015, be repealed replaced with the following:

Responses by Members

60(2) A Member replying to a Written Question must do so within 30 days of the Written Question

appearing on the Order Paper. If the reply is received when the House is not sitting, the Clerk shall provide the answer in writing to the Member who asked the question, while also notifying all Recognized Party Caucuses and Independent Members that a reply has been received and is available upon request.

THAT sub-rules 64(1) and (2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Motions to be in writing

64(1) All motions, except motions to adjourn a debate or to adjourn the House, shall be in writing.

If filed with the Clerk

64(2) A motion requiring notice must be filed with the Clerk. If the motion meets procedural requirements, the notice is to be reproduced on the Notice Paper and placed on the Order Paper as described in Rule 60.

THAT Rule 69 be repealed.

THAT Rule 78 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Referral of Bills to Committee of the Whole

78 Any Bill after having been read a second time may, on the same day, be referred to the Committee of the Whole. The Committee may then consider all the bills so referred to it, and report the bills along with any amendments to the House immediately after the Committee raises.

AMENDMENT

THAT Rule 78 be amended by deleting the word “raises” and replacing it with “rises”.

THAT sub-rule 129(5) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Presenting Petitions

129(5) When the Speaker calls “Petitions” during Routine Proceedings, any Member whose name appears on the Order Paper under “Petitions” may present his or her petition. The Member must read the full text of the petition.

AMENDMENT

THAT sub-rule 129(5) be amended by adding at the end “, and may read the names of the first three petitioners”.

THAT sub-rule 134(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Committal to Committee

134(4) Every Bill, after having been read a second time, shall stand referred to a committee.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 135(14):

135(15) The mover of a Concurrence and Third Reading motion is not considered to have spoken in debate, and may speak immediately or at the end of the debate.

THAT Rule 139 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Officers

139 The Officers of the Assembly are

- (a) the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, who may also be known and called the Clerk of the House;
- (b) the Deputy Clerk;
- (c) the Assistant Clerks;
- (d) the Law Officer of the Legislative Assembly;
- (e) the Deputy Law Officer of the Legislative Assembly; and
- (f) the Sergeant-at-Arms.

THAT clause (b) of Rule 140 be repealed and replaced with the following:

- (b) have direction over the Deputy Clerk, Assistant Clerks, Hansard, Chamber Branch, and other staff that may be employed in connection with the House;

THAT Rule 142 be repealed.

THAT Rule 144 be repealed.

THAT sub-rule 145(1) and the centered heading before it and sub-rule (2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

DEPUTY CLERK

Deputy Clerk

145(1) The Deputy Clerk may be present at the Table in the Legislative Chamber during the sittings of the House and shall assist the Clerk in his or her duties.

145(2) In the absence of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, or in his or her absence, such person as is appointed by the Speaker, shall perform the duties of the Clerk.

THAT Rule 148 and the centered heading before it be repealed.

THAT Rule 149 be repealed.

THAT Rule 150 be repealed.

THAT Rule 156 be repealed.

THAT Appendix E be amended by replacing the information pertaining to “Rule 135(10) – Report Stage Amendments” with the following:

135(10) Report Stage Amendments

10 minutes

30 minutes for: Leaders of Recognized Parties

THAT Appendix E be amended by replacing the information pertaining to “Rule 42(1) and 42(2) – Second Reading of Government Bills” with the following:

42(1) 42(2) Second Reading of Government Bills

30 minutes

Unlimited speaking time for: Leaders of Recognized Parties (may be transferred); Ministers moving Government Orders

THAT Appendix E be amended by replacing the information pertaining to “Rule 42(1) and 42(2) – Concurrence and Third Reading of Government Bills” with the following:

42(1) 42(2) Concurrence and Third Reading of Government Bills

30 minutes

Unlimited speaking time for: Leaders of Recognized Parties (may be transferred); Ministers moving Government Orders

Agreements

Your Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on March 9, 2016:

- THAT the following agreement to delete the Point of Order Appendix from the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba made at the June 26, 2015 meeting of the Standing Committee of the Rules of the House be included in the committee report from today’s meeting.

THAT the item “POINT OF ORDER” in the APPENDICES be repealed.

- THAT the Clerk may re-number the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and make other minor corrections that in no way alter the intended meaning of these amendments.

- THAT the Clerk prepare revised rule books incorporating all amendments, additions and deletions.
- THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba are permanent.
- THAT the document entitled: “Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Rule Change Proposals – March 2016”, be included in the Hansard transcript of this meeting.
- THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba come into force on April 20, 2016.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Mr. Speaker, it's my—I am pleased and it's my pleasure to table the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation quarterly financial report for the third quarter for the nine months ended December 31st, 2015, for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Seeing none, we'll move on to ministerial statements—oh, sorry. The honourable minister, on tabling of reports?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries quarterly financial report for the third quarter for the nine months ended December 31st, 2015, for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am tabling the Public Guardian and Trustee of Manitoba annual report for '14-15.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to ministerial statements.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement to make and have the requisite copies with me.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, give it a moment to distribute to the House.

Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, 125 years ago, in 1891, the first Ukrainians made their journey to Canada in search of freedom from oppression and opportunity for a better life. Many settled here in Manitoba where they have made tremendous contributions to the social, cultural and economic fabric of our province. Today there are over 170,000 Canadians of Ukrainian descent in our province, more than any other province or territory in Canada.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the Ukrainian-Canadian culture thrives in Manitoba. Members of this House only need to step outside this Chamber into the east hallway to see the painting of the Holodomor genocide by Orysia Sinitowich-Gorski.

And I am proud that Manitoba maintains a close relationship with Ukraine to this day. Indeed, these are troubling times for our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, and we do what we can to support those working to restore peace in Ukraine.

It was a great honour to meet with the Ukrainian ambassador Andriy Shevchenko and his wife, Hanna Homonai, before coming into the House today. This productive dialogue that exists between Manitoba and Ukraine is evidence of deep ties that our countries share.

In honour of Manitoba's rich Ukrainian culture and on behalf of all members of this House, I am proud to now proclaim 2016 as the year of Manitoba's Ukrainian-Canadian cultural heritage. It is my pleasure to share with our guests here today the text of this proclamation which reads as follows:

Whereas 2016 marks the 125th year since the arrival of the first Ukrainians to Canada; and

Whereas Ukrainian-Manitobans have greatly contributed to the province of Manitoba, initially through agriculture, forestry, railways and mining and, presently, in most professional fields of the workplace; and

Whereas Ukrainian-Manitobans assisted in the creation and the promotion of multiculturalism in Canada and in Manitoba; and

Whereas Winnipeg was the first major urban centre of Ukrainian-Canadians, where many of the earliest religious cultural institutions were founded, including the Canada-wide co-ordinating body known as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, established 75 years ago; and

Whereas Winnipeg is the first city outside of Ukraine to dedicate a statue honouring the bard and freedom fighter of Ukraine, Taras Shevchenko, built on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress; and

Whereas 2016 marks the 55th anniversary of the Ukrainian education program in Manitoba, a program that was taught in the early decades until it was disallowed in 1916 and was reinstated in 1961; and

Whereas higher education is deeply important to Ukrainian-Manitobans, and the community has established three institutions at the University of Manitoba, including St. Andrew's College in 1946, the Ukrainian Studies in the Department of German and Slavic Studies in 1949 and the Centre for Ukrainian Canadian Studies, 1981; and

Whereas Ukrainian-Manitobans have contributed to Manitoba's rich cultural heritage through the arts, including choral and instrumental music, folkloric and performing dance, fine art, fibre art, literature, architecture, libraries, museums and archival collections and cuisine.

Now, therefore, be it known that I, Greg Selinger, Premier of the Province of Manitoba, proclaim 2016 be designated as the year of Manitoba's Ukrainian-Canadian cultural heritage in Manitoba, and do commend its thoughtful observance to all citizens of our province.

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Dyakuyu.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the Premier for those excellent remarks.

Mr. Speaker, it's with great honour that I am able to speak today to reflect on 125 years of Ukrainian settlement in our province.

The first wave of Ukrainian immigration to Canada began in 1891, and most of these immigrants settled in Manitoba and in areas of the Northwest

Territories that would later become Alberta and Saskatchewan. Stats Canada reports that there are 1.2 million Ukrainians living in Canada today, and close to 200,000 of those live here in the keystone province.

Ukrainian history, culture and heritage all deserve recognition considering the great contribution Ukrainian-Canadians have made to our province and to our country, of course.

The early settlers from Ukraine lived extremely difficult lives, Mr. Speaker. The hardships and the struggles these new Canadians had to overcome are a testament to their perseverance, their dedication to create a better life for themselves and for generations that followed.

Like many others going through tough times, dealing with loss, overcoming hardships, the Ukrainian settlers, thankfully, could turn to their church. Their faith kept them alive and strong. The first Ukrainian Orthodox Church was built right here in Manitoba, in the southeastern town of Gardenton where it still stands today.

The role of Ukrainian people in Manitoba and in Canada is vast and longstanding, which is why honouring and respecting their history is the right thing to do. And that's why we have a responsibility too, Mr. Speaker, to never forget the atrocities of the Holodomor and the dangers of communism, one-party states and totalitarian regimes.

The Soviet Union, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, implemented a policy of collectivization of agriculture. Those who opposed collectivization were forced from their homes, stripped of possessions, sent to work in labour camps or on collective farms.

The horrific events of 1932-33 resulted in the loss of between seven and 10 million innocent men, women and children, who starved to death or died of unnatural causes because of the actions of that Soviet regime.

* (13:40)

It's only recently that more detailed and accurate information about these events has emerged, and now that the world is aware, we all have a responsibility to pause in remembrance of these events, which is why it's appropriate that Manitoba have a day, each year, to do just that.

A hundred and twenty-five years of Ukrainian settlement in Manitoba is something that we as

Manitobans should all be very proud of. From their contributions to agricultural development, to the arts, to culture, even to the food we eat, the impact that Ukrainian settlement has left on our lives must always be acknowledged.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to express my gratitude and appreciation for the great contribution of the Ukrainian people to our beautiful province. Dyakuyu.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I speak leave to speak to the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the arrival of the first Ukrainians in Canada in 1891, Wasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypow, is memorable and important. Ukrainians have contributed greatly to Manitoba, and we must recognize this important anniversary, as we are doing today with various events, including declaring 2016 the year of Manitoba's Ukrainian-Canadian cultural heritage.

I want to welcome the Ukrainian ambassador Andriy Shevchenko and his wife, Hanna Homonai, here today to recognize this event.

I also want to recognize the important roles that Thomas Greenway and Sir Clifford Sifton played in supporting and encouraging the immigration of Ukrainians to Manitoba. When Thomas Greenway was elected Premier in 1888, he made a huge effort to encourage immigration so that the population of our province grew from about 120,000 people when he became Premier in 1888 to more than double that, to 255,000 by 1901, and many who came were Ukrainians.

Sir Clifford Sifton, who was elected the Liberal MLA in Brandon in 1888, was a strong proponent of immigration. Indeed, he was chosen as the first speaker on the Speech from the Throne in this House that year, and he emphasized in his speech the government's support for increased immigration to Manitoba.

When Sir Clifford was elected a Member of Parliament in 1896, he expanded his efforts to promote immigration to western Canada, including Manitoba, where he continued working closely with Thomas Greenway and the Liberal government here. It is thanks to people of vision like Thomas

Greenway and Sir Clifford Sifton that we have so many Ukrainians in our province, and thanks to the numerous Ukrainian immigrants who chose Manitoba that our province is as strong as it is.

It is with pride that I note both Greenway and Sifton were Liberals. Today we treasure Manitoba's continued ties with the people of Ukraine. Today we embrace the rich Ukrainian culture and heritage that thrives here in Manitoba. And today we hope that Manitobans and Ukrainians can continue to work together for the benefit of all of us in many years ahead.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to members' statements, and I'm going to switch the order up a little bit today if members will indulge me, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Andriy Shevchenko, Ukraine ambassador, and his wife Hanna Homonai.

And on behalf of all honourable members of our Assembly, welcome to Manitoba and thank you for being our guests here today.

Also seated in the public gallery where we have with us today from the HBNI-ITV system out of Fairholme school, we have 18 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Evelyn Maendel. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart).

On behalf of honourable members, welcome to the Manitoba Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Anhad Spiritual Centre

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): A famous musician once said: Music is very spiritual; it has the power to bring people together. And this is just what happened in 2008 when Sher Singh Grewal began teaching traditional Kirtan music to a small group of Sikh children in our Rossmere community.

With fellow instructor Lakhvir Singh Dhillon, their classes quickly expanded to 200 students ranging in age from five to 19.

Combining spiritual hymns with traditional Sikh instruments, like the harmonium and the tabla, Kirtan is an intricate musical genre. Both instructors work

completely on a volunteer basis, and the school acquires the instruments from India through donations from parents.

As a troupe they grew, eventually named themselves Anhad and their space, the Anhad Spiritual Centre. Anhad is a complex term in Sikhism which loosely translates to blissful melody. It serves as an excellent name for a school that emphasizes harmony, empathy and patience in their students. In part, the school's success is thanks to older students who are encouraged to teach younger students, building an environment of teamwork and mentorship.

The school is considered a spiritual centre rather than a religious one, so anyone who is interested to learn music can join. For Sikh students, it's a way for them to stay grounded in their community, uphold their cultural traditions and stay connected to their traditional language. Especially in the case of teenagers, it becomes a safe social space where they can connect with friends.

The students' talent has made them famous across the city. They are asked on a weekly basis to play at local temples and, as representatives of the Indo-Canadian community, at provincial events. I've had the pleasure of listening to them play on several occasions.

Thank you to everyone involved in the school, including President Sindy Brar, for taking the time to create an inclusive, fun space for young people to learn music. Along with all members, I wish you and the students of the Anhad Spiritual Centre continued success.

Thank you for your commitment to our community.

World Kidney Day

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize World Kidney Day today, March 10th. I spent some time today at a Manitoba Kidney Foundation event with Milt Stegall and met a young man—or, sorry—a young woman who has had two kidney transplants.

Mr. Speaker, you may know that this is a very personal issue for me. Our oldest daughter has IgA nephropathy and this damaged her kidneys so that she required a transplant just over five years ago. My lovely wife was a good match and she donated a kidney. It was a very trying and emotional time for our family. That went along well enough until

just before Christmas when Jessica's transplanted kidney began to fail. There is apparently a less than 5 per cent chance that the IgA nephropathy would attack the new kidney, but someone has to be in that 5 per cent. Turns out it was Jessica.

Mr. Speaker, being in the hospital is never great; being in the hospital over Christmas is not what Jessica had planned. She is on dialysis awaiting a second kidney transplant. We are in the long process of finding a donor from amongst her siblings and her husband. It is a long testing process that tries my patience, and I am not the one on dialysis.

Mr. Speaker, the people in renal care and the kidney clinic are fabulous, then there has been some great research done, but the waiting is difficult. We are very fortunate to have at least two donors who are a good match, but as I said, the matching process is very tedious.

Mr. Speaker, if you are interested in supporting kidney research, there is plenty of opportunity, especially today, World Kidney Day. If you are interested in being a donor, a tissue or organ donor, signupforlife is the website. Not for us; there are many, many people on the waiting list for organs or tissue. A donor is not the issue for Jessica. Time is her enemy.

* (13:50)

Kevin Boyd

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today to pay tribute to the life of Kevin Boyd who passed away on February 29th at the age of 46.

With Kevin's passing, his family and friends lost a truly great man, and the city of Brandon lost a pillar of our community.

Kevin pursued a successful football career throughout high school and university. He got to travel in the United States, playing for college teams in North Dakota, California and Texas. He even made it to the attention of the Canadian Football League, being drafted by the Edmonton Eskimos before health issues became a barrier.

In the next chapter of his life, Kevin invested 23 years into coaching the Crocus Plains football team, the Crocus Plainsmen. He also served as a coach for the 6 Nations Challenge, an event aimed at skills development and increasing participation amongst Aboriginal players in Canada.

In some form or another, Kevin coached an estimated 5,000 kids throughout his life. He made a positive difference in each and every single one of these lives.

For 15 years, Kevin also worked for Career Connections helping people living with disabilities find good jobs by assessing their skills and helping with resume and interview preparation. Kevin worked long hours to respond to all former clients, all former players and his friends, who asked Coach Boyd for advice or just wanted to visit.

At the recent memorial service, the former football players who were coached by Kevin were asked to stand up. Over half of the people in the Crocus Plains gymnasium stood. There is no greater testament to the number of lives Kevin touched.

Kevin was a tremendous leader, a caring mentor and a kind friend. He was a great father to his sons Logan, Eric and Landon, and he was a father figure to many, many, many more kids.

To his wife Jordana, his sons and to all of Kevin's family and friends, my heart is with you. On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature and the people of Manitoba, thank you for sharing Kevin with our community.

Thank you.

Child Poverty in Manitoba

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I wish to speak today on child poverty in Manitoba.

Manitoba continues to lead the country in child poverty rates at 29 per cent, well above the Canadian average of 20 per cent. On top of the poverty levels—on top of this, poverty levels amongst First Nations children is a staggering 62 per cent in Manitoba, a crushing burden that leads to higher levels of isolation and desperation, contributing to mental health crises and, regrettably, committing to suicide.

If this wasn't a bad enough indication, the use of food banks in Manitoba has continued to increase with 63,000 people using them regularly. Of this, 41 per cent are children. From 2008 to 2015, food bank usage in Manitoba increased by 57 per cent, double the national average.

From those few numbers, you can see that this government has failed those Manitobans on low and fixed income. They have left 84,000 children living in poverty and left them with fewer opportunities,

poorer health and social outcomes than their peers. Is it any surprise, then, that youth crime has risen 92 per cent in the last five years alone?

We also see the impact on high school graduation rates with Aboriginal children at only 55 per cent, the lowest in the country. The number of—the number gets even worse for children in care of CFS with only 33 per cent graduating high school.

I am embarrassed for this government, with these kinds of results. I know Manitobans can do much better, and, on April 19th, we will.

Portuguese Association of Manitoba

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, this year the Portuguese Association of Manitoba celebrates its 50th anniversary. The association is a big part of the life of Manitoba's Portuguese community.

Last week, the association celebrated its anniversary with many joyful events. My wife and I were honoured to join my colleague, the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino), at the gala dinner attended by more than 500 guests.

The Portuguese community in Manitoba has contributed much to our province. While at one time many people took up construction and industrial work, many public works have been and still are built through the labour and skill of Portuguese immigrants. Today, the community features entrepreneurs, teachers, lawyers, architects, doctors, police officers and others.

There are more than 35,000 Manitobans of Portuguese descent. The association has more than 1,000 members and owns the impressive centre at Notre Dame and Yonge Street. The centre is home to many events, not only for the Portuguese community, but the rest of the community as well.

Many members of the Portuguese community will tell you about their own experiences in language school or dance groups run by the association, which continue today.

The association also owns the Portuguese Park, near the community of St. Laurent on Lake Manitoba. The Portuguese community worked with local residents and provided a new concrete floor for the hockey arena. This weekend you can and you should, vote for St. Laurent in the Kraft Hockeyville contest.

While members of Manitoba's Portuguese community now live in many neighbourhoods in

Winnipeg and beyond, there is no question the heart of the community still beats in Winnipeg's West End—and if you have any doubt, Mr. Speaker, I invite you to come down to Sargent Avenue this summer any day that Portugal is competing in the Euro 2016 soccer tournament.

Congratulations to all the directors, staff and volunteers of the Portuguese Association of Manitoba on 50 years of excellence. I look forward to celebrating many more milestones with the association and the community in the years to come.

Parabéns e obrigado. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for oral questions.

Keeyask Agreements with First Nations Auditor General's Investigation

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I just wanted to add a word of welcome, Mr. Speaker, to our visitors from New Rosedale. I know you live in a beautiful part of the province because our farm is just a few miles from you. And it's a lovely—[interjection] It's Fairholme, I'm sorry—but it's beautiful.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the Premier for his assistance today on an issue of some importance. We have asked for an investigation by the Auditor General's office over two years ago now into the management of the Keeyask process costs and adverse effects agreements with First Nations at the request of the members of the community. I understand that the investigation's done. The previous Auditor General undertook to do it and it's complete.

So it would just need a word from the Premier to release that report so that the people of Keeyask and the people who are interested in the best interest of Manitoba Hydro's transparency would be able to have those figures.

Given the culture of secrecy evident in the non-budget presented today—or this week, the fantasy document that was presented, I think it would be a good thing for the Premier to do, in the interests of transparency, to undertake to agree that he would give the word that this report should not be covered up and it should see the light of day as soon as possible.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we're always pleased to offer assistance to the opposition on how the proper functioning of the Legislature should occur, particularly with respect to independent officers, and I know the member, the Leader of the Opposition, would certainly want us not to interfere in the independent functioning in the office.

They've undertaken to do this work. They will do it at a high level of professional standard. We will eagerly report—we will eagerly await their recommendations.

And I know the member opposite, in his suggestion, wouldn't want any political interference with that. That's something that he's committed he would never do. Unfortunately, that's not how he operates. He likes to interfere on every opportunity. Unfortunately, we can't help him do that today.

But we did pass legislation to give wider ambit to the responsibilities of the Auditor General's office, including a looking at value-for-the-money matters, and we're confident they will do the job as they see fit.

Mr. Pallister: Well, I believe the Premier knows—I think he knows that the independent officers of Parliament are servants of this Chamber and, of course, only his word blocks the release of that information, prevents it from being seen.

Now, the reality is the Premier alluded to respecting the Auditor General. That is, frankly, satire. The Auditor General did a report over two and a half years ago which recommended that the government set a new tone at the top. That hasn't happened. It's also recommended the government avoid doing untendered contracts, and that obviously didn't happen. It also recommended that the government use the marketplace to shop effectively and get a better deal for the taxpayer, and I know, and you know, Mr. Speaker, that most certainly did not happen.

So the Premier's record on respecting the Auditor General of our province is not good. He could set a new tone at the top today, however, by adopting a new culture of openness and transparency where one has not existed before. He could give the word, and that report, which is done, could be released and Manitobans could see it.

Why not?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's very unfortunate the Leader of the Opposition wants to politicize an independent officer of the Legislature. But that's—but that is exactly what he is doing today in front of the Legislature.

Let's make progress on how Manitoba Hydro is treated. The member opposite says he's not committed to privatizing it. We know that's his agenda; he's already committed to peeling off one agency for demand management, slicing and dicing it and making it more vulnerable for privatization.

*(14:00)

Will he repudiate that today? In addition, will the Leader of the Opposition repudiate the use of any public-private financing on future hydro development, which will cost at least 2 per cent more for the ratepayers of Manitoba?

If he wants to make progress with Manitoba Hydro, let him say to the Legislature today that he will not privatize it nor use public-private financing which will cost ratepayers more. Let him stand in this House today and make a forward-looking commitment to building Manitoba Hydro for export, which will help keep Manitoba's rates among the lowest in North America.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government and this Premier have a record of not just ignoring the Auditor General but neutralizing the recommendations to the point of farce.

The reality is that the Premier has engaged in vote buying. The Premier has covered up information on the Tiger Dams contract. The Premier has engaged in covering up information on a known abuse of the independence of civil servants in our province by his own former Cabinet minister and only made her a former Cabinet minister when it came to light he knew about it a year in advance of the Ombudsman's release of the report.

And this week's fantasy budget serves to also demonstrate to Manitobans how out of touch with transparency this Premier truly is. A Premier who would ignore his own political appointees on the Public Utilities Board is, obviously, losing his base plus, Mr. Speaker, and the Public Utilities Board recommended an independent demand-side management agency be established, and we support the recommendation of these appointed NDP members.

Why is the Premier so out of touch with his own people, so out of touch with former Hydro minister

Tim Sale, so out of touch with accountability, transparency and any semblance of accountability at all in respect of the numbers at Hydro?

I ask him again: Why cover up the Keeyask document? It's ready; let's have a look at it. What is he hiding?

Mr. Selinger: If the Leader of the Opposition is truly committed to protecting the integrity and impartiality and independence of the office of the Auditor General, and if he has any information that supports his allegations, which, usually, are baseless and false as we've seen timeless—time and time again, he can report it. He can report it to the Ombudsman's office. He can go to the Auditor General's office and make that complaint if he wishes. He can report it to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner if he wishes to do that. But he doesn't. He wants to hide under the immunity of the House to make false allegations that are baseless.

What he wasn't—doesn't want to do is face his record. His record has said that he will not build hydro for export. He wants to put in excess of \$9 billion worth of contracts at risk. He has said that he wants to set up a demand-management agency which is ripped out of the heart of Manitoba Hydro where it can't co-ordinate with other programs. That will be a first step towards privatization.

He has not repudiated his desire to use public-private financing in future development of Manitoba Hydro. If he's really committed to keeping rates low he'll let hydro be built for export, he'll repudiate public-private partnerships, and he will certainly commit today that he will not be privatizing Manitoba Hydro in whole or in part.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase Infrastructure Spending Record

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): We all know that the government went out before the last election and promised Manitobans that they wouldn't raise any taxes. The Premier said that was nonsense, and then we saw them casting around for something they could spend this money on that would look like it was needed. And they looked around here and they looked around there, and finally they seized upon infrastructure, splash pads and the like.

But we see now from the Economic and Fiscal Outlook, again, they're misleading Manitobans. Obviously, the PST did not go into infrastructure.

How can Manitobans believe anything that this government says?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, we're really glad to talk about infrastructure and our historic investments in the province. And even for the member opposite, there's so much going on in Brandon I can guarantee he could pretty well trip over what we've invested in terms of infrastructure.

But what I want to put on the record is that we're proud that this government is the first government to spend more than a billion dollars annually. And before members opposite do their me-too—because the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association after our Premier did, talking about that, trying to do a me-too—I want to quote the headline from the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association. It was: The Premier promises more than the Leader of the Opposition in infrastructure investment.

So we're doing more now and more in the future.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, there was nothing and nobody to trip over on the First Street Bridge because the minister forgot to talk to the railroad and there was no work being done for three weeks.

But I know he's still just learning his job. He's new at this. So, obviously, the minister has nothing to say because he can't prove anything that they spent the PST money on infrastructure. We look at this fiscal outlook and, again, they're cutting the infrastructure budget.

Where else is it going?

Mr. Ashton: Well Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record, too, that while the member opposite has been criticizing pretty well everything we've done in Brandon, there is a member in this House, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) who's been an advocate, who understands, in Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, in Brandon they call it putting Brandon first. That's what the member for Brandon East does, that's what this government does. And I want to say to the member opposite, perhaps he hasn't noticed, but there has been a lot of construction throughout the province as well.

I want to put on the record that with—two years ago was a record in terms of construction. This past year, we even beat that. In terms of paving, 30 per cent higher than any other year in history. It's

called in the NDP, we're the get-'er-done party. They're the shut-'er-down opposition.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did use the wrong word in the last question, because I used budget, and that's not what this is. Obviously, the minister doesn't know a budget; he can't follow one. We look at the fiscal outlook, and it's just a free-for-all.

If this is how bad the books are, how bad are they really with a real budget? We know it's available. Let's get that budget out there. What are you hiding?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I find it rather ironic that the members opposite wouldn't even allow the Finance Minister to present the statement. Talk about hiding.

Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? I—you know, I've got one advantage. I've seen this before, and a bit of advice to members opposite: If they keep along with the same kind of politics they've been following, they'll have a lot more time to be an obstructionist opposition in the next four years.

Because we have delivered on infrastructure, we're going to deliver on the—in the future and I will quote, again, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association pretty well recognized—I'll maybe phrase it another way: I think with the NDP it's called when it comes to infrastructure, much to—much accomplished, more to do.

Manitoba Hydro Tetra Tech Contract

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, as we on this side of the House have pointed out time and time again Hydro rates are going to double, if not triple, for the lack of transparency by the mismanagement of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro why an untendered contract was awarded to 'tera' tech in the amount of \$85 million. This NDP government has developed an attitude. They can do what they want when they want and if they want.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister responsible is: Why haven't checks and balances been put in place to ensure there are no more untendered contracts?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, I believe that my colleague, the minister of mines did respond to a

question on the day that I was absent to address the issue that was—that's been raised by the member for Lakeside. And I believe that we built one of the—we have built one of the most accountable process of—processes of any province in Canada when it comes to reporting on government contracts.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government, time and time again, has broken the law to get what they want. Star ambulance contracts, just recently Tiger Dam contracts, payouts to staff to keep them from telling the truth about this government, the list goes on and on.

Last week, another contract for \$85 million was awarded untendered. No transparency at all. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister to explain why this NDP government is silent on untendered contracts like 'tera' tech. Why did they approve the \$85-million contract? Is this what trust is about in this NDP Cabinet?

Mr. Robison: Ninety-five per cent of all Hydro contracts in the last five years have been tendered.

In 2012 six companies actually responded to the—to an expression of interest put out by Manitoba Hydro. Only two were available, qualified and not already involved with Hydro as project designers. Tetra Tech was the superior source for unique skills and expertise required and was awarded the contract, so to say anything otherwise is completely false.

* (14:10)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is out of control: an untendered contract for \$85 million; OCN First Nation community that was misled not once but twice; doubling if not tripling of Hydro rates; and expropriating farmland instead of negotiating with farmers. Trust has been broken.

Will this minister admit that under this NDP government, it is making everyone pay more while his colleagues continue to mislead them?

Mr. Robison: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the efforts that Manitoba Hydro has put into making hydro rates among the most affordable in Canada, and I'm very happy about that.

As we look into the future, we have a very bright future with Manitoba Hydro sales that are being considered east, west and north of us and, of course, our southern customers. And today over \$1 billion has been expended or is being committed in signed contracts for Bipole III, with 90 per cent of the

land that's been secured for construction of the 1,400-kilometre line.

So, Mr. Speaker, it does, in fact, look very bright for the future of Manitoba Hydro in the province of Manitoba.

Seniors Mental Health Care Wait Times for Treatment

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the lowest percentage of the Manitoba Health budget dedicated to the community health in Canada.

Can the Minister of Seniors and Healthy Living explain why community funding in Health is so low and how and why it takes so long for a patient to see a psychiatrist?

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): I thank the member opposite for the question.

We certainly take anyone's mental health seriously on this side of the House. And we make sure that we have programs available for them to access the care that they might need and certainly want to make sure that we continue to fight for the funding that we might share with the federal government.

I can speak to the fact that a mere two months ago I attended the FPT meeting with Health ministers along with our Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) and spent quite a bit of time talking with the Minister of Health on the pressures on all of the provinces, which I heard from every other province, about mental health in particular. So this is an issue that we continue to work on both in—within our own province but also with our partners at the federal level.

Mr. Graydon: The short answer is it's up to 18 months for a senior or a youth or any Manitoba suffering from mental health issues, depression. This is unacceptable.

We have folks from Mood Disorders Association in the gallery today, and they want to know: Why hasn't the Minister of Seniors and Healthy Living done more to reduce the wait time?

Ms. Crothers: Mr. Speaker, we've tripled our investment in mental health services and agencies. We've invested more than \$150 million in supports across Manitoba.

And I'm very proud that we continue to build our investments in youth mental health, for example. We have a Child and Youth Mental Health Strategy which we've devoted \$2 million to, and both the minister of child and youth opportunities and I have spent time doing outreach within the province to determine exactly where the gaps are so we can address the wait-time issue, for example.

We're building a new \$7-million facility in Thompson called Hope North that will help young northerners access the mental health and addiction services that they need. We're not just looking at what we can do within the city of Winnipeg; we're looking at the things that we can do across the province in terms of mental health.

We have a stand-alone Mental Health Crisis Response Centre. We also developed a program for assertive community treatment, or PACT, to help people with persistent and severe mental—

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the minister hasn't taken this situation seriously. I don't think the minister understands how terrible the situation is, especially for seniors, especially for indigenous people. Seniors and youth are more prone to depression and mood disorders.

Isolation in care homes and in hospitals and poverty lead to an increase in depression. We know that this is true. They can't get access to the services that they need. We know that the Minister of Seniors and Healthy Living has done a horrible job of putting our communities and supporting the communities' health program.

Why has she done nothing—nothing—to lower the 18-month wait time to access the services they need to lead a regular and healthy lifestyle?

Ms. Crothers: I'm not going to take that personally from the member opposite. I'll just continue focusing on my job, which is to do something.

One of the recent announcements that we made was that a 5 per cent increase would be given to senior centres. And the reason—this was something I felt particularly strong for—was because it provides the kinds of resources that many in the community, seniors especially, need, whether it's a congregate meal program or whether it's an opportunity to have some social engagements so that they're not living

alone without enough contact from the community around them.

This is something we know is going to have a deep impact on communities across this province, and it's something that I don't think they particularly support. They don't support much that we do but, furthermore, what they talk about all of the time is the cuts that they're going to bring into this if they get in power. They plan on cutting, and what do the members from the Liberal Party plan on doing? Creating tax credits—

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

Cross Lake First Nation Mental-Health-Care Crisis

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the families impacted by the crisis in Cross Lake First Nation.

I would like to acknowledge this government for getting a crisis intervention team in place. Five deaths and at least 18 attempted suicides is far too many for any community to deal with. It is always a failure when a reactive approach has to be taken, however. We know there were warning signs in the community.

Could this minister outline to this House what proactive alternatives to prevent suicide were in place to help prevent suicides in Cross Lake?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Let me thank the member for Portage la Prairie for his kind words.

First of all, I, too, want to express my sincere condolences to relatives in Cross Lake for the tremendous loss. I mean, you can't replace these lives that have been taken from the community.

I just got off the phone with acting Chief Shirley Robinson. Later on today the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and others will be meeting with leadership of the community to talk about the terrible tragedy that has occurred there.

But it's not only Cross Lake, I hate to report; it's also other northern communities. That is why our government has been adamant in doing proactive measures in ensuring that there are other activities for our young people. That's why we are so adamant in building that east-side road, so that there's opportunity for employment opportunities so our people feel a sense of pride in northern Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member for his question.

Mr. Wishart: High suicide rates or a high number of attempts are a cry for help, as we referenced yesterday.

Could the minister outline to this House what the usual mental health services were in that community and what additional services have been provided?

Mr. Robinson: Regrettably, this is one of the realities of First Nations communities. We don't know why it happens. It's also a reality throughout Canada in many different communities. Homelessness, bullying, drug abuse, solvent abuse could be among the causes. But it's all the residual effects of the residential school system along with colonization.

That is why we have before us in this Chamber Bill 18, the path to reconciliation, that is only one tool in the—how we correct the issues that we're dealing with.

And I might remind the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), because he has a tendency never to listen, but this is a reclamation of one's culture, Mr. Speaker. It is a very difficult thing when you take a culture from a people and you have nothing to replace it with, and that is what happened to many of us.

Mr. Wishart: We do know that many factors are involved in pushing a community to crisis and suicide, not the least of which is the impact of residential schools and, also, not the least of which are high rates of poverty.

The community has said their unemployment rate is at 80 per cent, and we know that child poverty rates in the North are a staggering 62 per cent.

* (14:20)

Can the minister offer any explanation at all as to how this crushing burden came to be in place in the community of Cross Lake?

Mr. Robinson: I don't know how much clearer I can be than what I just explained.

Mr. Speaker, we've tripled our investment, and I don't even want to call it an investment because it sounds derogatory to First Nations people, but investments in trying to address the issue of mental health services. The previous federal government cut mental health services in many northern communities, and then the provinces were left holding

the bag, so to speak, in trying to address these. So you couldn't have a personal crisis between the hours of 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. That is the reality of some of the communities.

So we are trying to fill the gap, and at the same time, we're trying to engage the federal government, and that was the context of my telephone conversation with the federal minister of Indian Affairs yesterday, Carolyn Bennett, who is on side with us in addressing this issue together.

Manitoba Housing Units Bedbug Case Concern

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the majority of those events happened between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. That's a cop-out, and it's reactive. They are being very reactive as opposed to getting in there and actually doing some work.

The member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) had asked questions about bedbugs not that long ago.

I'd like to ask the NDP ministers who are in charge of seniors and Manitoba Housing to explain what is their obligation if a senior living in Manitoba Housing is infected with bedbugs?

Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Well, I thank the member for asking me this question.

We are doing a lot for the seniors. Look at the school tax rebate. It will be totally eliminated. I know the Opposition Leader avoided to answer that question in the interview. And so tell me, by a \$500-million cut, how many seniors will get that housing? So housing, to get it, then we need money. And also we need give a break to seniors so they can stay a longer time in their houses so they don't have to use that personal-care homes.

So in that case, I think we have to be clear that with \$500 million, where seniors will—

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

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to table pictures of bedbugs found in Manitoba Housing unit, just taken recently.

Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent who is 80 years old and is virtually blind. Her apartment has now been infested for a third time. The family has been jumping through various hoops and were given less than 18 hours to move everything out of their mother's apartment so it can be sprayed at 8:30 this morning. Nobody showed up this morning from

Manitoba Housing to spray the apartment. This is another example of the lack of leadership being shown by these ministers in the Selinger government.

Why, Mr. Speaker, do Manitobans continue to pay more and get less and, in this case, nothing but bugs?

Mr. Saran: We know access to safe and affordable housing is important for all Manitoba families. That's why we want to be sure Manitoba Housing offers families a safe and clean place to live.

Our NDP government is working hard to eradicate bedbugs, coupling prevention education with the most advanced pest control treatment available. Since 2008, Manitoba Housing has developed an in-house quality control and new treatment methods to address bedbug concerns.

We are making steady progress, significantly reducing or already getting rid of bugs in many buildings. And we are working hard to eliminate the rest.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, we continuously hear examples and situations of the lack of seniors housing and Manitoba Housing for some of our most vulnerable Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, not to sound like a broken record, but this is yet another example of the Selinger government being far more interested in trying to save their own jobs than looking out for the most vulnerable Manitobans. Manitobans are tired of the NDP broken promises and are looking for a change. A change for the better is coming April 19th.

Mr. Saran: I think that change, which is going to come, that's going to become far worse. While eliminating \$500 million from the budget, where will it go? And how the seniors can be better off with that? How the—any—how we can build them those houses for the seniors or low-income people?

I think it will be a really saddened state if any of those guys come, and people should wake up and should know that these people are really dangerous for the Manitoba economy. We are—our economies, they are No. 1. Our economies are No. 1. We created more jobs than any other province. The unemployment rate is the lowest, and creating those jobs, that gives the economy a boost and that helps the seniors, that helps everybody.

Personal-Care Homes Aggressive Patient Placements

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the importance of ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of spaces and units in our personal-care homes specializing in addressing aggressive behaviours that can develop in some patients with dementia and Alzheimer's disease is something that has been known for years.

Today we have 1,251 patients waiting in hospitals across the province for the appropriate specialized care for seniors who need it, and a proportion of these need these specialized places.

Can the Premier tell us the number of spaces for patients with dementia and aggressive tendencies in such units in personal-care homes which are, today, fully operational?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member opposite for the question.

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has been working with their partners in the community, including Actionmarguerite, to put in units that are special to deal with the complex needs of persons with things like dementia, with Alzheimer's. Some of those individuals have some additional risks attached to potential behaviours they could express while being in those facilities, so a number of additional units have put in place.

It is a serious problem. The WRHA, in partnership with their local partners and the Department of Health, are working forward on doing this. As the member knows, we're building over about \$200 million worth of additional personal-care homes in Manitoba, and I have to say that the opposition has said that they will be boi—a half a billion dollars of cuts. That won't build one more personal-care-home bed.

The Liberal Party of Manitoba, with their health and education levy being eliminated, \$471 million not available for building personal-care homes, Mr. Speaker, so I'm glad the former leader of the Liberal Party, the member for River Heights, cares about this issue. I only ask that he goes to the Leader of the Liberal Party and cancel that reduction of \$471 million, which would help build more personal-care-home beds in Manitoba.

Dementia-Care Education Home-Care Worker Training

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has made announcements, but his foot-dragging has produced few such units which are actually operational to date. Many Manitobans want to stay in their own homes as long as possible. It's vital that all those who are involved in providing home care receive education related to the care and support of individuals with dementia so that people with dementia can remain in their homes longer.

Why is the Premier not fully supporting enhanced education for home-care workers in the care of those with dementia and instead is leaving more than 1,200 patients waiting in hospitals for the non-existent personal-care-home beds?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): And, again, Mr. Speaker, we think it is an important issue, which is why we've put additional resources, both in the community. Our home-care program has special features to it now that allow for people with more complex needs to be looked after in their homes. The seniors—the caregiver's tax credit has been expanded to allow for more support for people that look after people with complex needs in the community, including married couples where one's looking after another, and we find that they're doing a phenomenal job, and they need some recognition for that.

* (14:30)

But I have to say, again, the intentions of the Liberal Party to eliminate the health and education levy means \$471 million less each year. That's nearly \$2 billion over the next mandate that would not be available to build personal-care homes or to look after anybody with complex needs and behavioural risks.

The Leader of the Opposition is also planning a half a billion dollars' worth of cuts. That won't build any personal-care homes. He can't even commit to the Seniors' School Tax Rebate today when he was speaking to the Winnipeg Free Press. He can't even commit to a little bit of support to help seniors maintain their cost of living in the community.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, dementia-care education may be continuing in personal-care homes but it is the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, not this NDP government, that is working on its own to educate home-care providers in the same manner.

Manitoba Liberals have committed to modernize home care and enhancing such education to make it more effective in Manitoba.

Why is the Premier not fully supporting the important initiative of the Alzheimer's framework to improve education and training of home-care workers in relation to the care and help for those with dementia?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have, in fact, developed a program called Personal, Intellectual, Emotional Capabilities Environment and Social Training for staff to look after individuals with complex needs, and this is a serious problem.

We do have people living longer in our society. We do have people contracting Alzheimer's and dementia. There's lots of excellent research going on in that to be able to identify how that disease can be mitigated or prevented. But for those that have it, we have an obligation as a society to look after them, and cutting \$471 million out of the health and education levy will not look after one of those senior citizens.

Cutting a half a billion dollars out of the budget, like the Leader of the Opposition would want to do will not look after one of those seniors. They cannot stand up and say they care for seniors while they're cutting the fundamental resources that those people need to be looked after. Shame on the Conservatives. Shame on the Liberals.

Federal Immigration Plan Increase in Immigration Levels

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): As the representative for Winnipeg's West End, and as the husband of an immigrant, I see every day the value of immigration to Manitoba.

And it's a shame: Every time we hear the good news about Manitoba's growing population, the Progressive Conservative opposition ignores it. And they believe that a family moving to Manitoba from Saskatchewan or New Brunswick counts but a family moving from Germany or Syria or the Philippines doesn't. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that everyone matters, and so do all of my NDP colleagues.

Just this week, there was a federal immigration report published that revealed plans to increase numbers of immigrants to Canada shifting the federal focus to reuniting more families. I would ask the Minister of Immigration and Labour to tell us more about this great and ongoing story because

hardworking families in Minto are telling me that welcoming newcomers to our great province continues to be a priority for them, and this year we've worked together to welcome refugees from the Syrian crisis.

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Manitoba is well known for its generosity when it comes to welcoming immigrants, and especially over the last number of months welcoming refugees as a result of the Syrian crisis, and our response has been outstanding.

We've advocated for a long time with the federal government to increase the levels for immigration and it's fallen on deaf ears. So when the new federal Liberal government made the commitment to increase immigration levels, we stepped to the plate again. And when they indicated 25,000 refugees from the Syrian crisis would be heading to Canada, we said we would do our part, and to date we have received over 830 refugees as a result of the Syrian crisis.

We've engaged the Emergency Measures Organization to help co-ordinate the efforts because this indeed is a larger portion of refugees than we've taken in a while. We have, at this point, taken more refugees per capita than any of the other provinces in Canada.

And I have to say our partners on the ground have been absolutely wonderful and I cannot thank enough the community workers with—

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

Provincial Forest Renewal Plan Reduction in Number of Trees Planted

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the importance of reforestation renewal cannot be understated. Unfortunately, despite the NDP's claims, they are planting fewer trees today than when they took office.

Mr. Speaker, how does the minister rationalize a freedom of information request showing a 60 per cent cut in the number of trees planted under the provincial Forest Renewal Program today compared to just four years ago?

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

Reforestation is very important to this government. Unlike members opposite we do acknowledge the impact of climate change on our planet and the function that our forest plays in addressing this challenge. If only members opposite would actually acknowledge the existence of climate change, in particular the Leader of the Opposition, then perhaps we could unite as a Legislature and truly move this province and this country forward in addressing this very important challenge.

Our Trees for Tomorrow program is a big part of the climate change strategy that we just announced. So, really, I'm not sure where the member is coming from.

Thank you.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the minister should work on uniting his caucus first.

Mr. Speaker, a tree can absorb as much as 48 pounds of carbon dioxide in a single year and can sequester one ton of carbon dioxide over—within 40-year lifespan. Reforestation is part of any climate change plan. The NDP's cuts to Conservation, \$20 million in the last year alone, is indicative of this government's attitude when it comes to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, why isn't this minister defending his department's efforts? Or is it just that he thought Conservation was going to be an easy ride?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, I'm surprised. The member opposite, the time that he spent with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, that he would understand finances a little better than he does.

Obviously, you know, the difference from last year's budget to this is accounted for by the fact that this government put a \$30-million investment into the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre. That's the difference, and those are the types of capital items that come from one year to next that might have an effect on the bottom line.

Really, if the member opposite would learn how to maybe read and understand a budget, he might grasp something like that.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route— Information Request

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) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located southeastern Manitoba and 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 of—with tower heights expected to reach 40 to 60 metres and will locate every four to five hundred metres.

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

(4) The alternate route which have been seen in the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate in 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 be received any response.

(6) Landowners 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 the criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not the routing represented a least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

And this petition is signed by K. Turnbull, R. Turnbull, L. Gibbons and many other fine Manitobans.

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

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

* (14:40)

(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 the residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

Signed by M. Williams, J. Williams, P. Williams and many other fine Manitobans.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by K. Mazor, S. Wojcik, L. Clark and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by S. Beil, C. Theriault, R. Bruce and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes petitions.

We'll now move on to grievances.

Seeing no grievances, before I call orders of the day, I'd like to just wish our Clerk of the House a happy birthday today. Ms. Patricia Chaychuk, it's her birthday. And a page as well.

Happy Birthday was sung.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

(Continued)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, today we'll be calling Interim Supply, and then concurrence and third reading on Bill 17. After that, we will be calling report stage amendments and concurrence and third reading on Bill 33. Then we will call concurrence and third reading on Bill 5. After that, we will call second reading on Bill 6.

An Honourable Member: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Just on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and for the record I know the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs spoke passionately about having Bill 18 debated today. I want it noted for the record that we are willing to debate Bill 18 and to pass it today if it's called by the government.

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

Mr. Chomiak: I don't believe the member has a point of order, and I think members of this House

well know that we balance significant issues with respect to bill passage and they concern discussions of all three leaders and of all members of the House, and I will continue those discussions with the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach, I thank honourable members their advice on this matter. I did not hear that there was a breach of a particular rule, and though I have often stated in this House I leave it to the House leaders to determine the business of the House, I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: So it has been indicated that we're going to be dealing with business of the House in this order: first, I—leading with Interim Supply, and then under orders of the day, as well, we're going to be dealing with Bill 17, Bill 33, Bill 5 and Bill 6.

So we'll start, first, by calling Interim Supply, and the House will now resolve into the Committee of Supply to consider resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Interim Supply

Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have before us for our consideration two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The first resolution, respecting operating expenditures for Interim Supply, reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$4,475,000,000, being approximately 35 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2015, to be voted as set forth in part A, Operating Expenditure, of the 2015 Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2017.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments?

*(14:50)

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): No, Madam.

Madam Chairperson: Thank the minister.

Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Not.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

The second resolution, respecting capital investment, for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$563,100,000, being approximately 75 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2015, to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the 2015 Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 2017.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments?

Mr. Dewar: No, I do not, Madam Speaker.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. We thank the minister.

Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Friesen: I do not.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the critic.

The floor is open for questions.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no questions, is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

This concludes the business before the committee. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

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

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Mineral Resources (Mr. Chomiak), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March the 31st, 2017, out of the Consolidated Fund, sums not exceeding \$4,475,000,000, being approximately 35 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2015, to be voted on as set out in part A, Operating Expenditure, and \$563,100,000, being approximately 75 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2015, to be voted on as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the 2015 Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Mineral Resources, that Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

* (15:00)

SECOND READINGS

Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Mineral Resources, that Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016, be now read a second time and be referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, a few words. The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016 provides interim spending and commitment authority for the 2016-2017 fiscal year, pending approval of the 2016 appropriation act. Part A is authority for approximately, well, \$4,475,000,000. Its operating expenditure, it's about, it'll take the—this is enough authority to last until the end of July.

The second part is capital investment authority of \$561,100,000. And this, of course, is about

75 per cent of the money allocated for capital expenditure over the course of the year. And this is due to the fact that we're hoping for an early spring, Mr. Speaker, this year, and this would allow for an early start on infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the other parts of the bill is in terms of any future commitment that this government has made. And if anybody has any questions, I'm prepared to answer them.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move to the question period portion.

Are there any questions on this matter?

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I'd like the minister to comment: What is the relationship of the fiscal update that the government brought earlier this week to the appropriations for operating expenditures and capital investments in this Interim Supply bill?

Mr. Dewar: Well, Mr. Speaker, the—as the member knows, the—regardless of whether or not the update was presented, regardless of whether or not the update was passed, regardless or not a budget was passed, the—this effort is required, as the member knows.

We had a chance to talk with them earlier on today and he had a chance to raise these matters with our staff. This is basically the authority to maintain the operations of the government between now and the end of July, approximately 35 per cent of the overall expenditure within the fiscal year.

It is, as well, it has no new spending authority granted in this, Mr. Speaker. It's strictly for operational.

Mr. Friesen: The minister isn't quite correct, because, of course, it contains appropriations for both operational and capital. But I'll restate my question because it is significant. Of course, we understand why we bring an interim supply bill.

What I'm asking the minister to explain on the record is: What is the relationship of the fiscal update offered this week and this Interim Supply bill?

The appropriations reference percentages of total appropriation, both for operating and capital. But I'm asking the minister to indicate: Is there any relationship, and if so, what is the nature of that relationship between this appropriation and the fiscal update he brought earlier this week?

Mr. Dewar: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the fiscal update was not the budget. But, regardless of whether or not we bring in a fiscal update, regardless of whether or not we brought in the budget, this is necessary.

This will provide authority, as I said, approximately 35 per cent of the annual expenditure—operating and capital—75 per cent of capital, 35 per cent of operating to maintain the operations of the government. If, Mr. Speaker, we don't have the authority, it's basically, the government will shut down at the end of the—at the end of March. So this provides four months' worth of authority, approximately until the end of July.

Mr. Friesen: Yes, I thank the minister for that reply. I'm not trying to be quarrelsome, but I am asking him, and I'll ask it in a different way about reference points. So what I will ask is: The minister brought an update this week into the House in the form of the fiscal update, and what it contains is information that indicates that the deficit for the current year is going to be far surpassing the estimate of \$442 million. The deficit has now been indicated by this government as \$773 million, and we've had discussion in question period and in the—and in debate about this.

What I'm asking the minister to indicate in this context is: Is there, because of the government's overrun on operating in the—we'll say not in the summary budget, but in the core budget—is there an implication here in the operating appropriation that reflects the government's overrun in spending in the past fiscal year?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I have to answer no. But, again, the—this is approximately—this is based upon 35 per cent of the expenditures that was voted on in last year's budget, or the one that ends in the end of March. So I would have to—the answer would be no.

Mr. Friesen: And I would agree with the minister. The question, of course, arises, if the government has seen this ballooning of expenditure, how is that accommodated on a go-forward basis even in this interim period? So that is a question I have, and I can ask it later on in these proceedings this afternoon in a different context.

I want to—the minister did already answer one other of my questions. He indicated in his remarks that it is the intent of this appropriation to bridge until approximately July. And I'm happy to hear that because I wasn't sure of the date on which these decisions were being predicated.

Can the minister please bring a rationalization as to the 35 per cent when it comes to the operating expenditure appropriation? On what basis does the minister—on what basis has the Finance officials recommended to this minister to tack that at 35 per cent?

Mr. Dewar: As the member knows, it's approximately four months, and the—it's my understanding that 35 per cent is something that's been historically used as a percentage in the past interim appropriations act, and that was the advice that they gave us then and the advice that we follow today.

Mr. Friesen: The minister did comment about the reason underlying the capital investment appropriation and why it is stated as 75 per cent. This is a large amount in terms of the total appropriation. I'm just inviting him to put a few more words on the record in respect of this to indicate—I believe he indicated that it is because construction season is going to be beginning, and we understand spring could come sooner rather than later in this province. I want to ask the—hopefully sooner—I want to ask the minister: Are there other considerations besides the construction season that go into this, because 75 per cent is a higher amount than we would have anticipated?

* (15:10)

Mr. Dewar: Yes, I think the member did answer the question. It's my understanding, from our discussions with staff and, in particular, the staff from Infrastructure and Transportation, that it is the expectation, it is the hope, I think, of all Manitobans that we have an early start to our infrastructure program.

It appears to me that we have a very—looks like we're going to have a nice melting of our ice and snow, and it would be great if we could get out there early. And that is the purpose behind us granting—or seeking authority of such a high percentage so we can begin with that infrastructure program as soon as we can.

Mr. Friesen: I want to ask the minister whether he is—he would accommodate having his staff from the Finance Department come and join him during the Committee of the Whole part of this afternoon's deliberations. I want to ask if he would agree to that to allow us to ask some questions that will be technical in nature in respect of both appropriations.

Mr. Dewar: That certainly is fine with me.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Need to rise, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay.

Mr. Speaker, one of the questions that has come up is there are, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) knows, quite a number of outstanding labour agreements, including, for example, midwives which are not fully negotiated and settled.

To what extent were the labour agreements which are not settled, and some go back two years, the extra money that would be required to pay—or to meet those new labour agreements once they're completed, is that in the amount that the Minister of Finance has allocated? Is that, or would that change that percentage from 35 per cent to some other per cent because there would be, once these labour agreements are settled, additional costs during the year.

Mr. Dewar: As the member made—as he said, there is a number of agreements that we're—that we've settled. There's a number of agreements that we're currently in negotiations with with our public sector. We, of course, we do book some money inside the—within the appropriations. We don't always know whether or not the amount, what the end result of that collective agreement may be. We put an offer on the table. As you know, these are negotiations and a free collective bargaining system, and we don't always know precisely what the end result of those negotiations may be. Some of them, as the member said, some of them have been settled. Some of them so, in fact, some would be booked; others would not because those negotiations have not concluded.

Mr. Gerrard: The capital spending allocation here is 75 per cent of the total capital spending budget. The \$563 million, therefore, would indicate a capital spending budget that the Minister of Finance is planning of \$751 million, and yet the Minister of Finance in his fiscal update put in, I think it was more than a billion dollars for core infrastructure. How can you have capital spending of \$751 million but you're going to spend more than a billion dollars on core infrastructure which is presumably capital spending?

Mr. Dewar: Well the member will know that the core infrastructure plan includes not only support of roads and bridges and flood protection. It also

supports—a significant contribution of that is support in partnership with the municipal governments, and part A capital as well, Mr. Speaker. So that is why this is part B capital. I—it is part B capital, and as the member points out this 75 per cent of part B capital. We're also—that—when we include our infrastructure we also include significant contributions to part A capital. So that would be money that we directly partner with municipal governments which would not be included in this.

Mr. Gerrard: In the fiscal update that was tabled in this Legislature there was an estimate of an increase in the net debt of \$2.3 billion for the fiscal year 2015 to 2016. I would ask the minister, based on the projections that he's made here, what would be the expected increase in the net debt for the fiscal year of 2016 to 2017.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that information on me. If the member would like, I could return to the House with that information.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this seems to be a pretty essential piece of information and I would hope that the minister would be able to get his staff to bring him the document so he can table it before we complete this supply motion today because one presumably would—he should have that.

Now I look at the date at which the minister is projecting that there would need to be a—either a budget or an interim supply again sometime between now and the end of July. But clearly planning if you're going to know what you're going to spend in terms of operational dollars and in terms of capital dollars, would probably mean that you would need to work quicker than that. What would be the minister's estimate of when you would actually need to have, for planning purposes, the next either complete budget or the interim supply again?

Mr. Dewar: Well, as the member—as we said, this will provide us authority to the end of July, Mr. Speaker, and we will anticipate the election will be over by that point, whichever government is—whichever party is fortunate enough to be elected, they'll make that decision then. The member will know, last year, for example, we didn't pass the BITSA until late on into the fall. We required an additional preparation authority to continue on with the operations of the government well beyond the date that we are presenting and suggesting in this current document.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I have one last question. Would the minister commit to giving us the estimate of the net debt increase for 2016-2017 before we get to third reading? Is that possible?

Mr. Dewar: I will certainly do my best to accommodate the member's request, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further questions on this matter?

We'll now move to the debate. Is there any debate on this matter?

Seeing no debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resolve into the Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 23, the interim appropriation act, for concurrence and third reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

*(15:20)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order.

I would like to invite the Finance Minister's staff to join us in the Chamber.

Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016

Madam Chairperson: We will now be considering Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016.

Does the honourable Minister of Finance have an opening statement?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I do not.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the official opposition Finance critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I do not.

Madam Chairperson: Thank the critic.

So is the—the honourable member for Morden-Winkler, would you like to ask questions in a general way or go clause by clause?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Chair, I was looking for leave to be able to ask questions about the bill in a global manner.

Madam Chairperson: Is that agreeable to the committee, if we have some questions in a global manner and then we'll proceed after that to a clause-by-clause consideration? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Friesen: My question for the Finance Minister, I posed a question earlier in the second reading. I'm looking for a clarification, when it comes to the government's additional overrun, the government stated its core deficit somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$442 million—I'm sorry, I might be mixing up the summary and core right now. Core deficit is in the neighbourhood of \$600 million, \$650 million, somewhere in that neighbourhood, and I had asked the minister whether that is factored into the appropriation for operating expenditures.

I thank the Finance Department staff for joining us in this committee, and I'm asking for him to confer with his staff and to indicate, is that additional overrun accounted for and accommodated in the appropriation and is that why the appropriation is at 35 per cent?

Mr. Dewar: As we—as I said earlier in the debate on second reading, the 35 per cent allocated is in terms of the operating, will take us until the end of July, and it's based upon—35 per cent is based upon the '15-16 appropriation act.

Mr. Friesen: I'll invite a further clarification of the minister simply because he is correct that the appropriation refers to the 2015-16 budget. But, at the time of that budget, the deficit projection, the target, was much lower than what the minister has now revealed this week to the Legislature, an overrun that is significant, that is actually historic.

Now, what does it mean for the operation appropriation? Does it create additional leanness, then, when we know going forward there are costs that the government has had? It has sustained overruns in numerous areas. How is that reflected, then, in this appropriation?

Maybe another way to ask this is: If the government had hit its deficit target, would the appropriation be smaller, say, 30 or 25 per cent?

Mr. Dewar: Well, the answer is no, and 35 per cent, as I said earlier, is the historic percentage of costs of operations approximately four months. The first four months of the year, as we've said, this will take us

into—until the end of July. So the answer would be, no.

Mr. Friesen: Under section 2(2), I'm looking at the Authority for capital investments, and I wonder if the minister can indicate—now, he already indicated earlier in these proceedings that this refers to part B capital. I accept that.

I wonder if he can indicate—I'm trying to get a sense of what capital categories exist under this term. Can he indicate this is—if—does it refer to core government within department? Is it roads, bridges, paving? Is it more than that? Is it other categories as well, (2) to capital?

Mr. Dewar: Well, the—what's referenced here in this line would be: core infrastructure, so that would be roads and bridges, water and flood protection efforts; capital within the park grant; capital within the accommodation services division, which is division within the Department of Finance, so it includes buildings that are operated by accommodation services such as our—the jails, this building that we're in today.

Mr. Speaker—or Madam Chair, that would be what would be—what falls under this category.

Mr. Friesen: Can the minister indicate approximately what portion of this overall part—the capital amount, would pertain to the government's specific plans for infrastructure as part of their five-year capital infrastructure plan. And that, I think, he always uses—he defines as referring to roads and bridges and flood protection, those basic components.

So, if we can separate, parse that out from things like what he mentioned about, you know, the buildings and grounds of the Legislature and upkeep of other government buildings and fleet services, capital things.

* (15:30)

Mr. Dewar: Well, I do have an answer. So approximately 85, 86 per cent of the 75 per cent is for core infrastructure.

Mr. Friesen: The government made key spending commitments in the context of the Speech from the Throne in the late fall. I'm asking the Finance Minister to indicate whether there would be capital projects named and identified in the Throne Speech which would now be proceeding to construction inside of this appropriation under the capital investment amount.

Mr. Dewar: This is the approved capital plan from the last Estimates of 2015-2016. There may be some Throne Speech commitments funded in here. If I could just continue with that because we don't have the list of all the projects that are funded in here.

Mr. Friesen: It's not a definitive answer. The minister indicates there may be amounts included.

Now, by the opposition party's, you know, initial calculations of the Throne Speech commitments, we have referenced both in this House and outside of it that the government commitments could equal as much as \$6.6 billion. Now, the minister says there may be capital amounts that are now authorized with the passage of this bill that would also go to Throne Speech commitments. And he says there may be. Can I ask him for a better clarification? I know it might be hard to bring hard—difficult to bring hard numbers in this context. But does he suspect that there will be many of those Throne Speech announcements?

And perhaps I'll just clarify. Even in the month of January, the government made, by our estimate, 113 spending announcements, separate spending announcements, within the period of about three weeks before the Elections Manitoba defined cut-off date for government announcements. Will there be announcements from that period of time of those 113 spending announcements? Will some of those projects now be ratified? Are they to the point in terms of the—on the continuum towards construction where they will be approved for construction and the monies will flow through this appropriation under 2(2)?

Mr. Dewar: As the member knows, when the government presented the Speech from the Throne, we made a number of multi-year commitments. So things that we—were offered up to the citizens of Manitoba were to be funded over many years. So it really depends upon the specific project that the member may want to reference. The majority of the funding is for long-term capital plans that were developed over many years, as the member can appreciate.

Mr. Friesen: I'm trying to get a sense of what the limitations are on government going forward even within the election period.

Can the minister comment, what are the limitations on a sitting government in the election period in respect of authorizing new projects to be funded? It's a complex question, so I should perhaps

state—I'll offer this clarification: What are the limitations of a sitting government during election period when it comes to either approving new projects or—approving new projects or allowing projects to continue along a path, whether, you know, at whatever stage they're in? Are there limitations on a government's ability to do these things? Are they constrained or are they unconstrained?

* (15:40)

Mr. Dewar: Well, it's a fairly complicated question, but the—we are—the government is tied to the funding and appropriations that were passed in Budget 2015 and we maintain the operations both in the operating and the capital expenditures.

Mr. Friesen: I'm going to try to sharpen up the question because I realize it was multifaceted.

Can you explain—every number of years we arrive at this place where there is an election approaching and it poses challenges, of course, for Finance officials, as well as—I'm sure—Finance ministers and departments because, you were, of course, trying to ensure that the business of government is ongoing.

At the same time we also—in opposition—occupy this role where we want to continue to operate in—of course, in the role that has been given to us to oversee and to provide accountability over expenditures. And so with this—in respect of capital amounts, it's why I'm asking this question.

Do I understand correctly that tenders can continue to be awarded by government up to the issuing of the writ, but not past the issuing of the writ? Is that a correct assumption?

Mr. Dewar: Well, the rules that apply now under the blackout period will apply once the writ is dropped.

Mr. Friesen: Where does the authority reside when the writ is dropped for the authorization of monies to be permitted, to be, expenditures to be allowed? Does Treasury Board continue to meet after the writ is issued?

Mr. Dewar: Well, as the member knows, the—we're in a caretaker role during the writ period. But I am advised that Treasury Board will continue to meet as required.

Mr. Friesen: And I understand that that caretaker role, that Treasury Board assumes; I'm wondering what the constraints are on because there is a difference when you talk about 2(1) and 2(2). And

I'm just seeking to have further clarification about how public interest is maintained if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and ministers of the Crown who are no longer MLAs for the purposes of Elections Manitoba, if they are in that role where they oversee expenditures and operate in that caretaker role, are there constraints on the ability of the Treasury Board to authorize new—I'm not talking about operational expenditures; I'm asking about the ability of them to issue contracts to authorize the monies for contracts that weren't concluded.

And I guess the second part of the question is, in the same way as orders in council would indicate the activities and monies authorized, how does that get demonstrated during the electoral period? How does the public or other MLAs, former MLAs during the election period, have access to that information?

Mr. Dewar: There will be, the departments of course, if they have a funding requirement that is of an urgent nature, then those will be considered but only as—if it cannot wait. Many items, well, as the member can appreciate, will be deferred until after the writ period. But, if there are things that come up that need to be funded urgently, then the board would meet and would deal with those matters.

* (15:50)

Mr. Friesen: I would ask the minister to also respond to the second part of that question, and that is, then, how are those expenditures disclosed and in what time period are they disclosed?

Mr. Dewar: Well, I'll give the member an example. The proactive disclosure of contracts over \$10,000 would continue to—for an example, would continue to be made public.

Mr. Friesen: I would like to ask the minister, in the event of a transition—because, of course, we know that at some point in time, probably next week, the minister—the Premier will issue the writ and this Legislature will dissolve and we will go into election. In a time of transition should there be one from one administration to another?

How long following a decision would the Premier and Treasury Board from the outgoing government continue to have control over fiscal matters until that transition is complete? And at the same time, if I could add, and then on what basis does that same argument for urgency in expenditure authorization continue?

Mr. Dewar: My advice is that it'll continue until a new Cabinet is sworn in.

Mr. Friesen: The minister indicated that the Treasury Board continues to meet the—in the election period. I would ask for a clarification and say is there any other way by which expenditures, then, can also be authorized inside of the election period? Do ministers retain an ability under a threshold amount to be able to authorize expenditure? Or is—after the writ is issued, is all decision making locus of control inside Treasury Board?

And at the same time, if I could add, does the Premier have any latitude as well to make those decisions outside of Treasury Board.

Mr. Dewar: While ministers will maintain the authority delegated to them but given direction to proceed in a caretaker role and, as such, will only respond to such things as an emergency. Treasury Board will meet and deal if it's of urgent nature.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is a follow-up to what I asked earlier on. And that is: This year, the fiscal update showed an increase in the net debt of \$2.3 billion, approximately.

What is the estimate based on the spending and revenue estimates that would be for the increase in the net debt during the 2016-2017 fiscal year?

* (16:00)

Mr. Dewar: The answer to the member's question is the net debt will be \$22.8 billion.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, in the breakdown that was given in the fiscal update, in a number of instances there was the estimate for spending for a group of departments considered together, Justice and other departments being an example, and yet, clearly, in order to operate the individual departments, the government, based on their estimate for operational spending, must have estimates for the amount of spending to be made by individual departments: Conservation, Agriculture and so on.

I wonder if the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) could table those estimates by individual departments and provide that additional detail to members of the Chamber.

Mr. Dewar: The departments will be operating under the Estimates authorized in the '15-16 authority, and the information the member asked for will be contained in any upcoming budget.

Mr. Gerrard: Just for clarification, what the—I hear the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) saying is that for the initial operating phases, the departments will be operating under the budgets as of 2015-2016. Is that correct?

Mr. Dewar: The member's question—he is correct.

Mr. Gerrard: Then the one thing that I would wonder about is, I mean, there have been some labour contracts, for example, settled, and the expenses may well have gone up this year compared with last year based on the costs of, you know, labour or other factors. What will happen under that circumstance? Will the allocation still remain that allocation based on the allocation in 2015-2016?

Mr. Dewar: The departments will have to manage the current wage scales that is authorized within this—the act that's before the Legislature.

Mr. Gerrard: So, just as an example, the 2015-2016 budget for heritage, arts, culture, sports and that department, they would have an allocation which is the same as for the budget for 2015-2016. Is that correct?

Mr. Dewar: My response is the same to the question posed prior to this one, that departments will have to manage any increase to their salaries from within the lines that are—will be from the—which—from the appropriation act that will be—is before the Legislature.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister. I'm aware that, you know, the 35 per cent, I think, is based on the 35 per cent of the budget for 2016-2017, but the allocations are based on the budget, by department—are based on the budget for 2015-2016.

Mr. Dewar: The answer remains the same. The department will have to manage any wage increase within the allocation of the 35 per cent that is within this act that's currently before the Legislature.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I thank the minister for that clarification.

That completes my questions.

Mr. Friesen: I have one last question for the minister in this section for limit on payments for certain long-term liabilities. I'm wondering, when it comes to liabilities, you'll notice that there isn't a percentage of the total appropriation, and I'm wondering in this case: Do the liabilities that are referred to in section 4, is this amount that is authorized for the entire year, or for a portion of the

year, consistent with the operating expenditures and capital investments appropriations?

* (16:10)

Mr. Dewar: That is—this allocation is based upon a cash flow or the estimated need for the four-month period.

Madam Chairperson: There any further questions? Are we ready to move to clause-by-clause?

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

This concludes the business before this committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016, and reports the same without amendment.

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

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 23—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016; Loi de 2016 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any debate?

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I'm going to rise and just put a few words on the record in respect of Bill 23, the interim appropriation act. I do want to thank Finance officials for having joined us during the committee part of this afternoon's debate in consideration of this bill. It's important, and we did welcome the

clarifications that they were able to bring on a number of important matters.

Mr. Speaker, I will say at the outset that the appropriations, as they are listed in 2(1) and 2(2), are perhaps higher than we would've anticipated in the opposition: 35 per cent of the total appropriation for operation expenditures, 75 per cent of the total appropriation for capital investments. They—like—as I mentioned, they are perhaps higher than we would have anticipated they would be. But, obviously, we understand that the business of government has to continue, and there has to be a mechanism by which we continue to carry on the work even while this legislature will dissolve and the election period will begin.

Of course, every government has to entertain interim supply motions to keep business running even when we adjourn if budgets aren't passed. But, every once in a while, of course, every number of years then we, as the Finance Minister and the government and as myself as the Finance critic in the opposition party and the other parties as well, have—we have this additional responsibility because we're looking in—we're looking through a dark glass, and we do not know what's on the other side of that. And so the—so that's why it's important to ask some additional questions. Each of us has a responsibility in our own position to—ultimately, to taxpayers and to Manitobans, and we want to make sure that we exercise those responsibilities to the best of our ability.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is when it comes to allowing the government to continue to operate, we must do so. When it comes for the authorization to be made to allow capital investments that have been agreed to and been contracted to under law to go ahead, of course, we have to do that.

The comments I made earlier this afternoon on the record had to do more with the latitude that this NDP government has to continue to implement its spending mandate subsequent to its Throne Speech and subsequent to its 113 spending announcements in the month of January. Now I submit, Mr. Speaker, that these announcements are exactly that; they are spending announcements that are made by the NDP party that is looking for re-election. And that's not supposed to stir the pot; that's simply an observation.

I would submit that the government does not have the mandate to be rushing along spending priorities that it is using out there, promoting its agenda, promoting a set of priorities, as every party

will. These are things that they can do. They should've done them on their own dime; they did them on taxpayer dime.

The Finance Minister consulted with the public, which I call a phony budget consultation process, partly because almost no one came to them but also because he told them there would be a budget. The process cost \$40,000; he produced no budget at the end of it. Now he has offered a fiscal update that is missing a large part of information. It does not report information in the manner in which a full budget would report. It leaves out information that a full budget would include. It does not follow the methodology of a full budget.

Now, taxpayers and Manitobans are left with a dilemma, and that is they essentially hired this government for a term of four years. This government is in overtime. They were granted a reprieve of six months because, of course, of the overlap of federal and provincial elections, according to laws that we have in place. Now, in this—in the remaining seconds, as the last seconds are ticking off the clock, they're attempting a free throw from behind the three-point line, but they're doing so with taxpayer dollars. These things are important because they are costly.

The government, in its Throne Speech, made \$6.6 billion of spending announcements. In the month of January, they made a 113 more announcements. The minister today, in his remarks, would not rule out that these spending announcements would not be included in the capital investment portion. I asked him to account for that, he said: Maybe, maybe not could be the case.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that this is troubling for all Manitobans. These are election pledges they have made. Let them go to election. Let them take their message to Manitobans. But, in the interest of taxpayer protection, they should not be rushing capital projects through the process. We have seen with this government what happens when they rush the process that is in place.

*(16:20)

We have a civil service that is charged with a solid responsibility to oversee expenditures in this province. I am troubled to think that these civil servants in the Department of Finance, in the Department of Infrastructure, in the Department of Conservation, what—all over, in the Department of Health, in the Department of Education, social

services, what will happen when the interests of the taxpayers do not align with the interests of a government that could be an outgoing government? And that is indeed the case.

We submit ourselves to the will of electors once every four years, or thereabouts, there is a possibility that this government will not return. It is in the interest of taxpayers. The minister should rise in his place today and give his commitment that he will not, and the ministers of the Crown will not, and Treasury Board will not run against the will of the public. The public has not given them a mandate that extends past this time. These are spending announcements that are made by a political party in the same manner as we are making pledges to voters about what we stand for as a party.

I would submit that it does not meet the test of custodial duties. This minister outlined what he said were caretaking duties that they would continue to fulfill once the writ is issued, and I understand that. In this province those things take place. There are money still needs to be authorized, but he says then after the election the government continues in that transitional period should there be one, to have that authority. I'm asking to him to indicate what constraints are on him and he declines to indicate that there are any real constraints on government, and I say that that is not in the interest of taxpayers.

We're talking about a government that has run a deficit that is historic. We've never been here as a province. We've never had a government miss its deficit projection by this amount. And even during the year prior to when I was elected, I believe it was 2010 when the flood occurred and I was elected in 2011, I will ask for forgiveness if I get that date wrong. I believe it was 2010 with the flood.

And so even in that year—[interjection]—sorry, in the 2011 year when the flood occurred, now, even at that time, yes, at the end of the year, it showed an overrun much larger than the government had incurred, but remember a lot of that money was eventually, ultimately, reimbursed by the federal government who said, yes, we understand we have a responsibility under the Emergency Measures Act to compensate provinces for expenditures.

This is not that case. There is no flood. There is no sudden, you know, interest rate bump. There is no sudden loss of federal transfer payments. The only disaster on the other side is the disastrous fiscal management of this government, and that's why I've

called upon the minister to provide constraints around capital investments.

Absolutely, budget-tenders that are let, there is a process. I am concerned in specific—and my colleagues will be concerned—about the willingness of government, the willingness of ministers there to go against the rules, to not observe the rules, to rush the process, to not get the best deal for taxpayers; to ignore, as the Auditor General has said, all the protections that an open process would offer. I do not believe that this will offer an open process. It leaves this open to abuse. This government has shown in the past that it will take whatever is given to it to be able to break the rules.

And so these are the concerns I express. They are concerns that I direct to the Finance Minister and I have to put those on the record. In respect of all these other things, let it be clear, we support these appropriations and as much as we have to continue that the business of government goes on. And so, while these appropriations are higher in percentage than I would have expected, nonetheless, the appropriations are important for the reasons I have outlined.

Nevertheless, I would stress, and with this I will close, that protections of the public must be ongoing. There must be a mechanism by which the decisions being made by Treasury Board are communicated to other—to Manitobans, because, of course, at that time, those of us on this side will no longer be MLAs backbenches and that side will not be MLAs. Where are those protections, how can this government be trusted to bring those protections when in the past we have failed so spectacularly to defend the public interest? They put their interest above the interest of Manitobans.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on the appropriations bill. I thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) for the explanations that he provided, his clarity that at the end of the 2016-2017 fiscal year the net debt is expected to be \$22.8 billion, that will represent an increase in the debt of \$1.5 billion. And so that the—when one factors in the projected deficit for 2016-2017, if that were to be maintained, then we would have other borrowing above and beyond the deficit of close to \$1 billion. I just want to put that into context.

Now, the second question that I asked dealt with the—what the departments will have in terms of spending allocations and budgetary allocations. It is

of interest that the budget of 2015-2016 represented an expenditure of roughly 12.8 or \$12.865 billion in the budget. That was what the allocation was based on, and we hear that the 35 per cent that is part of this, you know, interim appropriations, is expected to last for four months or 'til the end of July.

Now, I want to put that in a little bit of perspective because last year the government, instead of spending that amount, actually expended 13 point—roughly—point zero billion, which is another, you know, 135, well, almost 200 million over. And the government has projected an expenditure in the 2016-2017 fiscal year of \$13.45 billion. Now, if you figure that the government has estimated expenditures of \$13.45 billion but then has allocated 35 per cent based on 25–12.865 billion, then, in fact, the government is planning to allocate what would be significantly less than they're expecting to have spent in this fiscal year.

And so that, in fact, is interesting because it actually represents a little bit of a cut from what was actually spent last year. Interesting observation, but I just put that on the table.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that this interim appropriation is the best that the government of the day can do, and then I will leave it at that. And we look forward to proceeding with the rest of this consideration of this Interim Supply bill.

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

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 23, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016.

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

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Bill 17—The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 17, The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act; Loi sur l'Association des enseignants du Manitoba, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and

Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

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

* (16:30)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I just want to, first of all, compliment the work of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, their efforts on behalf of teachers, their work over many years to get changes to this bill. And the fact that, you know, this bill has been a long time coming, it is good that we have it before us today, and I am pleased that we are actually going to proceed with this at third reading. So with just a few words to acknowledge the efforts that went into producing this bill and to acknowledge the contributions of teachers all over Manitoba to educating our youth, I believe that this is a step forward that we should be taking, and I will be supporting this bill at third reading.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this matter?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I understood the tradition was that on third reading, I would close debate, but I'm happy to put it—stand up and—*[interjection]* Okay, I understand that I—having had it explained to me how this is going to play out, I am delighted to get up and speak to this bill and to thank the Manitoba Teachers' Society for their efforts in bringing this bill to our government's attention.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the bill will formally give the Manitoba Teachers' Society the autonomy they deserve by allowing Manitoba teachers to make democratic decisions about how their own organization functions without requiring government approval.

Of course, as you know, in the bill, certification of teachers remains in the hands of the provincial government where it belongs. But what the bill does is to provide the Manitoba Teachers' Society with the autonomy to be able to conduct their own affairs free of government interference, free of government approval and, I dare say, that's very important at this time, at this eleventh hour of this session as we draw near to an election.

Mr. Speaker, I think you know that I come from a family of teachers. My older sister and my older brother are teachers; sister-in-law, cousins, teachers; myself, though a teacher in a university context, nevertheless a teacher. And then, I'm proud to say,

my oldest daughter, a teacher, grade 1-2 class. And I'm proud to say, in her grade 1-2 class, that she has 20 kids or less, which is a by-product—a function of our small class size initiative. And she tells me, repeatedly and every day, that having that one-on-one time with her students provides the kind of intensive learning that allows a child to grow and develop and to flourish. And, for that, I think that class size initiative has been, probably, I can say, in the Department of Education, one of our proudest achievements going into the next election.

And, of course, we had a child-care class size bill ready to go ahead, but that doesn't seem to want to proceed. But I know that when it comes to small class sizes, which, Mr. Speaker, has resulted in 380 teachers being hired between the province and our partnerships with school divisions across Manitoba, it's a singular achievement to have 380 new teachers in our class rooms on top of the already splendid teachers that we already have.

And I know that we could all look back in our own school career and remember those teachers who had an enormous influence on us, both from a mentoring and tutoring, from a leadership point of view. And, of course, teachers are not only valuable inside the class room; they contribute to the well-being of the school writ large and then to the community even more. I'm very pleased to think of the schools in my own constituency, the fabulous teachers there, the work they do in the classroom, in the school, in the neighbourhoods and in the community every single day.

And so, as I say, we've hired 380 new teachers through the class size initiative alone, and I want to contrast that with the 700 teachers that were fired by the previous government when they had the chance. They were faced with reasonably similar economic circumstances as we were. Recently, the great recession of 2008 came along. The federal government almost collapsed, as you'll recall, if you remember your political history. In—at the eleventh hour, the Prime Minister changed his tune and agreed to invest—stimulus investing, in order to keep the Canadian economy rolling. And we've made that same decision here, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba. We've continued to invest in the things that matter most to Manitoba families, even when economic conditions across Canada are fragile, and globally they're fragile. And so it is a credit, I think, to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and to the responsible, courageous nature of this government that continues to put the well-being of Manitobans ahead of every other

factor. I just listened to the member from Morden-Winkler speak to the supply bill and, really, it's quite obvious they have a much different approach.

So I want to thank teachers for the incredible role that they play in our communities. I certainly want to thank MTS's president, Norm Gould, for coming to committee this week and speaking on behalf of Manitoba teachers. I think that was very, very important. We stand in partnership with MTS, with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the school board association, with MAPC, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, with the Mani—association of business officers. We speak directly to parents, and we work in concert with school divisions and with parents every single day to make sure that our children get the best education possible. So I want to thank MTS not only for their work on behalf of teachers but the work they do to represent teachers and to remind Manitobans of how important it is to continue to invest in our schools in order to ensure that our children get the very best education that they possibly can.

I know all members of the Chamber want to support this bill, so I'll take leave of this speech now, but, again, our great thanks to teachers and to MTS for the incredible work they do on our behalf every single day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure today to stand up and put a few words on the record toward Bill 17, The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act.

It doesn't surprise me, Mr. Speaker, that on third reading, when we have said that we're willing to see the bill go forward—and I'd like to thank the Manitoba Teachers' Society for coming to committee earlier this week and putting their words on the record in regards to the bill. I know that it's very near and dear to the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society's heart, Mr. Norm Gould, and it will be passing today.

And, of course, the Minister of Education shows his true colours as usual, when he gets up to put any words on the record, and he just can't help himself by being partisan and deciding to throw various words on the record that he knows, deep down, if he is, you know, as highly educated as he tells us in this House once in a while and has done that reading, Mr. Speaker, that some of the things that he puts on the record, there are, you know, he's playing fast and loose with the truth, as usual.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to Bill 17, we see that the bill has modernized the legislation constituting the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the representative of teachers in the province. And the bill continues the leadership structure and membership of the society, and the society's given a comprehensive set of bylaw powers to deal with its own governance and operations. This, as the member from River Heights has pointed out, is a step in the right direction so that, you know, the society has the ability to govern itself within its guidelines and rules, and it also, within the bill, it gives the ability to discipline members and operate insurance and benefit programs for its members and others involved within the school system.

* (16:40)

We know that the Manitoba Teachers' Society is a society within the province that represents 15,000 teachers, and we also know that this Minister of Education has, you know, dragged his feet a little bit on bringing this bill forward. And, of course, he's mentioning the eleventh hour, and they've had ample time to bring the various bills forward for introducing the bills and, in second reading and, of course, sending them onto committee and then third reading as well, Mr. Speaker.

But we also know, on this side of the House of, you know, of some of the Education Minister and his colleagues' most recent failures when it comes to education, Mr. Speaker. We know that since the 2011 election—and I know the Minister of Education is from that class of 2011 as well as so am I, and, from the 2011 election 'til today, he's actually the fourth Education Minister. Granted, they've subbed him in and out a couple times in regards to being the Education Minister, especially after the long-standing Education Minister Peter Bjornson from Gimli has—had resigned. And so they needed somebody to put back into place, so they put—they decided to put the member from—or the current Education Minister back into that role.

We know that we believe, on this side of the House, that education is critical to finding success, but yet this government has shown minimal effort and action in addressing issues that our teachers continually have, Mr. Speaker. I've had the pleasure of this coming—I guess, this coming May will be my 22nd year, starting as a teacher in this great province of ours, and I've seen firsthand the challenges that this current government has imposed on teachers. And I know that the minister, he believes his own

Kool-Aid, continues to drink his own Kool-Aid and continues to see that the various—that the class-size initiative is the only initiative to help—is to help teachers. But we all know that, on this side of the House, and many teachers across this province knows that it's not all about the numbers, and there's not actually a set stat or research that goes to that.

It does have a lot to do with composition, and I know that, even at committee, on the K-to-3 class size, on the bill, that the various presenters from the community and also from some associations have come and spoke to that bill, and they mentioned on how composition in—actually has a lot to do with alleviating some of the pressures that are put onto teachers today.

Now, since the minister decided to make it a little more partisan, and instead of just, you know, moving forward and passing the bill, I figured I would take this time to point out a couple things that this government has actually failed on in regards to education, Mr. Speaker.

We know that this government has put a lot of money into education, which, on that note, Mr. Speaker, is not the bad part; that's a good thing. But, when we are talking about government funds or—sorry—hard-working Manitoban taxpayers' money, we do expect that there should be some results as well, and we've seen, under this minister's control and his former colleagues, that we have gone from one of the leaders in the country, in regards to our education results, in numeracy and literacy and science, to dead last.

And so you would think that when we are spending the type of dollars that we are—I mean, we are the second highest spending province on education within the country, and yet we are sitting last in results. And the only thing that we can attribute that to, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that since we have dropped significantly in the results, is that it's got to be the current NDP government. It has to be their leadership.

And, you know, I know members on the other side are thinking, well, you know, that can't possibly be, but yet we take a look at some of the more recent evidence-based things that we're looking at—reports, and we're looking at the Auditor General's report, which just came out in January, 2016. It says improving educational outcomes for kindergarten to grade 12 for Aboriginal students.

Well, one of the points that are mentioned by the Auditor General is the fact that he talks about the lack of leadership, the lack of leadership in regards to implementing this action plan. We know that right here, on page 1 of the Auditor General's report, it says, in regards to the action plan to try to improve education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people, the Auditor General himself says, and I quote: We found that the department needed to provide more leadership in guiding and co-ordinating the efforts of its partner departments and the school divisions in achieving action-plan goals.

Mr. Speaker, that's one more piece of evidence, again, at the eleventh hour, before the 2016 election coming up on April 19th, that this minister and his colleagues and the member from St. Boniface are having a difficult time portraying or relaying some of their messages on some of the things that they'd like to get done in regards to—on the Aboriginal education file.

We've also seen that the amount of students, the amount of Aboriginal students that have graduated from high school, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General has reported 55 per cent of Aboriginal students are graduating from high school, which is actually 2 per cent lower than what was reported in 2010. We found—or I have found, as well, working within the school system, that the government, this NDP government, is asking educators within the school system certain things in order to keep data and statistics within their schools, and yet they seem to be going into some sort of mist into thin air because it takes an Auditor General's report to bring out some of these stats, and I don't quite understand why—and I mean, coming into this position, I am finding out why these things have been happening, is because this government seems to like to hide certain information from hard-working Manitobans.

We know that by having our teachers within Manitoba, we know that if it is up to them, we can actually rejuvenate the education system with some proven leadership, and we are looking for that change, as I've said earlier, coming up in April, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, we scored less on test scores with PISA and PCAP, but it just doesn't stop there. In the last few years we've also scored really low, actually second last in PCAP, which is also a testing model which is national and international where, basically, it's students who have university degrees from this province that are not performing

very well, Mr. Speaker. And, again, it all comes down to that NDP leadership and the inability to focus on what really matters to Manitobans.

We know that we've talked about other failures, and it's not just the test results, Mr. Speaker, because it can't just be that. We know that the tests that are offered, the PISA test, is just a tool, and just like everybody else in Canada and internationally, they write this particular test, and it just basically puts us up against everybody else. It's just a tool.

So, if we don't have the proper foundation built for our young people, our students, then they really don't have that chance to succeed and to do even better on these tests as the years come on.

* (16:50)

I know that I've asked the Minister of Education a few times if he could give me examples of these tests because he—or of these questions that are offered on these tests, and I know that the minister—I don't think that he himself has really done his homework and checked to see what exactly some of these stats show. And I mean, when it does tell us that a certain percentage of our students are scoring at a level 2 or—you know, in his mind, he thinks that what that means is that they're all meeting grade levels, Mr. Speaker. And, in fact, what that means, and I'll just talk about the numeracy side of it, is that a certain percentage of our students can actually add three groups of three-digit numbers with a calculator and get the right answer.

Unfortunately, that is not necessarily a good way to be showing how great our students actually can be and are in this province. And I know that we have the potential here in this great province of ours because I've worked, as I've said, it's coming up to 22 years, as an educator in this province. And I have seen many, many, many colleagues that have gone on to be administrators, they've worked for the department, they've gone on and worked for—in education all across this country as well.

I just have to point out, since again, as the minister had mentioned, we're at the eleventh hour. So I do want to put a couple other things on the record, Mr. Speaker. In regards to Bill 17, which is, you know, the legislation for The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act, there was also another piece of legislation that was applauded by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and for teachers as well, and I actually thought personally that it was going to again

be a piece of legislation that we on this side of the House would support.

Now in December—December 3rd to be exact, there was a news release where the Province introduces proposed legislation that would give Manitoba Teachers' Society greater control over its governance and operations. And it says additional proposed amendments would ensure equal credit for teachers on maternity—parental leave, and this is—this was by the Education Minister himself. Well, this was something—and since we're talking about Bill 17, The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act, we know that he was supposed to bring this legislation forward, and you know, it's not him that I feel sorry for, it's those teachers that he continually—continuously goes and breaks his promise as well as the government side's promises, Mr. Speaker, to not only teachers, but to hardworking Manitobans all across.

So here's a quote from a hardworking teacher from the Louis Riel School Division that was used in their press release, Mr. Speaker. She says—and this is talking about the amendments which would ensure equal credit for teachers on maternity—she says, when I had my two sons early in my career, it was stressful enough to return to work and think about being away from my babies and finding daycare, having to worry about credit for service and when I was going to get my next salary increment just added to that stress. This proposed change would eliminate the stress and put teachers who choose to have children on equal footing with their colleagues in the rest of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to me, that was this government's news release. And so here we are, eleventh hour, we're only, you know, a few weeks 'til the election. And we're waiting for this legislation to come forward, and maybe it's going to come, I mean, who knows. You know, we know that the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) have many, many priorities, and I think we've heard something like, you know, 51 to 100 hard-core priorities of this government.

And so, who knows, maybe in the next few days, maybe we will see that legislation come forward for the equal credit for teachers on maternity. But I think that the job of this minister is, basically, to try to promise things on one hand, make a huge wish list, and then not fulfill them. That's what we're seeing from this government, that's what we're seeing from this minister, Mr. Speaker.

The last election, I mean, 2011 election, they went to every door in Manitoba and they promised not to raise the PST. So what ended up happening that very next spring, which is only a few months, they ended up broadening the PST on various goods and services, on teachers' goods and services, on hard-working Manitobans' goods and services; things that we, as Manitobans, cannot and should not do without. And that could be the various insurances—home insurances, automobile insurances.

It's just telling, Mr. Speaker, and the minister himself stood up today, again, and everything—anything that I'm putting on to Hansard today, anybody can go ahead and check out to do some fact-checking and see if it's accurate. It absolutely is, and everybody has that opportunity.

Some of the things that the minister goes about doing, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely deplorable, and I can't understand that, as the minister for education, how he can stand up in front of people within his constituency, within Manitoba, wearing the title of Minister of Education and Advanced Learning, so somebody who is in charge of all of our educational needs, from K to career, and go ahead and threaten those teachers that we're actually passing this bill on, today. The threatening and the fearmongering has to stop, and I think what this minister should do is take some time to reflect over the next few weeks, and to, maybe, retract some of those things that he's put out into the public because it is fearmongering and it's—and he has to stop the partisan politics.

I stand on the side—we stand on the side of teachers, here. Bill 17 is a step in the right direction moving forward. I applaud the Manitoba Teachers' Society for encouraging this government to start working for the teachers and to try to take some of that authority out of this minister's hand, Mr. Speaker. But I think that they should have done this a little bit earlier.

So, with that, thank you for allowing me to put a few words on the record and we look forward to seeing Bill 17, the Manitoba Teachers' Society Act, passed today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I'm glad to see that this bill has been called for third reading. We're certainly willing to debate other bills, as mentioned earlier on, but this is an important piece of legislation.

I believe—I hear the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) wants some additional time. I don't know how much time—more time we can give him. We gave him six additional months, Mr. Speaker. Six more months. The election was supposed to be in October, and that six months wasn't enough. He still wants more time. We'd be going to our constitutional limit, I suspect, if we gave him any more time.

But, I guess, you know, there's—that's always the—when you're in trouble and when you're on your last days, and you're always looking for more time. And maybe that is the case with the NDP and the Government House Leader, as well.

But we are glad to fulfill our commitment to see this bill not only come to third reading, but pass third reading as it will this afternoon. We're glad for that

and we hope that, in the future, the bill will operate in the way that we expect it should, and that it will benefit the Manitoba Teachers' Society and, hopefully, the education system as a whole.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter? Seeing none, the House is ready for the question.

The question before the House is the concurrence and third reading of Bill 17, the Manitoba Teachers' Society Act.

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

The hour being 5 pm, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 pm on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 10, 2016

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