

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 18, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 224—The Family Law Reform Act
(Putting Children First)**

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I move, seconded by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that Bill 224, The Family Law Reform Act (Putting Children First); Loi sur la réforme du droit de la famille (mesures pour le mieux-être des enfants), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill will allow Manitoba law to catch up to the realities of modern families. The bill is intended to allow family law disputes to be determined more simply, faster and at less expense. Judges will ensure that family law cases are conducted with as little delay and formality as possible and in a way that minimizes conflict and protects children and parties from domestic violence.

The bill will create new provisions dealing with the proposed relocation of children, based on advice from lawyers and experts in child development.

The bill will recognize the choice of many Manitoba parents to use assisted reproduction and surrogacy and end the practice of same-sex couples having to go through the legal step of putting their baby up for adoption just to be recognized as parents.

The rights of other important people in children's lives, including grandparents, to apply for guardianship of and access to a child, is specified in this bill.

These and other important changes represent a modernization of family law, and I encourage all members to support this bill.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Polish Immigration to Manitoba

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize this Manitoba milestone of the 200th year of Polish immigration to Manitoba.

In June 1817, Lord Selkirk reached The Forks with a group of disbanded soldiers from the de Meuron regiment. This expedition to Fort Douglas on the Red River included 10 Polish soldiers, and it was Lord Selkirk's hope to establish a settlement along the banks of the Red River.

The second wave of Polish immigration started around 1895 along with a mass immigration from continental Europe. This lasted until the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and is commonly known as the pioneer era that helped to settle our vast Canadian prairies with homesteads and hard work.

The third wave was the post-World War II period of 1945, where hundreds of Polish soldiers from the second Polish corps, along with civilian population, were welcomed to Manitoba. These immigrants had more professional, technical qualifications and became prominent in business, industry, health and education.

The fourth and most recent wave is what is known as the Solidarity wave of the 1980s. Motivated by the deep economic and political crisis in Poland, thousands fled that country after the imposition of martial law. Many of them found their way to Manitoba.

Today, we focus on the story of those first Polish pioneers who blazed the trail for thousands of Poles across four waves of immigration, each contributing to a stronger Canada. The success of these first Poles in Canada is a testament to the opportunities and possibilities that our great country presents.

Their children are true Canadians, and today, in Manitoba, there are over 85,000 Canadians of Polish descent who are proud of the part their families played in building this wonderful country of ours.

They have been instrumental in the building of a diverse, inclusive and welcoming Manitoba.

Polish people have remembered their traditions, language and culture while giving back to Canada, the land they have made their home. In Manitoba, Polish heritage has evolved to become a part of our multicultural identity. Thanks to events such as Folklorama, Polish Fest and cultural days—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Schuler: I ask for leave to finish my statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to conclude his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Schuler: Polish people have remembered their traditions, language and culture while giving back to Canada, the land they have made their home in. In Manitoba, Polish heritage has evolved to become a part of our multicultural identity. Thanks to events such as Folklorama, Polish Fest and cultural days, this rich Polish history continues to be shared with all Manitobans.

Please join me in commemorating the 200th anniversary of Polish immigration to Manitoba.

May God continue to bless all our Polish-Canadians living here in Manitoba.

Thank you and dziękuję *[thank you]*.

Sister Lesley Sacouman

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, today I recognize a phenomenal lady who has helped shape the Logan constituency. Through her dedication to Winnipeg's young people and her passion to help others, she has given hundreds of children and family a place to call home.

Sister Lesley Sacouman has been a positive influence in the lives of many people. In 1976, she co-founded Rossbrook House as a safe home away from home for youth. Today, Rossbrook House has grown and operates a drop-in centre, as well as programs for children and youth. Each year, up to 1,500 participants get to enjoy these programs, including cooking classes, sports and recreational outings.

In 2004, Sister Lesley opened Holy Names House of Peace, a downtown living space for immigrant and refugee women in transition. As the

current executive director, she lives and works with people of all walks of life.

Sister Lesley has received many well-deserved honours for her years of good work. Just a few years ago, she—a few weeks ago, she won the University of Manitoba Distinguished Alumni Award for community service, which honours U of M graduates who are outstanding in their professional and personal lives.

Sister Lesley, your love, kindness and compassion have—has positively touched and made a huge difference in many lives.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in thanking Sister Lesley for all her passion and dedication to bettering the lives of those around her.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, I am requesting leave for the names of the House of Peace community members here today to be added to Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Imee Gutierrez, Amiira Barre

Inspire Community Outreach Inc.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Manitoba has many social programs and supports for children, youth and families dealing with challenges like mental illness or a diagnosis of autism. But sometimes these programs can be difficult to access in a timely manner or difficult to navigate for families who are already under significant stress.

That's why three and a half years ago, Angela Taylor founded Inspire Community Outreach Inc. Inspire is an incorporated, non-profit social services agency working with youth in Manitoba. Inspire helps Manitoba families navigate our social services system and provides supports and programming to children and families. They help people find their passion and they create connections that will last a lifetime. It's an organization that's agile, efficient and effective.

And one of their most well-known initiatives is the annual Winnipeg March for Mental Health, held this year in beautiful St. Vital Park. I recently attended the march, together with the honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage and over

1,000 other people who were also in attendance, many of whom were wearing purple, as I am today. This event is designed to raise awareness and lower the stigma that surrounds mental illness and differences. Several speakers there shared their stories and struggles with mental health. We also took the opportunity to enjoy musical and cultural performances, including an amazing hoop dance by the talented Shanley Spence.

I first met Angela just under two years ago, and her passion, enthusiasm, creativity and flat out hard work impressed me, and it's an inspiration to her board, staff and volunteers, and I believe it serves to inspire all Manitobans.

* (13:40)

So please join me in congratulating Inspire Community Outreach on their excellent work in their community. Founder Angela Taylor and several of her team members have joined us in the gallery today.

Manito Ahbee Festival

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): We are lucky to live in a province that celebrates its art, culture and music with so many different festivals and events. One of my favorites is the Manito Ahbee Festival here in Winnipeg, which began yesterday and goes all weekend.

Manito Ahbee is an Ojibwe word that means where the Creator sits, and the sacred site in western Whiteshell is recognized and honoured by many indigenous peoples across North America as a sacred place for all people. The name of our beautiful province is derived from this sacred site.

Many of our elders can remember a time when the Government of Canada outlawed traditional indigenous ceremonies, and until 1951, gatherings such as that was illegal for my people. Years of assimilation policies and institutions, including residential schools, reduced and restricted the ceremonial life of First Nations.

This dark history is why Manito Ahbee is so important today. Our children should be proud and celebrate their heritage and share it with many Manitobans. Indigenous and non-indigenous people can come together and celebrate this tradition and promote the enduring culture and people.

If you want to go see the beauty of our culture and make meaningful connections, please go to this event. I encourage all members of this House,

their families and friends to join and celebrate indigenous culture in Manito Ahbee—at the Manito—in Manitoba at the Manito Ahbee Festival this weekend. I know I can't wait to feel Mother Earth's heartbeat reverberate within myself to help me re-energize.

And I would like to thank all of the volunteers and organizers who work hard to share in this amazing festival with us, and the artists, musicians and dancers who share their wonderful gifts.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Raymond Ngarbouri

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): On Tuesday, April 25th, the 34th Annual Volunteer Awards took place at the RBC Convention Centre. At this event, many individuals from across our province were nominated for a number of different awards. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that one of my constituents, Mr. Raymond Ngarbouri, received one of the prestigious Premier's Volunteer Service Awards. This was in recognition of his tireless efforts to support the social integration of newcomers, including founding and co-ordinating Rainbow Community Gardens and sitting on several community boards.

Raymond started the Rainbow Community Garden in June of 2008, with 16 families from seven different nationalities, at the University of Manitoba. Rainbow gardeners are generally from many different countries and are newcomers to Canada. Many of the gardeners come from farming communities or worked in the agriculture industry prior to coming to Canada, and this project allows them to utilize their skills and gain a sense of community in their new surroundings. Raymond spends most of his time in spring and summer teaching new immigrants, refugee families and single mothers how to plant and take care of vegetables in Winnipeg's short growing season.

In 2016, the project involved 288 families of at least four members from 26 different nationalities growing tropical vegetables and crops on nine sites across the city of Winnipeg and across rural Manitoba. In addition to that, other added benefits of the program include exercise, friendship, gaining access to healthy produce that may be unavailable in Canadian supermarkets or may just be too expensive.

I would like to personally thank Raymond for the contributions he has made to our province. His

initiatives have surely increased the happiness and well-being of many people in our community.

Thank you, Raymond, who is in the gallery.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte).

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Madam Speaker, I'd like to request leave for the names of the guests also in attendance with Raymond this afternoon to be entered into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the names of the guests in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Jordan Bighorn; Parsu Dahal; Cathy D'Andrea; Margaret Follett; Jennifer Hanel; Jo Meyer; Bill Millar; Mary Millar; Ali Millar; Philibert Ntuyemukaga; Raymond Ngarbou; Maggie Yebo

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: And we do have a number of other guests here in the gallery today.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today the 27 tour guides who are currently training and will be with us until Labour Day: Claire Normandeau; Ruth Ormiston; Deanna Smith; and Cleo Syverson, and they are accompanied by the manager of the Visitor Tour Program, Vanessa Gregg.

And also in the gallery today with us we have Kelsy Edgerton, ceremonial and security assistant, Visitor, Ceremonial and Security Services, from the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you here to the Manitoba Legislature today.

And also seated in the public gallery from University College of the North nine law enforcement students under the direction of M.J. McDonald, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here to the Legislature today, as well.

Madam Speaker: Oral Questions—Oh, the honourable member for Radisson?

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

If I may beg your indulgence, is it possible for me also to include the names of all the members of Inspire Community Outreach who came to the Legislature today in the Hansard?

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Christine Brouzes, Melissa Ray, Angela Taylor and Lisa van den Hoven.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Advertising During By-Election

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Campaign

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): The double-standard action from the Premier is clearly at work. He moves his now-former chief political communicator to sell Manitobans on cuts to emergency rooms. Then he orders half-a-million-dollar propaganda campaign to try and convince Manitobans that closing ERs is a good idea, and the campaign is running during a provincial by-election in Point Douglas in print, radio, social media, even TV spots during playoffs.

The Premier got caught and has now cancelled some of the ads.

We ask the Premier: Why did he break the law?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I've just been accused of breaking the law, Madam Speaker, I believe by normal course that is occasionally taken as unparliamentary. I could be wrong on that, but I will tell the member that I do take very, very seriously the laws of our province and will endeavour in all times to obey them, and I would say, especially, in respect of The Elections Act of our Province. Section 92 of The Elections Act is one which every department of our government, every agency, every agency that receives government funding was given clear instructions on obeying in advance, of course, of the called by-election.

So, naturally I take it very seriously when the members make allegations in respect of these things and I take it with no small degree of disappointment when there are infractions that occur, because I have seen those happen in the past and I didn't like them then and I don't like them now.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier knew when the by-election will be held, so did the Health Minister,

who tipped the public off on Thursday that the by-election call was imminent. The Premier moved his now-former chief political communicator to sell the public on the misguided plan.

The Premier wants the public to believe that running half a million ads on TV, radio and on social media into this week was just an error, but everyone knew the by-election was coming soon.

In the Premier's words it would be in the government's best interest to make sure they're not abusing the election rules before, rather than find out—they did find out after.

Does he agree with his own words, yes or no?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the question, Madam Speaker, and as I've said previously, take very seriously the rules around these types of issues around by-elections, around elections. I want to assure the member that these rules are respected and I want to assure her and her colleagues and everyone in this Chamber that we will do everything we can to make sure they are.

*(13:50)

I would also remind her that there were absolutely no ministers touring new birthing centres in advance of the election. There was no announcement concerning repairs at investors field, neither was there any announcement about an untendered purchase of a shiny, new, red helicopter, Madam Speaker. None of these things happened, none of these things happened. None of these things will happen in this government. All of these things did happen under the previous government.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Part 13 of The Election Financing Act doesn't just disallow advertising, but publications as well. Yet, the WRHA still has its half-a-million-dollar healing our health-care system campaign published on its website. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: The publication is promotional and makes campaign promises around our health-care system in the middle of a by-election.

Will the Premier direct the WRHA to pull down this publication from the website and will he apologize to this House for breaking the law?

Mr. Pallister: Of course, as I've said earlier and will say again, we take these accusations very seriously and want to do our very best to demonstrate our sincerity in respecting the rules as they should be respected.

But I would remind the members opposite that after four years of raiding the infrastructure budget, in the few months before the last election they launched a \$2-million advertising campaign, put up steady growth signs all over the province and ran parades and ribbon cutting ceremonies to pretend that they were actually caring about infrastructure when they were actually engaging in the most ancient form of vote buying, Madam Speaker.

They're now under investigation for that practice. They're under investigation for offering to buy votes in northern communities where people are desperate to find jobs and opportunity.

And so, Madam Speaker, we will take steps to make sure that we toughen this type of legislation and that these types of behaviours are not demonstrated again in the future.

Post-Secondary Institutions Management Reduction Targets

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): The government's latest directive to cut 15 per cent in management from post-secondaries is going to disrupt programming. Management at a university is not run like a business. Many university administrators themselves deliver programming; some of them even teach—sounds like front-line services to me.

So how will this Premier guarantee that there won't be any disruption to the delivery of front-line education services at post-secondary institutions in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I appreciate the question from the member.

He remarks that universities are not run like businesses. I'm not sure if he fully understands the severity of the situation we face as a province, but there are many business principles we could learn from. One of those is of giving maximum value to the client or customer; another is to get maximum value out of every dollar invested. These are fundamental principles that are at play in successful businesses, Madam Speaker, that should be at play in successful government operations as well and we'll make sure that they are.

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

Mr. Kinew: One of the managers at University of Manitoba who recently lost their job was the person who came up with the gold standard for post secondary sexual misconduct policies, right? So, that work led to the eventual passage of a law that this government is very proud and deserves to be commended on bringing in. But it just serves to highlight how an arbitrary, across-the-board 15 per cent management cut directive can have a real impact on some of the notable goods that are carried out at post-secondaries in our province.

So will the Premier commit to backing off of this arbitrary 15 per cent target and, instead, commit to operating more strategically and in collaboration with post-secondaries?

Mr. Pallister: The member uses the word strategy—or strategically, the root word strategy—and strategy requires the implementation of sustainable management practices. What was the strategy in doubling the provincial debt over the last few years? What was the strategy put into play by the previous administration in putting us into a billion-dollar deficit position? What was the strategy there and how would that have strengthened our ability as a province to offer, long term, the services that our high school graduates will need going forward? No strategy at all, Madam Speaker, out-of-control spending, spending that the members opposite promised to get under control and failed to, spending that jeopardizes the future of our province's ability to offers services to our people who need those services.

Madam Speaker, after a decade of debt we will fix the finances in this province. We will get it right.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, strategy means you make smart decisions; you don't just do arbitrary, across-the-board cuts with a 15 per cent predetermined target.

Of additional concern is the pattern that we're seeing increasingly from this government where they employ these arbitrary, across-the-board 15 per cuts not just inside government departments, but now, also, at arm's-length agencies, and then they roll them out not in collaboration or consultation with these organizations, but rather through the media and they just sort of drop that and walk away.

We've seen the public-sector-wide cuts expand, and so we're asking: Will the Premier tell us today, additionally, if this is all that we can expect or will there be more? Will they implement a similar 15 per cent directive to school boards in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Easier to speak about making smart decisions than to actually make them, Madam Speaker.

Was it a smart decision to double the debt of the province? Was it a smart decision to raise taxes more than any other jurisdiction in Canada? Was it a smart decision to make our wait times longer than everyone else in Canada? Was it a smart decision to give our ambulance fees the highest level of all Canadian provinces? Was it the smartest thing to have the longest wait times for child care in the country? Was it the smartest thing to put more children into state custody and take them away from their homes and their communities and their families than any other jurisdiction in Canada?

Madam Speaker, the member speaks about smart decisions. His previous—his colleagues, when they had the chance in government to make those decisions, did not make them. They failed to make them and now we must make those smart decisions and will.

Public Sector Wage Freeze Request to Withdraw Bill 28

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, dozens of Manitobans representing tens of thousands of front-line workers came to the Legislature last week to voice their opposition to Bill 28. Many of them noted the Premier (Mr. Pallister) kept his 20 per cent pay raise while introducing heavy-handed legislation that will hit over 100,000 workers in the pocketbook.

The Premier's taking away the right of workers to bargain and he's trying to force over 100,000 front-line workers to take a pay freeze, which we know is really a pay cut when inflation's taken into account.

Will the Premier withdraw Bill 28? Will he get back to the bargaining table and negotiate with Manitoba's front-line workers?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): There goes that member again, putting false information on the record when he knows very well it was the NDP ministers who gave themselves a raise when they failed to take the penalty coming to

them under the budget—under their legislation when they failed to keep the deficit from growing larger.

What that member also knows is that this government took a principled position, refused to take a cost-of-living increase, and we were pleased to see the members of the opposition join us in that principled stance.

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

Proclamation Timeline for Bill 28

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, this bill will affect over 100,000 front-line workers in Manitoba.

If the government won't back down and listen, we know it has the ability to guarantee passage of Bill 28 in June. But we also know from experience in other jurisdictions, such as Nova Scotia, that laws like this can sit without being proclaimed into force for years, causing further disruption and further confusion for front-line workers.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) lectures us often about openness and transparency, so I'd ask him to clear this up right now. Bill 28, when passed, will not take effect until Cabinet proclaims it into force.

Does the Premier commit to proclaiming Bill 28 into force immediately after it has passed?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the member fails to acknowledge or indicate what the context is in which he's asking the question, so Madam Speaker, allow me to describe the context.

The context is that our net debt-to-GDP has gone up. The debt has doubled in the course of eight years. We are paying, right now, \$61 million more in year for debt service charges than we just were one year ago. This is an unsustainable situation.

In that situation, we have introduced legislation that we think is moderate, reasonable and balanced. Considering the circumstances, we need all hands on deck. We invite all Manitobans into making the progress that we must make on behalf of all of our citizens.

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

* (14:00)

Mr. Swan: Let me give the Minister of Finance some context.

There are over 100,000 Manitoban public servants who need to know what their paycheques will be this year and next. They want to plan for their mortgage payments. They want to plan for daycare. They want to plan for their children's skyrocketing tuition fees. They want to know whether or not the government will actually follow through with the retroactive wage freeze, and if so, when.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) show respect for working Manitobans, confirm that Bill 28 will be proclaimed into force by Cabinet immediately upon passage of third reading in this Legislature?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I thank the member for that question about affordability. And all Manitobans know that we take affordability very seriously on this side of the House.

But where was that member's concern for the affordability of Manitoba workers when they first widened the PST and then raised the PST, bringing in \$400 million of additional revenue to government, on the backs of those who could least afford it? Where was their concern for affordability then?

We stand up for Manitobans. We insist that conditions continue to be affordable for all Manitobans.

Transitional Housing for Vulnerable Women Request for Additional Supports

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Minister of Families denied funding for Red Road Lodge to add emergency shelter beds specifically for marginalized and vulnerable women. Executive Director Beverly Burkard says her staff regularly see women without a space to sleep, forced to sleep on wooden pews. Burkard says working to expand shelter supports is difficult and the Province is, and I quote, always tight-lipped, reserved and not forthcoming.

Shelters around the city are seeing an influx of—in marginalized, at-risk women who need safe spaces to sleep, eat and be connected with other supports.

Will the Minister of Families reconsider his decision to deny funding for Red Road Lodge?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Our government has taken a priority in terms of providing housing solutions for vulnerable Manitobans.

We know, under the previous NDP government, they left over \$500 million of deferred maintenance on their housing stock in and itself. We as a

government has—have created, with partnership with the federal government, the Housing First rental program that invests in people that are at risk of being homelessness or that are homelessness. We're taking a strong stand to help the most vulnerable Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: By expanding their services, Red Road Lodge was hoping and taking an active approach toward providing space for women to live for a few weeks rather than just one night. In this way, women have a safe space to leave their belongings and can focus on getting connected with health care, education and training supports.

This speaks to the greater need for safe transitional housing for marginalized, vulnerable and at—struggling women, really.

Will the minister commit to expanding transitional housing supports for vulnerable and at-risk women?

Mr. Fielding: Our government is committed to working with anyone that can meet the high standards of shelter use in Manitoba.

We know as a government we've invested over \$90 million, with the federal government, in terms of housing solutions for Manitobans. That's in strike contrast to the opposition members, when they were in government, where they deferred maintenance on over \$500 million of housing here in the province of Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: It doesn't make sense, because he just said that he's willing to work with anybody, and here was a proposal from Red Road Lodge for housing for vulnerable and struggling women, and they denied the funding. So it just doesn't make sense what the member is saying here.

So, really, the minister must work with organizations like Red Road Lodge, but also North End Women's Centre, the Native Women's Transition Centre, Salvation Army and the West Central Woman's Resource Centre to find a funding formula that works for them in respect of transitional and emergency housing for women.

Will the minister commit to meeting with these women's organizations to identify where and how many beds are needed to address this crisis?

Mr. Fielding: Again, our government is committed to working anyone that meets the high standards to create shelters in Manitoba. As mentioned, we established the Housing First rental program with 'partnership' with the federal government which we announced just in the last two weeks, that's going to provide supports to over 48 vulnerable Manitobans over the next two years.

It's an important process. It's an important investment. We've made further investments of \$90 million with the federal government. We wish the opposition would get on board and join us to providing meaningful housing solutions for Manitobans.

Interlake-Eastern Health Authority Rural Doctor Recruitment Program

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): The Interlake-Eastern RHA is reporting that there are currently—a 37 per cent vacancy rate for family physicians. That means 31 out of the 84 available spots are vacant and families are having to travel hours to get access to care.

This issue is compounded—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —when we consider that the Health Minister has recently cut a program that would incentivize doctors to work in rural Manitoba.

Is the minister concerned that by cutting this program, the shortage of doctors in the Interlake will continue to worsen?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if the member hasn't been reading the newspaper for the past 18 years, but I could give him some clippings about the shortage of doctors that are—happened when his government was in power, not just in rural Manitoba, but in Winnipeg and other places as well.

This is something that's been difficult because of what we've inherited from the previous government, but I am—I am—pleased to say that today the largest class of doctors graduated in Manitoba this morning, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: What we do know is that the Health Minister cut the doctor retention program, claiming it wasn't working, but then failed to put forward any plan at all to replace it.

Families in rural Manitoba are being forced to travel hours to the nearest doctor or even out of the country to get access to emergency treatment. Manitobans have the right to accessible, affordable health care close to home. In light of the recent—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe:—number that we see in the Interlake, will the minister reconsider his decision to cut the rural doctor program?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, the member asked for proof that the program wasn't working. The proof that the program wasn't working was his first question. His first question was, why was there such a shortage of family doctors in the Interlake and in other parts of rural Manitoba. Well, there's been a shortage for the last 17 years because the program wasn't working. So, on one hand, he asked, where's the proof that the program isn't working; on the other hand, he offers the proof in his very question.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Yesterday in the House, we discovered that there's a shortage of home-care workers in rural Manitoba, despite a rising number of clients.

According to the data, the Interlake has seen the largest increase in seniors as compared to every other region in the last five years. We need to invest now so that health—the health-care system in this—these parts of the province are able to handle these increases in seniors.

Will the minister direct additional funding to the Interlake-Eastern RHA to train, hire and retain more doctors and more home-care workers?

Mr. Goertzen: The member opposite'll be interested to know that contained within the Peachey report, the Peachey report which was commissioned by the NDP, the hand-picked consultant that the NDP selected, there is a section on doctor recruitment within that particular report, Madam Speaker.

Now, I know the member opposite has tried to run away from the Peachey report. He's tried to allege that there was a conspiracy. In fact, we had the unseemly situation on the weekend where Dr. Peachey had to phone in to the Free Press from across Canada, from the Maritimes, and say—Dr. Peachey said, I don't know what the member for Concordia is talking about.

That's now a national thing. Nobody across Canada knows what the member for Concordia is talking about, Madam Speaker.

* (14:10)

Fatal Dog Attack in Little Grand Rapids Conservation Officer Agreement

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Klassen: *Ojibwe-Cree spoken. Translation unavailable.*

There is a Manitoba community where residents are mourning a horrific death. This is deeply troubling, no matter where it occurs. I would like to thank MKO crisis-response team for coming into Little Grand and the Minister of Health for providing support contacts.

According to my federal cousins, there was an understanding with the previous government that allowed the Province to offer supports in the form of conservation officers to First Nation communities.

I ask the minister responsible if this current government has reached out to the feds to establish a similar understanding and agreement.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question and pass on my sincere condolences to the family.

I just talked to the member opposite and extended to her the services from conservation officers, just a few hours ago today, to work together with the community and try ensure that we can provide some form of service to them. I think that's very important that we work together with the community and I am very, very humbled to be able to provide that service to that community.

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

Support Services for the Community

Ms. Klassen: The crisis team from MKO was warmly received. They promised that they would return for extended periods if needed, and that was very reassuring.

The family brought her home, but to add to their burden, they had to step off the plane and wonder which dogs were responsible. I can't imagine what heartache they went through.

The community feels helpless and needs all levels to deal with the frightening situation that has been going on for some time now.

Will the minister responsible call the chief and council to see what types of resources the community needs?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I also want to extend my condolences to the family of this young woman, but to the whole community as well, and also to your family that has been directly involved in this. Unless you've been through this type of tragedy and trauma, you do not understand the long-term effects of what you're going through, and we certainly understand that.

And within our government, we are looking for partnerships with the chief and council specifically. I, first-hand, know that this issue of dogs is throughout our province, and it needs to be looked at and it needs to be done immediately. And we will work with all partners, whether it's Sustainable Development, our veterinary services, our federal partners, to work together collaboratively and ensure that these types of traumatic issues—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Klassen: A better line of communication needs to be established between the provincial government, our federal counterparts and Manitoba First Nations. The volleying of responsibility simply has to end. We all know we must build capacity, create jobs, and we all know reserves are underfunded. We should support our First Nations to build their own dog-control programs, as this type of tragedy has happened far too many times.

Will the minister responsible agree to meet with me to consider investing in such programs so that further tragedies can be prevented?

Ms. Clarke: Most certainly we will meet, whether it's this issue or any other issue. And I'm happy that, in the past year, we've met with many chiefs and councils. This is one issue that is really serious within our First Nations and indigenous communities, but there are many more and we will continue meeting with chiefs and councils, individual families, and, in fact, I've actually talked to my staff about visiting Shamattawa this summer to meet with various families on the issues that they've been dealing with that are very traumatic.

Agriculture Equipment Highway Safety Practices

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, in my constituency I see many producers are now well into seeding. I'm sure this will be the beginning of a great crop year and we all know the importance of agriculture to Manitoba's economy.

My producers are busy in the fields. We will see equipment travelling down Manitoba roads and highways at slower speeds.

Can the Minister of Agriculture please share with the House, today, how everyone can drive safely at this time of year?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): I thank my colleague for the question.

First off, I'd like to wish everyone a great long weekend. Travel safe; one accident is one too many.

As you all are aware, agriculture equipment operators must have reflective lights, reflectors and lighting to ensure the safety of the farm families and, of course, the motorists that are on the road. So please slow down when you're approaching farm equipment, often it's going at a slow rate, so reduce your speeds and pass with safety.

Hydro Rate Increase Financial Forecast

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Since the last election, the government has made a point of demeaning and degrading and otherwise damaging the reputation of Manitoba Hydro, and yet recently Manitoba Hydro released its integrated financial forecast which clearly shows that debt-to-equity ratios of the corporation are improving at the current rate levels.

So can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) please explain to the House why he allows his Crown Services

Minister to call Manitoba Hydro bankrupt when its financial position is improving?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Well, Madam Speaker, what we have made very clear to Manitobans is that Manitoba ratepayers are going to face an NDP bipole-Keeyask levy, and this levy, which will be going in front of the Public Utilities Board and will be forthcoming certainly within the next year—we understand also that the Keeyask dam, which was started under the previous NDP, did not go to the Public Utilities Board until it was under way by \$2 billion. Now, it is over budget by \$2.2 billion. That is a disrespect.

Madam Speaker: The—[*interjection*] Order.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Allum: You know, what the minister's not saying is that by frontloading and jacking up rates by 8 per cent per year, the government's going to see a huge increase in net revenue. In fact—in fact—by the fiscal year 2020 the summary deficit will improve by a whopping \$510 million.

So will the minister just admit that his rate increases are designed, not to promote Manitoba Hydro, but to balance the budget on the backs of Manitobans? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, Manitobans—Manitoba ratepayers are going to face an NDP bipole-Keeyask levy. This is something that came under the NDP. In fact, under the NDP they disrespected the Public Utilities Board and the process so much that they not just didn't allow the PUB to see what the bipole line was going to cost, they forbid the bipole line to go in front of the Public Utilities Board.

Our government's going to do something different. We're going to respect the process, we're going to respect the Public Utilities Board and we're going to respect ratepayers and send the rate-increase request to the Public Utilities Board for a complete and open and transparent hearing.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, the minister has been a member of this House for years. Rates go to PUB every single year.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, that by rapidly increasing rates, what this government is afraid to admit is that their summary position will improve by a whopping \$510 million on an election year.

So what we really want to know, Madam Speaker, is is the minister jacking up hydro rates in order for—to protect his promise—[*interjection*] You're right, it doesn't always come out perfectly every time.

* (14:20)

But is he jacking up rates so that he can roll back the PST? Is that's what going on here?

Mr. Schuler: Well, the member did get one thing right in that it doesn't always come out right. In fact, it was this member and his government who said, and I would quote, the bipole hydro line will pay for itself.

That was their argument for building the bipole line where it's currently going. In fact, they went so far as to say it would be cheaper than free, and today, bipole is sitting at \$4 billion. We called every—and every single year that bipole go in front of the Public Utilities Board, and they wouldn't listen, and they should have.

Museum Funding Budget Inquiry

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Tough acts to follow.

I'd like to pose a question on behalf of the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton). Staff at the new Icelandic heritage museum are very concerned because of the budget cuts of \$3.6 million from the annual provincial spending for arts, culture and sports programs. Cultural organizations, like museums, get \$700,000 less in grants, but they don't know the specifics yet.

So will the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, tell the new Icelandic heritage museum what their total funding will be, today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I'm very proud that our government invested \$68 million in targeted investments to grow the culture economy. We're also launching the first culture review in 25 years so that we can really grow this robust economy.

But further to the member's question about would I write a letter and make an announcement on

public funding, no, I will not do that today because we are in a blackout period and I respect the rules.

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

Mr. Lindsey: I'd like to ask a question on behalf of the members for Gimli (Mr. Wharton), Agassiz (Ms. Clarke), Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), Brandon, St. James (Mr. Johnston), St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger)—not quite right, but each of these honourable members has a signature museum in their constituency that has special significance for the province. Staff at these museums are so concerned about funding that they're making a special submission asking the minister for some certainty.

Will the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage provide them with the information they're asking for, today?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for bringing up the signature museums, which we are very proud of in this province of Manitoba. And just last August I had the honour of travelling to Morden to open up another signature museum—or to grant the signature museum to the facility out there that—the fossil museum.

And we're very proud of our signature museums in the province of Manitoba. My department has worked very diligently to communicate with all of our funding partners prior to the blackout, and we will resume those communications at the end of the blackout.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Despite the fact that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage is still polling cultural organizations, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has cut funding before the minister can even complete a policy paper on art sector needs.

Can the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage assure the House that her consultations, polling and surveys are worthwhile, and that it's not just a cover for what the Premier has already decided to do?

Ms. Squires: I can assure the members opposite that our government does think consultation is very worthwhile in all circumstances.

Unlike members opposite, we are interested in hearing from Manitobans on these various issues. And I would just also like to take the opportunity to say that, because of the election blackout period, I've extended the deadline for my culture review until the end of July so that I can have an opportunity to hear from all Manitobans and reach out to some of the communities that may—I may not be able to talk to during the blackout period.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Housing First Rental Program Pilot Project for Brandon Area

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Just on the behalf of the member of Gimli, I'd certainly like to invite the member from Thompson to come to Gimli to the Icelandic Festival in August. Maybe you'll learn something.

My question, though, Madam Speaker, is, on a serious note—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Isleifson: —no one prepares to become homeless. Unfortunately, a person's situation can change at any time. Finding suitable housing can often be a first step for many people to stabilize their lives, feel safe and become part of a community.

My question to the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) is: Could you please inform the House of the new, important two-year pilot program that—and how that will help the people who are at risk of being homeless in Brandon?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): It was a true pleasure being out in Brandon. I know the members for Brandon East and West are doing a fantastic job and part of the announcements *[inaudible]*

Our government is extremely proud to partner with the federal government on the Housing First rental supplement program that provides, as mentioned, about \$250 per month for rental subsidy for 48 vulnerable families and individuals in the Brandon area who are homeless or a risk of being homeless, the prevention of it. In total, more than \$307,000 will be invested in this initiative over the next two years. Again, initiative—working with the federal government, the provincial government, the community and organizations like the Manitoba Metis Federation as a partner. We look forward to further partnerships in terms of—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize how important it is to provide young people with quality learning spaces to succeed in school. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

Mr. Swan: (2) Sport, recreation and the spaces to engage in them are critical to the health and welfare of all students.

(3) All forms of educational infrastructure, including gymnasiums and recreation centres in general, represent an incredible value-for-money investment, whereby the return is improved physical and psychological health and wellness.

(4) Kelvin High School is one of the largest high schools in the province, with over 1,200 students.

(5) Kelvin High School spent several years raising almost \$1.2 million towards the construction of a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

(6) Some Kelvin students currently have to pay to use outside facilities to obtain their mandatory physical education credit.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for the Kelvin gym and wellness centre for political reasons, despite the extensive community support, fund-raising and engagement.

(8) It is wasteful and disrespectful to the dedicated efforts of students, staff and the community in general to simply lay their goals aside without consultation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the need for excellent recreation facilities in all Manitoba schools, to reverse this regressive cut and to provide Kelvin High School with the funding necessary to complete a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

And, Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

* (14:30)

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Manitoba a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

The taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision for taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what have been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect those passengers, including a stringent complainant–complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in the–in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers all–at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city, and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of

taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city, and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many, many Manitobans. Thank you.

Seven Oaks General Hospital Emergency Room

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced the closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Seven Oaks General Hospital.

(2) The closures come on the heels of the closing of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in north Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services and will result in them having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface Hospital's emergency room or Health Sciences Centre's emergency room for emergency care.

* (14:40)

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors in—who live in north Winnipeg and visit the emergency room frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or are low income.

(5) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in north Winnipeg regarding the closing of their emergency room or to consult with health officials and health-care workers at Seven Oaks to discuss how this closure could—or would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Seven Oaks General Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in north Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

This petition was signed by Sanjit Kaur Sidhu, Chernjeet, Jaspinder Kau and many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): I'm seeking to—I'm seeking leave to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Health, Seniors and Active Living in the Chamber; Finance until 4 p.m., then Agriculture in room 255; and Sustainable Development in room 254.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Health, Seniors and Active Living in the Chamber; Finance until 4 p.m., then Agriculture in room 255; and Sustainable Development in room 254? Is that agreed?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Micklefield: I am seeking leave to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Health, Seniors and Active Living in the Chamber; Finance until 4 p.m., then Agriculture in room 255; and Families in room 254.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Health, Seniors and Active Living in the Chamber; Finance until 4 p.m., then Agriculture in room 255; and Families in room 254? Is that agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I'm seeking leave to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Health, Seniors and Active Living in the Chamber; Finance until 4 p.m., then Agriculture in room 255; and Sport, Culture and Heritage in room 254.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Health, Seniors and Active Living in the Chamber; Finance until 4 p.m., then Agriculture in room 255; and Sport, Culture and Heritage in room 254? Is that agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I'm seeking leave, for today only, for the Committee of Supply to meet in one section in room 255 to consider the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living while the House considers legislation.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the Committee of Supply to meet in one section in room 255 to consider the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living while the House considers legislation? Is that agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Micklefield: This afternoon we will be resuming debate on second reading of Bill 33, The

Minimum Wage Indexation Act; third reading of Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act; third reading of Bill 15, The Department of Justice Amendment Act; and third reading of Bill 32, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been indicated that this afternoon we will deal with bills starting with Bill 33 and then moving into bills 4, 15 and 32.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 33—The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended)

Madam Speaker: Bill 33, second reading, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act, Employment Standards Code amendment, resuming debate, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon, who has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Well, where was I when I left off the other day? Oh, yes, I remember now. I remember now; it's all coming back to me. Bill 33 is bad because 15 cents is an insult to hard-working Manitobans. It was an insult the last time I stood and spoke on this bill; it's still an insult today. Fifteen cents leaves people worse off than they were because it hasn't kept up with the year that this government sat on its hands and refused to even acknowledge that people working minimum wage deserved a raise.

They waited and waited and waited, and then they finally bring in a piece of legislation that says, well, sorry, hard-working Manitobans, but you're really not worth that much to us. Three nickels—three nickels—15 cents. You know, what can you buy for 15 cents? I don't even think you can buy a bag of mixed up candies anymore for 15 cents.

You know, there's all kinds of beaking-off going on here. Maybe if the members opposite paid attention maybe they'd learn something. Maybe they'd learn something about compassion—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. There is a lot of noise and it is difficult for me as the Speaker to hear the debate, and it is very important that I do hear the debate so I can ensure that there are all the rules being followed, so I would encourage members to please keep it down and allow the member to continue with his debate.

Mr. Lindsey: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and it is important that debate—that people listen to what's being said, because the whole point of having a

debate is to try and sway opinion, to try and convince people who are of a different opinion why their opinion is not correct. That's the point of a debate. The point of a debate isn't just to stand up here and talk for no particular reason, although sometimes it certainly appears that way in this House.

But, in this case, Madam Speaker, I hope the members opposite are listening, and listening not just to me, because this bill isn't about me. This bill is about hard-working Manitobans, hard-working Manitobans that have been asking for a raise in the minimum wage since this government got elected. It's falling on deaf ears. This government is not listening to those Manitobans who want to work, who want to be able to feed their families, who want to be raised up out of poverty.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The minister talked about this being a poverty wage, and he's absolutely correct. That's what this minimum wage is with this meagre, miserly 15-cent increase that this government is talking about. It will hold people in poverty. It won't lift them up.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about a hand up, not a handout. This is not a hand up. This is a foot holding you down. It's stopping you from getting ahead. A lot of minimum wage workers are already having to work a couple of jobs trying to make ends meet.

This government talks about their desire to unnecessarily raise hydro rates 7.9 per cent, but 7.9 per cent is too much for a minimum wage to go up. How is that possible, even in their warped logic that they should put those kind of bills up? Utilities need to go up, but the wage needs to stay down. It creates, again, more of a two-tier system where there's those that have and those that never will. And that's really the heart of the ideology of this government is to look after the people at the top end and to make sure that the people at the bottom end can't get there.

Fifteen cents. You know, I'm sure if the Premier or any one of his ministers got told when they took the job on, well, thank you, we appreciate what you're doing, we're going to give you a 15-cent raise. Oh, no, wait, they took a 15 per cent raise. There's a difference. They forgot that 15 cents is not the same as 15 per cent. You know, they're quite happy to say, well, we'll freeze our wages now because, you know, we're all about all this in this together, but let's hold this government to account to make sure that they're

in this together. Let's make sure that people on minimum wage are in and a part of this province and part of what this is all about.

So, you know, 15 cents. We talked about it being insult. It's a travesty, really, that after waiting a year and a half, after bills continuing to pile up, after a single mother trying to figure out, should I pay the rent this month or buy groceries, after all of that time, where they're waiting, hoping—hoping—that this government will heed their pleas and listen to their heart-felt cries for help, what do they get? They don't get that, that's for sure. They get told that, yes, we'll give you an increase, won't be enough to cover anything that's increased in your life. It won't help in the long run; it will hold you in poverty. It won't make sure that—well, never mind that your kids can't sign up for the local hockey team because you won't be able to afford the cost of admission to play, 15 cents increase in the minimum wage won't even guarantee that that kid will have enough to eat, never mind do all the things that a lot of our kids take for granted. They won't have three meals a day; they'll start school hungry and then they'll wonder—the government will wonder why aren't those poor kids doing as good, or maybe they already know why they're not doing as good and they want to make sure that they can't compete. They want to hold them back, because 15 cents holds people back. Fifteen-cents-an-hour increase simply is not good enough for the people that work minimum wage jobs in this province.

If the government wants everybody to get on board, I say let's do that, but let's do that with an increase in the minimum wage that's a meaningful increase that makes sure that people that work minimum wage jobs earn a living wage, earn a wage that they can afford to pay their bills, a wage that they can afford to feed their kids, a wage that they can actually start to get a little bit ahead in the world. You want to get on board? Let's get on board with all Manitobans getting ahead. *[interjection]*

Hold your applause, please.

Let's really look at this government's version of all aboard and it—well, it's only some aboard. The rest of you, you don't get on the train, you don't get on the plane, you don't get on the boat. You can't afford it; you might have to work two, three jobs to try and feed your family. So, again, this government is not being inclusive, not making sure that everybody's going to be on board with making a better Manitoba. Well, in fact, for so many hard-working Manitobans,

this 15 cent raise is not going to lead to a better Manitoba for them. It's going to lead to more despair, more poverty and less opportunity for those Manitobans. Let's get on board, let's make sure that people earn a living wage, a wage that they can afford to live in this province, and 15 cents that this government and this minister have deemed to be acceptable is not acceptable to the people in this province.

You know, we'll talk about passing this because 15 cents is better than nothing, but really, not much better than nothing, Mr. Acting Deputy Assistant Speaker.

Fifteen cents is an insult. It's an insult to all of those Manitobans that work so hard to try and get ahead, to try and feed their families. This is a travesty. This needs to be stopped. The minister should apologize, change his legislation, and give people a raise that they deserve.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows. Pardon me?

Sorry about that.

The honourable member from Elmwood.

We were—sorry about that. We were, like—I called Burrows, and—Burrows, actually. Go ahead.

The honourable member for Burrows.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this bill. Our Liberal caucus supports this bill because we believe minimum wage should be raised, but we want to be very, very clear that this is just a step in the right direction; it's nowhere near good enough.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this past October, many Manitobans were disappointed, frustrated, and alarmed to hear that their minimum wage would not be increased by this government. I'm so alarmed that this provincial government doesn't seem bothered by the fact that minimum wage disproportionately affects women more because they make up 60 per cent of minimum wage earners. The fact is, that as of right now, someone working full time for minimum wage is earning less than \$20,000 a year. To put that in perspective, that's 11.7 per cent of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) salary. So a person on

minimum wage makes about 10 per cent of what the Premier makes.

This \$20,000 a year is \$10,000 short of the low-income cut-off. What does this government think is going to happen here in the province? Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order for a single mother with one child, working full time to earn a living above the poverty line, minimum wage would have to be raised to \$15.23 an hour.

Now we know realistically, that an increase like this can't happen immediately. With that said, the reality is more than 30,000 people here in Manitoba earn minimum wage, and this past year, under this new government, people earning minimum wage found themselves \$400 poorer this year due to inflation. So it's clear that whatever this government is attempting, it's not working.

In closing, I'm happy to hear that this government is willing to look at raising minimum wage to inflation, but I think this government needs to be reminded that poverty is way too high here in Manitoba and people deserve—and they need—livable wages. There needs to be a long-term plan, and this government needs to invest proactively to reduce future costs. Minimum wage is only a small piece of the puzzle.

Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I never thought I'd have my chance.

I'm very pleased to speak today for the next 30 minutes on the—Bill 33, Minimum Wage Indexation Act, which was just brought in by the government a couple of days ago, and kind of was a bit of a surprise, I guess, because since the election last year, we've spent considerable time on speeches and questions on the whole area as to why the provincial government was not raising the minimum wage when, in fact, the NDP—previous NDP government had raised the minimum wage, I believe, every single year for the last 17 years.

* (15:00)

And you know, historically, when we go back, we can look at increases brought in by Conservative governments and NDP governments. In the Schreyer years, I would believe there would be increases, decent increases, in minimum wage. And then we go to the Filmon—the Lyon government, and we'd be back to very few increases, if any. And then we go to

the Howard Pawley government and we're back up to proper increases. And, after the Pawley government, we're back to the Filmon government. Once again, very chintzy. Very few increases in the minimum wage there until the Gary Doer government came in—the NDP came in and we have proper increases to minimum wage.

So that has been the history of the situation regarding this particular issue, and the fact of the matter is that something changed this year. And we're trying to figure out what that could be. And, whoa, I think we discovered what they—what might be the answer, here. A by-election's been called. How about that? A by-election's been called in Point Douglas and, all of a sudden, the Conservatives have this newfound interest in an issue that they feel might help them in that by-election: raising the minimum wage. And, in fact, what they've done is they've simply indexed the minimum wage. And, as my colleagues have pointed out, we are really looking at perhaps a 15 cent increase. And, while I guess it's better than no increase at all, it certainly doesn't come anywhere near to where my colleagues and I would like it to go.

And members remember, I'm sure, the very successful campaign of Bernie Sanders—ultimately not successful because he lost to Hillary Clinton in the election—the US election last year. But, certainly, on an issues basis, Mr. Sanders went from, you know, 3 per cent to popularity and actually came reasonably close, I would say, to—exceeded expectations by a long shot to giving Hillary Clinton a run for her money for that nomination largely based on issues such as tuition fee increases and, you know, minimum wage increases. And it's a recognition that there are millions of people in the United States, and in Canada, at a minimum wage. And it's pretty much impossible to live on wages like that.

So, you know, if the working people—or people are expecting Conservative governments like the government across from us to perform for them, or they are expecting the Donald Trump, you know, billionaire class to be looking out for their interest, then they are deluding themselves because it's not going to happen. Matter of fact, in the United States, there are people like Donald Trump that want to see the minimum wages even lower than they are right now. And some American politicians would like to eliminate it completely and have no minimum wage at all.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, minimum wage earners have been struggling to make ends meet after this government refused to give them a raise, now, for what is going on two years. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) froze minimum wages for workers but made sure to give himself a 20 per cent raise in his first year of government. And then he went and locked in. *[interjection]*

And, while the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) wants to dispute the facts here—and, you know, it's fair, he can do that. The Minister of Agriculture has found himself subbing for the Premier in Estimates just last week. I've yet to read the Hansard of that day, but I think it's going to be some of the more interesting Hansard that I've read in the 31 years I've been in the Legislature, because, to paraphrase some of the Q & As, the question and answers there, I've been told that the—our questioner has asked—the Premier was supposed to be in the Estimates—you know, a question dealing with the Premier's staff. And then the Minister of Agriculture, who's pretending to be the Premier, starts talking about sunflower crops and lentils and peas. And so they went on for a better part of an afternoon, I'm told, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we have now taken care of that issue, and we don't anticipate a repeat of the Minister of Agriculture, or any other minister, subbing for the Premier in his Estimates.

As a matter of fact, we don't even know where the Premier is. *[interjection]* Ah, yes, and as I was about to get more in depth here in Bill 33 and not make any reference to the fact—to the Premier—was not around his own Estimates the other day, and the Agriculture was—minister was stepping in, I do want to say that this bill fails to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Just want to remind the member that you can't disclose—suggest that the person's in or out of the House, okay? Or the Estimates.

So we will continue with the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

Mr. Maloway: Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I got so confused with all these myriad of files that have been coming in here as briefing and speaking notes. I've got files full of them.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill fails to do enough for minimum wage workers. And matter of fact, our—as I'd indicated, our government raised the minimum wage every year we were in government. Under the Conservative government, minimum wage

workers are now earning half of what they earned under us. We raised the minimum wage 30 cents—30 cents—in 2015. And this government is raising it 15 cents in 2017.

By refusing to guarantee an annual raise for minimum wage, workers are—workers—they're locking Manitobans in with a wage that is too low. And I think the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), if I'm not mistaken, yesterday either asked a question or made a statement. And what they did was, they took the increase in the minimum wage and to show that under the Conservatives, if you took the indexation process that—or indexation figures that—and applied them to our 17 years, it would have come out way, way lower than what our actual increases were.

So the argument there is that if you project forward with the—if you adopt this bill and then you project forward, if they are doing it on the base of—basis of indexation, over a period of time, over five, 10 years or longer, the minimum wage worker is going to be way, way further behind than they would when they look at what the NDP has historically brought in each and every year over the last number of years.

Many, deputy—or the—you will know that minimum wage earners, a lot of them are women, some of them single mothers. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) said he doesn't believe a higher minimum wage is the best way to reduce poverty in Manitoba. I believe he said that sometime last year. He said it's a mitigation tactic that's seen on the surface to be helping, but really doesn't reduce poverty, and that—he said that on CBC on December the 29th. The Premier is making life less affordable for families of minimum wage earners.

The government failed to include a minimum wage increase in the provincial budget. We were expecting perhaps something would show up there, but no, didn't happen. Of course, the by-election wasn't ready yet, I guess, or they weren't thinking by-election at that time. So they delayed an increase for workers and keeping businesses in the dark for a longer period.

The Premier campaigned on a promise to protect front-line workers in public services. I remember those ads very well last year, when I had time to actually—the minute or two to see anything on TV last year—but he kept cajoling people by saying that, oh yes, you can elect me. You can elect a

Conservative government because we're going to protect those front-line workers.

* (15:10)

Well let me tell you: that's dangerous when you do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and then don't follow through with it. And witness the fact that during the election there was not one mention of Concordia Hospital emergency rooms being closed, not a sound of that. And of course, had they mentioned then what they were going to do this year and close the emergency ward, they would have finished a distant fourth in the whole quadrant, had they mentioned what they were going to do. But no, they didn't do that. They said—they told the nurses, we're going to protect front-line services. They told all the workers, we're going to present—protect front-line services, and then, only a year later, they've now decided they're going to close the emergency department. Well, and that's to save money, to save \$30 million—a total of \$80 million in total. There was no talk at all of cutting \$80 million out of the health-care system only one year ago.

There was no talk of closing Concordia Hospital emergency room, nor was there talk about closing Seven Oaks emergency room or closing the Victoria—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order.

There's a lot of kinds of conversations going on in the House here and it's hard to hear the individual debate here. So I would ask that you guys—if anybody's having conversations, please use the loge and we'll continue.

Mr. Maloway: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I was going to chalk that up to constructive heckling, but now I'm very disappointed when I find out they're not listening at all. They're having their own meeting. So now I have to start over to explain my point, and all the time I thought they were listening to every word.

So, the fact of the matter is that these members must be a little sheepish now when they think about this, that they went and they—let me find some space here—they knocked on the doors last year and they told people no front-line workers are going to be laid off; just trust us, elect us. We're going to take care of the health care. We're not going to fire any nurses. We're not going to fire any front-line workers.

And you can imagine the shock of these people now in the northeast Winnipeg when they find out

that not only are—have they gone back on their promise to keep the front-line workers, but they're shutting down the ER. They're just going to close it down. Well, people didn't bargain for that. That was not part of the pact they made with this new government. And so I—forgive me, but I think they feel that they've been cheated here; they're not too happy. They're having a big amount of buyer's remorse, I would say at this point, big time buyer's remorse.

So, you know, this is not a good sign going forward for the government. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) clearly doesn't care about Manitoba workers. He—while he spends—and we all know about the two months in Costa Rica—you know, a lot of people in this province hadn't even heard of Costa Rica. This Premier has done more for the tourism industry in Costa Rica than anybody alive. He ought to be on the payroll of the Costa Rican tourist board—*[interjection]*—tourism—I would never suggest that.

I'm just saying that he ought to be because he's done so much to promote tourism to Costa Rica, probably even business investments, for all we know, you know, because—and I know that it's a hard place to get to. I mean it's not a—I know a little bit about tourism business in this province and the customers have—are very willing to get on flights to get them to their destination within four or five hours, and that's why in Canada you have an amazing five million visitors going to three spots, and they go—these three spots are Cuba, Mexico and the third one is Dominican Republic. Each one has about a million and a half visits a year, whereas Jamaica has maybe only 20,000 out of Canada, it's very small.

And the reason, of course, is price. But another reason is the fact that there is such a volume of people going, the prices are fairly low, and people do not like interrupting their vacation with stops—stopovers. They want to get on one plane, start here and end up in their destination and not waste the whole day. Well, you can't do that to go to Costa Rica; it's a complicated one or two flights.

So I'm sure with all this promotion that's been going on, that we're probably helping the tourism industry in Costa Rica because eventually when all the people start going down there, we're going to have volume and we're going to have probably direct flights at some point. Right? So I'm sure that there is a point to all of this activity.

So the Premier spends these two months in Costa Rica, no access to email or cell phone, and

meanwhile, everyday Manitobans are working hard to pay for basic needs like food and housing. And until this bill they had a frozen minimum wage. And what are they getting now? Well, as the members have indicated, very little, just a 15 cent per hour, when in fact the NDP regularly raised the minimum wage as was indicated, in the range of 30 cents—double that. And many of us would argue that that's not high enough, that we are quite interested in what Bernie Sanders had to say last year about a \$15 minimum wage, and there's increasing talk about that.

Now the—while the Premier's giving himself this 20 per cent pay raise and refused to raise the minimum wage up till now, what have we seen as far as students are concerned—and there are a lot of students have minimum wage jobs? The hiked up tuition fees. Tuition fees are going up a lot now, where the NDP had a freeze on tuition fees for quite a number of years. Now tuition fees are going up—lays off workers, cancels important health and education infrastructure projects that were beneficial to Manitobans.

We'll see just in this last year—is essential just mothballing. And it's exactly what we saw from Sterling Lyon when Sterling Lyon was in power, and Gary Filmon. Basically, the mothballed projects, they put a stop to any project that was on the drawing boards. Even projects that had, like, basements dug, they stopped those kinds of things. Back in Lyon government, sure. Seniors home that was being built, they'd already dug out the dirt for the basement, they just stopped that. But normally what they do is they would just stop it before the, you know, before the construction actually starts.

The Premier claims to be a team player, but what we've seen from him so far would suggest otherwise. He refuses to sit down at—with bargaining—bargaining with unions. He imposes anti-worker legislation; he refuses to work with the federal government—that was a big fuss about that to come up with a health-care deal. Manitoba, in fact, is still the last province to sign on to an agreement.

The Sandi Mowat—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Government House Leader on a point of order.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on relevance we've heard about 5 million tourists going from

Canada to Cuba. We've heard about, something about basements. We've heard about all kinds of different things, but I would just like to appeal to the honourable member that, you know, for a lot of people this is actually quite a serious matter, a minimum wage bill that people are waiting for us to put forward. And that's what we had hoped to debate this afternoon and that's what we would like to hear about. The member seems to be wandering, not just through the woods but literally around the globe. And I would appeal if possible for some restraint and focus.

Thank you.

Mr. Maloway: Yes well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's clearly a dispute about the facts because, I mean, a person who earns minimum wage is not going to be able to go to Costa Rica very often, all right? It's just a function—the point is, it's just a function of how much you earn.

If you're making the salary like the Premier (Mr. Pallister), you can afford to go to Costa Rica. But if you're working a minimum wage job, the chances are you won't be able to afford the airfare to get on the plane to go to Costa Rica. That is my point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the point of order, there's really no point of order as long as the member keeps on relevance and comes back to the topic of the bill, Bill 33.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So, if we can just go back to the—on minimum wage.

* (15:20)

Mr. Maloway: That's exactly what I've been talking about for the whole 20 minutes that I've been speaking is about the minimum wage, what you can actually buy with the minimum wage and why it's important to raise the minimum wage so people can actually live a proper lifestyle on minimum wage jobs.

I mean, the fact of the matter is that there are a large number of people who actually live in this province on minimum wage. You know, they're not all, as the Conservatives often suggest, students, right. The Conservatives go, well, you know, we can't raise the minimum wage because, you know, it's just students that are working on minimum wage and they're not actually living on minimum wage.

Well, the fact of the matter is there are people living on minimum wage.

There are two-wage-earner families that that's what they earn, minimum wage times two and they're paying their rent, they're feeding—their food and they're paying for their children's costs and these are not the people that are getting on airplanes and flying off to Costa Rica. They're lucky if they can afford a much cheaper, more accessible trip to Cuba, but they can't do that because they've got a minimum wage job and they—if they're waiting for the Conservatives to—and you know, some of them, I don't know why they would, but perhaps one or two of them did vote Conservative last year. Well, we're just letting them know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're letting them know that that probably was a mistake if you did that. If you voted for the Conservatives last year, thinking that somehow they're going to look out for you, they're going to take care of you, then you probably did not make a good choice at that time because, in spite of what they told you, that they were going to take care of front-line workers, they weren't going to cut health care, they weren't going to do this, they weren't going to do that, the story has certainly developed differently in the last 12 months.

What have they done? No increase to the minimum wage for the first year. They started to get rid of front-line services, front-line workers; they cut the Concordia Hospital emergency room and two others. Those were not promises that were made. I don't remember the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes), you know, I mean, I don't—I never heard of him going out and knocking on the doors and saying I'm going to shut down—

Some Honourable Members: Victoria.

Mr. Maloway: Victoria hospital. I promise that I'm going to shut down the emergency room. I never heard of anybody saying that. I never heard of anybody saying that they went out and knocked—the members from the north—north Winnipeg, that they went out and said they were going to shut down the Seven Oaks. Forty thousand people a year going to Seven Oaks and you're going to shut it down? How many voters do you think you would have attracted saying that? Not too many, I would say. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Maloway: All right. Why did they not go out to Victoria? Why did the member for St. Norbert not go out and knock on the doors in St. Norbert and say

we're going to shut down the emergency ward at Victoria and 30,000 of you are going to have to fight your way down to Health Sciences Centre? We never heard anybody say that. I've been looking around for leaflets from the campaign; I never found any. Nobody said anything about that. Okay, and certainly in the north east, and the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) can bear me out on this, we looked very carefully at all the Conservative leaflets that were sent out and we heard nothing—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A point of—the Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Micklefield: On relevance. You know, the member opposite is a fairly nice fellow, but he did reference his desk as full of different files. It would appear, to those of us listening, he's picked up the wrong notes by accident and seems to me that he's talking about some kind of health bill, because all I'm hearing is those kinds of comments. I understand that these things can happen from time to time, but just to draw your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rule 41 actually does state that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Micklefield: Rule 41 does actually make reference to speeches, saying they shall be directed to the question under consideration or to a motion or amendment that the member speaking intends to move. So I think that we're probably failing 41 right now, and just wanted to bring that back in, so thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Honest mistake, I'm sure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The opposite House leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Maloway: I would say, certainly, there is some dispute over facts here; we certainly understand that. But the member should also know that under any rules of—in any parliament that I've ever been involved in, there is a wide—speakers are given a wide range of latitude on their topics of discussion.

I've sat here—stood here and listened to members opposite talk about all sorts of stuff that have absolutely nothing—nothing—whatsoever to do with the bill in mind. This, on the contrary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 33 is a bill that I have been addressing for every minute of my speech here today, relating this whole idea of indexation of minimum wage, covered under Bill 33, to what the Conservatives promised in the last election, very relevant information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, on that point of order, as long as the comments do come back to the bill, the comments—or relevancy, this is something that applies equally to members on both sides of the House.

That being said, you can encourage members to be—on both sides of the House to be mindful of the relevance of the bill under the consideration.

* * *

Mr. Maloway: You know, it's very clear that the government members just don't like what they're hearing. That's what—and it—and, you know, having said all that, it does bear repeating—it does bear repeating—because we're talking about minimum wage, and even in minimum wage, I don't recall the government last year, in any of their communications and their leaflets, talk about not increasing the minimum wage. There was not a word.

I mean, to be fair, they didn't promise to raise it to any great heights; I know that. But they never said anything about, well, we're just going to ignore it for a year or two and just let it—you know, let it drop. And it's only when there's a by-election called, the panic sets in here, and they say, oh, well, you know, what are we going to do to help our diminishing chances in Point Douglas? Well, let's see now, why don't we just index the minimum wage? And they think that somehow they get a good story out of it in the paper and they're on their way to success.

But, as the opposition, we're pointing out that what this Minimum Wage Indexation Act really means is, like, 15 cents an hour, when the NDP in previous years was raising the minimum wage 30 cents. So, we're just pointing out directly with the bill what they do when they're in government and what we do when we're in government.

And the issue being that if it hadn't been for this by-election, they wouldn't even be doing that, okay? But in the context of what the minimum wage actually means, I've simply, you know, gone through a series—and I'll kind of tie it back into the theme here that people who are on minimum wage, who are not just students, like the government tries to point out, that there's a lot of people out there who are working minimum wage jobs and supporting families. They are not able to get on an airplane and fly to Costa Rica.

* (15:30)

And so, I'm just asking you to bear in mind just a few points out of this. I know I made it complicated to get into, like, 20 or 30 points. I mean, I've got many, many files here and many, many points that I could make, but just not enough time. If I had the unlimited time that one of my colleagues will probably have—they don't—they let—they don't let me have the unlimited time. So, if I had the unlimited time, I could get into all of these points.

I just want to keep it simple, in two or three points, and I've already made that the one.

And my other big point about this minimum wage bill is they did not—what they've done is they have sold the public a bill of goods. They have gone out and they have promised that they would not get rid of any front-line workers, right, and they never talked about any cuts in services.

And we are—in the northeast, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and myself don't recall any of them knocking on the doors in Elmwood and Concordia and saying, we—elect us and we are going to close the emergency ward at Concordia Hospital. And the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), the member for River East (Mrs. Cox) also up—*[interjection]*—and Transcona, up in the northeast in Transcona, those members, too, did not go out and knock on the doors and say, we are going to close the Concordia emergency ward. Had they done so, Mr. Deputy Speaker—had they done that, they would have ended up probably finishing third in the election, and they know that.

All they have to do is get in their car tonight, drive down Henderson Highway and see yellow signs everywhere, and a good number of those people were Conservative voters. They were Conservative voters last year for whatever reason, and, boy, oh boy, you should be—you should just take a trip out there, you know, and knock on those doors, and you will get one blast from those people. And this is the kind of activity that somehow they think they're going to get away with.

I can assure you that people have long memories, and they are going to remember that nobody from the Conservative Party promised they were going to do this. They didn't promise to do—to close the Concordia emergency ward. They never promised to close Victoria. The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes) did not go out and knock on those doors and promise to close the Victoria hospital; he didn't do that.

And the north Winnipeg Conservatives did not go out, knock on the doors and promise to close Seven Oaks either, and they are going to pay the price for having done that and basically betrayed the trust that they were given by the people of Manitoba only one year ago.

And it's going to be—it's been a short—a very short honeymoon for this government. And their honeymoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is long, long gone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time is up.

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): May I say I very much appreciated my friend from Elmwood's very entertaining speech. I do agree with one thing, though; Manitobans do have long memories, and they certainly have proven that, haven't they? Manitobans felt all good things must come to an end, I guess.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to establish a mechanism that will automatically adjust Manitoba's minimum wage every October 1st at the rate of inflation from the previous calendar year. This will maintain the minimum wage's real value of purchasing power at its current level on an ongoing basis.

The increase implemented on October 1st, 2017, will be 15 cents, making Manitoba's minimum wage \$11.15 per hour. Government will have regulatory authority to specify a different minimum wage than the determined—than determined by index and formula from specific classes of employees. Government will have regulatory authority to stop an increase from being implemented in a given year if it is satisfied that economic indicators, such as a recession, warrant it.

Manitoba's minimum wage is currently set in the 'employant' standards regulation of \$11 per hour. It is tied for fifth among most provinces midway in Canada. Consultations were held with the Labour Management Review Committee, LMRC. The MLR—the M—the LMRC did not reach consensus. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a \$15 wage is just not realistic at this time.

Let's take a look at the minimum wages across Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker: 2017 in British Columbia, it's \$11.25; in Alberta, it's \$13.60; in Saskatchewan, it's \$10.95; in Manitoba it will be \$11.15; in Ontario, it's \$11.60; in Quebec, it's \$11.25; in New Brunswick, it's \$11; in Nova Scotia, it's \$10.85; in Prince Edward Island, it's \$11.25;

in Newfoundland, \$10.75; Northwest Territories, \$12.50; Yukon, \$11.32; and Nunavut, \$13.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what that information indicates is that Manitoba is certainly not out of line at \$11.15. This legislation provides a consistent and predictable way of indexing Manitobans' minimum wage with inflation through a fully transparent formula. Manitobans will understand what increases they're getting.

Several other provinces in Canada have already used this method. With the proposed legislations, Manitoba minimum wage will be increased to \$11.15 per hour as of October 1st, '17. The next year, and in years ahead, adjustments to the minimum wage will be announced before April 1st to take effect each October 1st.

This bill will ensure that in years of note—negative or no inflation, the minimum wage will remain steady. In line with other Canadian provinces, this legislation represents a balanced, common-sense approach that reflects our commitment to small business, workers, and their families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, good governments make difficult decisions to ensure the protection and stability of their citizens. We continue on the road to recovery. *[interjection]*

Well, let's answer some questions. What is the main purpose of this bill? The main purpose of this bill is to establish a mechanism that will automatically adjust Manitobans' minimum wage based on the previous year's inflation rate. This will ensure the purchasing power of the minimum wage is maintained over time and will provide predictability for businesses in terms of wage costs.

What inflation measure is used for indexing form—the indexing formula? The formula uses the increase in consumer price index for the previous calendar year for Manitoba, as published by Stats Canada. There's a consistency there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When will minimum wage adjustments occur? The bill provides for the minimum wage to be adjusted based on indexing formula every October 1st, starting in 2017.

How will the increase to the minimum wage be—how much will the increase in the minimum wage be in 2017? As I indicated, it will be 15 cents.

Is the minimum wage rounded up or down? Once the indexing formula has been applied, it is

rounded up to the nearest nickel. However, the unrounded figure will be used in applying the indexing formula in the following year. This was well thought out, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (15:40)

Why is unrounded figure used in indexing in this previous year? This will ensure that the minimum wage stays at pace to inflation rate over time.

What happens if inflation is negative? Will the minimum wage decrease? In the unlikely event that Manitoba has a negative inflation or deflation, in a given year the minimum wage will stay at its current rate. It will not be decreased.

Can the government decide to set a different wage than determined by the indexing formula? With one exception: The government will have no authority to decrease or increase the general minimum wage to an amount other than determined by the indexing formula.

Expansion of a two-tiered minimum wage: The LMRC discussed this option, but the government is not pursuing it. The previous NDP government created a two-tiered minimum wage policy focusing on security guards several years ago. The construction industry also attempted from the general minimum wage being regulated instead by The Construction Industry Wages Act. Currently, the Employment Standards regulation provides that minimum wage for security guards is higher than the general minimum wage. This provision will not be affected by the bill.

Do any other jurisdictions index their minimum wages to inflation? Yes, several. Ontario, Nova Scotia and Yukon all index their minimum wages to the previous year's inflation rate as it is being done in this bill.

Saskatchewan also indexes their minimum wage but uses both inflation and average hourly wages equally weighted instead of just inflation. In practice, this results in a pretty similar rate of increase to using inflation alone.

New Brunswick has also announced an intention to begin indexing its minimum wage to inflation starting in 2018.

How does Manitoba's minimum wage compare to other jurisdictions? As I've indicated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is mid-way in the pack, rated fifth.

What consultations were held in developing this bill? Consultations were held with the Labour Management Review Committee, and, as I indicated earlier, their recommendation was \$15 an hour, but our government deemed that was unsustainable and unrealistic.

The minimum wage was never designed to be a primary income. It was designed as a beginning. It was designed as a training wage. This wage will continue to grow with inflation. This increase, as now implemented, will continue to assist Manitobans in helping to be a base for future prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): And I appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record with regards to the minimum wage, and I've said many times in this House, and I'll say again, I often appreciate the opportunity to get up on an issue that so clearly defines who we are as New Democrats on this side of the House and who the government members are as members of the Conservative Party and their particular ideology, because this is the kind of bill that, as a new government, should be the centrepiece, should be the most—one of the most important things that a new government does is set its policy with regards to minimum wage, and I can imagine a new New Democratic government in Manitoba. This would probably be one of the very first things that we'd talk about to Manitobans and that we commit to and accomplish as a new government in this Legislature.

But, instead, for this government, what we've actually seen is, we've seen them run from this issue for more than a year. And this—we've now had two budgets, we've had two Throne Speeches, and yet here we are on—and I'm looking for the House leaders, what day of the session we are, you know, how far into the session are—maybe it's easier to count backwards and say we're 11 days from rising, I think, if I've got my math correct; maybe 10, maybe 9. Who's counting?

And here we are, the government brings in their legislation totally out of the blue, not in the budget, not in their budget documents, not mentioned once in their budget speech, not mentioned once in their Throne Speech of last year. Instead, we get it introduced at the last second—*[interjection]*

Oh, thank you. It's the 54th day of our Legislature that we've been sitting, and we're now debating something that affects the people of

Manitoba every single day and affects those who have the least, and yet it's now that this government brings it forward and now that this government wants to ram it through and jam it through and says this is the most important thing that we have to talk about.

Well, you're darn right, it's the most important thing we have to talk about, but not on day 54, but on day one. And on day one of this government, this government should have stood with the people of Manitoba, the workers of Manitoba, to say that they deserve a living wage, that we would support them absolutely every day as workers.

But we didn't see that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, we saw them bring it in almost as an afterthought. Now, I could go on, as my colleague from Elmwood did, and talk about the particular timing of this bill, that it coincides almost to the day with a by-election that's been called in one of the most 'impoverich'—impoverished constituencies in our province. I could talk about that. I could talk about the particular timing that this government has decided to bring it in and make a lot of noise about it just before they called a by-election in Point Douglas. I don't know if that's what—if that was a strategy of this government. That could've been what they were thinking when they did it.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

But it really is beside the point because for over a year now, the people of Manitoba who earn minimum wage have been without an increase in their wage. And all of this was at the time when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) saw fit to give himself a 20 per cent raise virtually on day one.

So again, I talk about priorities and stepping forward as the new government, and showing what your priorities are and who you think is important in our society, who you think you're really there to represent, and we see—we couldn't see it more clearly than when the Premier stood up on day one and said, we're going to give ourselves a 20 per cent raise. Said nothing about those who were earning minimum wage, and said he was going to give himself a 20 per cent raise.

An Honourable Member: That's the first thing they did.

Mr. Wiebe: And that's the first thing they did, as the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) correctly says; the first act of business of this new government.

Now the other thing I wanted to talk about this afternoon, Madam Speaker, is this idea of predictability. Predictability—this—I think it's in fact, it is certainly mentioned in the words of the members opposite, if not in the bill itself. But the intent of the bill is to offer some predictability, so say the members.

Well, you know, I was curious. I wanted to go back and make sure. So, you know, just for reference of the members, when the government—the last government came into office in 1999, I don't think I was earning a minimum wage at that point, but I was pretty close. I was probably maybe less than a dollar over minimum wage.

So I was still earning minimum wage when this—the last government came into office. And so I wanted to go back. I wasn't, as I am now, a member of this Chamber. I wasn't following exactly, you know, every step of the way, so I wanted to go back and check, and I wanted to check exactly how much had the minimum wage gone up.

*(15:50)

And, as the members opposite say, this idea of predictability, because it certainly is an important aspect of the minimum wage, predictability for those minimum wage earners who see their food prices increase, they see their fuel prices or their transit prices increases—increasing, they see the cost of living going up every single day. And so they want to know that there's some predictability for them and their family going forward, that they can make a better life for themselves. So it's important in that respect, and it is important for employers. It's certainly important for employers, because employers are the other part of this equation. So we want to make sure that they understand that there's a predictability.

So I went back, and I thought maybe there was a year where it was—where, you know, the government didn't increase the minimum wage. Maybe there was a year where there was a—just a very minimal increase or maybe there was a drastic increase that was much higher than in other years. And, in fact, what I found was every single year that the previous government was in office there was a modest increase to bring the minimum wage up to a living wage. There was a clear path upwards to bring people out of poverty in this province and give them a living wage, if they're doing work in this province and they're working the number of hours that they can.

So I checked for this. I looked for the—some kind of indication that what the previous government had done was totally out of line with what had been done elsewhere, and I didn't see that. In fact, what happened was, in the 1990s, this province had fallen so far behind in the minimum wage that it was only after those increases started coming into place that we saw that people were starting to come out of that poverty wage and starting to get closer and closer to a living wage, and we became the province that the rest of the country looked to. We became the leaders. That's where we ended up. And that was the predictability that the members are looking for.

So the predictability was very clear. It was a path from a poverty wage, which I believe the minister himself went out in the media and said, it's absolutely a poverty wage, and then he went ahead and locked it in at that poverty wage. But—and I'll get to that in a moment—but he said, it's a poverty wage, and what we saw was a steady increase to get us closer to a living wage. And that was the predictability that the members opposite asked for.

The other thing that the members opposite seem to forget is that this wasn't done in a vacuum. This wasn't done, you know, as the members opposite like to suggest, simply by one side of the equation. Certainly, we appreciate that labour leaders have been forceful in their pursuit of a living wage and in asking governments to meet that challenge, and I think that's a laudable challenge and a laudable goal to undertake, but we didn't do it in a vacuum, we didn't do it just listening to one part or another in terms of representatives in the economy. What we did was we listened to workers who said that we needed to have a sustainable wage, a living wage, and then we went to business, right, and I think the member previous mentioned LMRC, a committee which I know first-hand from my colleagues, listening to the work that's done at that committee, how difficult the work is that they do, but how, ultimately, it allows this Province to move forward with business at the table, with labour at the table and coming up with a solution that works for everybody.

The member opposite prior to me here mentioned very clearly that this particular suggestion, this bill, failed at LMRC. In fact, there was no consensus, as he puts it. So instead, the minister decides to ram it through. But, in the previous government's term, what they undertook to do, in consultation with workers, with labour, with business, was to say we need to increase this wage,

we want to increase employment, we want to make sure that employment is strong and that people have good jobs in Manitoba, so how can we help make that happen? And what the business community said to us is, they said, well, what we could—what you could do, is those small businesses who are impacted the most by minimum wage increases, you could give them a break. And so this is what the previous government did, if you want to talk about predictability, is what the previous government did is said that we are going to give you a tax break on your small-business tax that you pay. We're going to give you a break on that tax that you pay. And we brought it down—

An Honourable Member: For how much?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, we brought it—and the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) asks how much. Well, was it all at one—in one shot? No. What it was, was the first year, I think—and again, I don't have my notes in front of me to say exactly—I think it was 25 cents the first year. The minimum wage increases and we bring down the small-business tax by a half a point.

We bring it down the next year by another half point when we increase the minimum wage. We bring it down again and again and again and again until, as the members on this side of the House certainly know, it gets down to zero. No small-business tax in this province, and then—so then we're—there's no more small-business tax to pay, what do you do? The next year, we increase the minimum wage by another 25 cents, and we increase the size that we consider a small business to be.

So even larger companies, then, are captured, and we say, this is our pact with business: We are going to help you because you're going to help your workers have a living wage in this province. And it was something that was predictable, it was something that worked, it was something that was seen across the country as a model. And yet here we are, the members opposite give no breaks to small businesses. They have given no additional breaks, but instead, what they do is they give nothing to minimum wage earners at all. And in fact beyond that, they increase their cost of living at every turn.

Every place that a low-income wage earner turns now, their prices, the costs that they are facing, are going up. They're paying more for hydro, they're paying more for tuition, there are higher taxes that they have to pay across the board, and yet this government gives them no relief and says, too

bad, you're on your own. Oh, and by the way, we're locking in that poverty—as the minister said—that poverty wage, we're locking it in into the future indefinitely.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have, as the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) referenced many times in his speech, reams of paper—paperwork of studies that have been done, and I see my time—I know others in the Chamber want to speak, so I don't want to take all of the time. But I do just want to read a couple of quotes into the record because this is not just me making it up, it's not just this side of the House saying, well, we think low income Manitobans should earn a living wage and, you know, and just kind of resting everything on that.

There's concrete evidence from the research that shows that increasing the minimum wage helps people get out of poverty and, in fact, lowers costs in health care, in justice, in our education system, across the board. This has an impact, and yet it—you know, in a short-sighted way by freezing the minimum wage at a poverty level, it—we should see no benefits.

But I digress because I did want to read just a few quotes into the evidence. This is from a paper by Jim Stanford, who many here in this Chamber will know as a respected researcher—

An Honourable Member: Brilliant man.

Mr. Wiebe: Brilliant, my colleague from Minto points out—and Jordan Brennan, where he says—where they say, quote: It finds—this paper finds almost no evidence of any connection whatsoever between higher minimum wages and employment levels in Canada. They're just not there, and in fact, what we see is that across the country, there are—stronger minimum wages can be an important and effective tool in boosting the earnings of low wage workers—again, we know that—promoting greater equality across employee persons, stabilizing or improving the total labour market share GDP and reducing poverty. It's clear in their research, absolutely clear.

We know that the real minimum wage—sorry, the wages in—the real minimum wages in Manitoba and across the country have fallen dramatically from their peaks in the 1970s and this is simply a way for us, by increasing it beyond 15 cents, to get back closer to that level.

* (16:00)

Now, I could—again, I could go on, and I feel almost overwhelmed by the amount of evidence that's so very clear and yet is being ignored by this government, but I'll just return to a point that I—my—the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), my colleague, made that the members opposite didn't really want to hear much about but I will reiterate it for them, because in the last election, every single one of them knocked on the doors in their constituencies. Every single one of them went to the doorstep and said, please elect us, we'll protect your front-line services, we'll protect the workers who perform those services, and not one of them—I can guarantee that in this House, Madam Speaker, and I challenge anyone to stand up in their seat and say, yes, I went to the doorstep and said I'm going to freeze your minimum wage at a poverty level; I'm not going to increase it for the entire length of our term; we're going to lock it in so that you have a poverty level. Oh, and by the way; we're jacking up tuition; we're increasing taxes on you; and we're increasing your hydro and other utility rates.

An Honourable Member: Tuition. Tuition.

Mr. Wiebe: The tuition rates. Not a one of them would have done that. And, if I'm wrong, I implore them to stand up today and tell this House how you knocked on every door, how you told your constituents that you were cutting—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

There are a number of conversations that are happening in this Chamber right now, and it's happening on both sides, not just one. And I would ask everybody to please show—all sides. I would ask everybody to please show some respect for the member that is speaking in debate, and that you either take your conversations to the loges, to the back chairs, to the hallways, or bring down the level of conversation.

I'd appreciate everybody's consideration—everybody's.

Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate that as I'm wrapping up here that everybody will be all ears and listening very intently.

And so I'll just simply end today, Madam Speaker, by saying how disappointed we are that this government thinks that three nickels is what the work of Manitobans is worth, that they feel that they should have a 20 per cent increase for themselves,

they should lock in their wages at 20 per cent higher than the rest of Manitobans while, at the same time, cutting the minimum wage for those who need it the most—rather than seeing that there is a positive benefit in so many ways, not only to our economy but to the health and well-being of our province to simply pay people a living wage for the good, honest work that they do.

Madam Speaker, it's shameful that this government would bring forward this legislation, try to ram it through as an afterthought rather than increasing the minimum wage in a way that is sustainable and appropriate to all Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): I rise today to talk about Bill 33, the Employment Standards Code amendment act, which is minimum wage indexation. And I'd like to thank the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) for bringing this forward, for introducing this important legislation, and it gives me opportunity to put a few words on the record to speak about this bill.

We know that we've heard before—I listened to the words by my wonderful colleague from St. James of—that the Manitoba's current minimum wage is \$11 per hour and is set in Employment Standards regulation, which means our province is tied for the fifth highest among other provinces, and I believe it's eight, if you add in the Territories which is across Canada.

With this legislation set to begin in October 2017, Manitobans will see the minimum wage increase to \$11.15, and, for years ahead, adjustments to the minimum wage will be announced on the first of April, which will take into effect on October each year, and that gives people the opportunity to plan businesses, to prepare.

We've heard the members opposite on several occasions ask several times in the House: When will this government raise minimum wage? What is their plan? What are they going to do? Well, here we are—here we are—we're working for Manitobans. We're proposing a minimum wage increase, but they mock us; they make fun. Well, it's not a fun situation, Madam Speaker. You know, they mock us when they talk about it's only three nickels; they talk about rubbing three nickels together. Well, it's just simply not good enough for members opposite, because they sit there and they keep talking this out, they keep putting comments on the record. And, you know

what, they simply—let's get this done, let's get more money in the pockets of Manitobans.

This legislation will provide a predictable way of indexing Manitoba's minimum wage with inflation that is through a transparent formula. This is the predictability small businesses and families have been looking for. This decision to index minimum wage balances the needs of employers and of workers. This bill will ensure that, in years of negative or no inflation, the minimum wage will remain steady, Madam Speaker.

Our government was elected to clean up the mess left behind by the NDP, and that's what we intend to do. We're acting based on advice of the Labour Management Review Committee. We gave Manitobans time to provide input, and many chose to do so. We're taking the advice of experts, Madam Speaker. We're listening to Manitobans. And how can this be steering Manitoba wrong? It's not. It's simply not.

We know members opposite have made choices through considering the true impact—without considering the true impact it would have on families. I know I've heard the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) toss out a comment to my colleague about how much money do you make. Well, when I look back, Madam Speaker, I am no different than many people in this province. I once made minimum wage for very many years. You know, I look back to the very beginning, when my husband and I started. You know, we came together, we lived in an apartment, we started to build our future together. Both of us made minimum wage. Those days weren't always easy. There were days when we didn't know how we were going to pay the bills. We didn't know what we were going to do. But we got through it because we hunkered down and we made smart choices—choices that were important for our family.

My parents—where did I learn that from? From my parents. My parents were young. My parents were very young when they had me. I was an only child for many years. My mom worked part time making minimum wage. But you know what, Madam Speaker? I never went without. Somehow, my parents had the work ethic and the determination to make sure that I had what I needed—what our family needed so that we could succeed. And I pride myself on taking that work ethic when I come here and I work on behalf of Manitobans in this Legislature. Every day, I think about that time when my parents were very young. I think about living on the farm in

Fisher Branch, Manitoba. We didn't have running water back then, Madam Speaker. We had an outhouse back then. I remember those days when it was rough and there wasn't enough money. But I'm proud to say that, through my parents' determination and their work ethic, we all succeeded together. We moved forward.

We know that good governments make tough and fair decisions. And that's what we're trying to do here, Madam Speaker. We're making good decisions. And, for the last year and a bit, all of my colleagues have sat in this House and tried to push through legislation that will make it easier so that people who are like my parents 43 years ago could make their lives and raise their children in this province. I believe that this legislation is going to demonstrate that we are making the right decision.

We are committing—committed to leaving more money in the pockets of Manitobans, Madam Speaker. The former government didn't do that. What we got in this province was a 14 per cent tax hike by raising the PST without consulting the people of Manitoba. They just went out there and they did it. So those low-income workers, those low-income families got hit hardest. Their house insurance, their car insurance, even their haircuts got a tax increase. And who did that affect? We keep hearing how it affects women in this province. Well, most women spend the most amount of money on their haircuts. What did they do? They dinged us on that, too. It simply was irresponsible and it was shameful. Completely shameful.

*(16:10)

Along with providing a consistent approach to minimum wage for businesses and for workers in Manitoba, we are continuing to index tax brackets to inflation, and again increase the basic personal exemption. This means that more than 2,000 taxpayers in this province will be removed from the tax roll saving Manitobans \$23 million this fiscal year and \$34 million by 2020, Madam Speaker.

This bill will ensure minimum wage is not subject to the desire of the government of the day nor getting its direction from unions. After a decade of debt, decay, and decline our government is working hard for Manitobans. This bill provides certainty, as I've stated before, for the business community and its workers. This decision to index balances the needs of those individuals. Our government is committed to fixing the Province's finances and restoring the

balance. We know Manitobans deserve better, and by making these choices and these changes, we are demonstrating that we hear their voices. We've heard them loud and clear and we continue to hear them, Madam Speaker, because those are the voices that make good decisions in this Legislature.

I believe that all members can ultimately look favourably on this legislation, and again I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward.

Can we please, Madam Speaker, get on and get those three nickels in the pockets of Manitobans?

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 33. I'm amazed every day I come in here at the apparent corporate culture of the Progressive Conservative caucus across the way.

The member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer) in her comment said that she cannot believe that opposition members have the audacity to debate this bill for a second day in the Manitoba Legislature. A bill which we think is very important to the livelihoods of people in our province that have the very least, and we have frustration that flows from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) down to the Cabinet members, down to even those sitting in the back row of this Legislature that cannot believe that members of the official opposition should have the right to debate, should have the right to ask questions and get answers, and have the right to bring things forward.

And I know even then the member for St. Vital is heckling my putting on the record the very, very basic right that we're entitled to have, as members of the opposition, to talk about bills.

And it's important to discuss this bill. And it's important because minimum wage earners struggle to make ends meet. And this government's choice, since it was elected has not made their lives any easier. This is a government which chose for the first time in nearly two decades not to raise the minimum wage. Seventeen years of the NDP government—17 years, there was an increase in the minimum wage to try and give those who the least just a little bit more, and that didn't happen last year.

And now we have Bill 33, which members opposite are somehow suggesting is a panacea for people who have the least when really all it does, is it legislates locking in people at the very, very lowest rung in the ladder. These are the very people—and we even heard it in the last speech—there is this Damon

Runyonesque, this Horatio Alger look-what-I-did sense that people have that don't have an absolute clue what it is like for young people, that do not have an absolute clue for what it is for people who are living in poverty, who don't have a clue what it's like for people losing their jobs because of the inactivity of this government to try and make things meet.

The Premier froze minimum wage. But, of course, he made sure that he protected for himself, and for his ministers, a 20 per cent raise. You know, I've talked to lots of workers who say, that's great, I'll take a 20 per cent pay raise, and then I'll freeze my wages for the next four years. There's lots of workers out there—in fact, most workers would agree. But here we have the top-down way, the trickle down economics that the members opposite still believe in, and this is nothing more than another example of that.

Now, there are a lot of myths about minimum wage that I know members opposite hold near and dear to their heart. And, you know, I like the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston), but when I listened to the comments he made, he showed a misunderstanding of what minimum wage is all about and a misunderstanding of who actually collects minimum wage. The member for St. James would have us believe that the minimum wage is just a stopping place. Just, you earn minimum wage for a short period of time, maybe a couple of months or a year, and then it's guaranteed and ordained, even if you don't have the level of educational attainment, even if you live in a community that might not hot—might not have opportunities, or maybe you, personally, have issues which would make it more difficult to go and be retrained or to take a job with more responsibility. People rely on that minimum wage.

And who relies on that minimum wage? Well, it's not all young people. Although young people are more likely than any other group to rely on minimum wage, it's also minimum wage earners are women. Some of them are single moms that are not 18 years old or 21 years old, that may be much older than that but still require a fair wage to be able to provide for themselves and their family.

And, you know, I know people can talk about their own examples of being able to work at a minimum wage job and get through school. One of the measures I've seen, the Canadian Federation of Students provide year after year is how many hours you would actually have to work at a minimum wage

job in order to save up enough money to pay your university tuition. Now, we're—we've been lucky in Manitoba in the past, because we've had a relatively high minimum wage and low tuition, but even at that, the number of hours someone needs to work in Manitoba at minimum wage to earn their tuition for the next year is much higher than it was when I went through university one generation ago.

When I went through law school, the pay—the tuition every year was only \$1,500. That same law school education now costs, I believe, somewhere in the range of \$10,000 a year. Minimum wage has not gone up by a factor of six or seven in that generation.

And I know this because I now have a daughter at university who's working a job, not at minimum wage but close to minimum wage. She and her friends are out there working to make sure that they can provide—but I'll tell you, if my daughter was trying to do this on her own, it would be extremely, extremely difficult to do.

Now, I know that we hear other myths that the government members want to put forward, and one we hear most often is, well, if you raise the minimum wage, it's going to lead to more unemployment in the province. And that is not borne out even by the words of the members opposite. The members have been quite quick to put on the record that after 17 years of continuous increase to the minimum wage, Manitoba's minimum wage now stands as the fifth highest in the country—[interjection]—and the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk) is agreeing, and I'm glad to hear that. He agrees with what his own members are saying, and that's good because sometimes members over there don't even agree with what they've put on the record that day or the day before.

And, of course, with the fifth highest rate of—or fifth highest rate of minimum wage, what is Manitoba's rate of unemployment? Well, actually, for most of the past 17 years, it's been lowest or the second lowest in the entire country, which must be very, very difficult to reconcile for those members whose economic view of the world is that a higher minimum wage must result in higher unemployment, because it's just not true.

But what else does happen if you have a higher minimum wage? You've a higher rate of labour force participation. And, if you look at Manitoba, Manitoba actually has one of the highest rates of labour force participation, because if you provide a decent minimum wage, it incents people to do

exactly what Progressive Conservatives tell people to do, which is to go out and get a job. That's exactly what a higher minimum wage encourages people to do.

And that's why a higher minimum wage is good for the people earning minimum wage, but it's good for everybody else too. And it's also good for business owners who pay a higher minimum wage, but then have more people coming into their shop or into their restaurant or into their business who are then able to spend more money. [interjection] And there is the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes)—there's the member for St. Norbert who now wants to heckle, who wants to put his vast business experience on the record, and I'll be happy to hear from him, and he can tell us why a minimum wage is bad for business.

* (16:20)

Now, I'm going to then thank the member for St. Norbert clearly demonstrating he wants more information. I'm going to put on the record of—the summary of a very, very good report that was prepared by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. [interjection] It came out in October 2014, and it's called, Dispelling Minimum Wage Mythology: The Minimum Wage and the Impact on Jobs in Canada, 1983-2012—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And this report was prepared by two individuals named Jordan Brennan and Jim Stanford. I've had the chance to meet Mr. Stanford who is—who was one of Canada's most brilliant economists who now has moved to Australia. But we hope that we'll get him back to continue to be a strong voice and an intelligent economic voice on progressive matters.

So here's what the report has to say: "Every time a provincial government debates whether to raise its minimum wage, employer advocates protest loudly that a higher minimum wage will reduce employment." Well, we know that—there's the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) who used to be one of those very voices who used to tell us how the sky was falling if we raised minimum wage by 25 cents or 50 cents.

"Boosting minimum wages may be well-intentioned, employers and some economists argue, but will end up hurting those who it was meant to help. Making something more expensive, they argue,

means less of it will be purchased. In contrast, other economists and social advocates point to the potential economic benefits of higher minimum wages, including stronger consumer purchasing power, higher productivity and better employee retention. There is no conclusive outcome to this debate on a theoretical level; whether the positive effects outweigh the negative effects therefore becomes an empirical question." For the member for Southdale (Mr. Smith), that means science.

"To that end, this report takes a detailed empirical look at the relationship between minimum wages and employment in all ten Canadian provinces between 1983 and 2012. It finds almost no evidence of any connection whatsoever between higher minimum wages and employment levels in Canada. And where an empirical connection is found, it is almost as likely to be positive as negative: in other words, in many cases, higher minimum wages were associated with higher employment (not lower). The report confirms that employment levels are overwhelmingly determined by larger macro-economic factors (such as the state of aggregate demand and GDP growth) and are not very sensitive at all to wage regulations.

"The report's major features and findings include"—and on an aside, the members can look this up and read the report. It's very readable. The report's major features and findings include, first, "The report casts a wide empirical net in search of any evidence that higher minimum wages reduce employment or increase unemployment.

"Seven regressions were conducted using historical data for each province from 1983 through 2012. These regressions covered several different potential indicators by which minimum wages have been held to cause significant harm to employment outcomes—including total employment, employment and unemployment rates, youth-specific employment and unemployment rates, and sector-specific employment in low-wage sectors (namely, retail and hospitality).

"Ninety per cent of the tests indicated no statistically significant relationship whatsoever between a higher minimum wage and labour market outcomes in Canada."

In seven of the 10 regressions, "the minimum wage was found to be a statistically significant determinant of employment or unemployment. However, of these cases, the effect was seen to be positive, leading to higher employment or lower

unemployment, almost as often, in three cases, as it was seen to be negative (four cases).

"Even when the analysis is focused on those segments of the labour market where low wages are most common (among young workers and in the retail and hospitality sectors), there was no consistent evidence of significant disemployment effects from higher minimum wages.

"Claims that higher minimum wages will inevitably cause measurable negative consequences (especially for young workers and those in low-wage industries) are not consistent with empirical evidence from the Canadian provinces. Minimum wage regulations do not have important consequences on employment outcomes in either direction. Not surprisingly, employment outcomes depend first and foremost on the overall level of spending and macro-economic activity."

So I would encourage all members to read that report, because it's very, very useful and very instructive for all of us as we decide what to do.

Now, the idea of putting into legislation required increases to the minimum wage, I suppose, is better than what happened the last time the Progressive Conservative Party was in power, when they froze minimum wage year after year after year, and Manitobans working at minimum wage fell further and further into poverty. There's a poverty line, but members opposite need to know there's also a measure of depth of poverty, and, in Manitoba, that depth of poverty became worse and worse for so many people by the policies of the previous government.

So we know that there would be ways to improve this bill. And we'll be talking with this bill when it goes to committee, and we are prepared to move it on to committee even if members don't like us debating it for all of two days in the Legislature.

We think there's a few things that could be done that could greatly improve this bill. First of all, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet put the pause button on minimum wage for all of last year. It seems to make sense the first increase for this year, for 2017, would be to give a double increase to catch people up at least to where they were the year before. And that would be very, very easy to do, and I'm—I couldn't see why members opposite would disagree with that.

Secondly, we can always change the increase from the change in the consumer price index to the

consumer price index plus some other measure. And this government has already thought that was appropriate when it came to tuition fees. This government thinks it's appropriate to raise tuition fees by the consumer price index plus 5 per cent per year. Yet, at the same time, they believe that providing a minimum wage increase of anything other than the CPI is somehow going to lead to the decline of Manitoba's economy as we know it.

So we could always change this bill to accept that minimum wage is not a living wage. That minimum wage is not yet at a place where we can say that people are able to live on and support their families. We could always come back with a measure to provide for an increase of—increase the consumer price index plus some other measure that provides the same level of stability and security that members opposite seem to be talking about. But it also gives us, as Manitobans, the confidence that, each and every year, Manitobans are going to start getting closer to, at the very least, a minimum poverty line from earning minimum wage.

So those are things that we can certainly do that I think could improve the bill. I'm very interested to hear what Manitobans will say at committee, and I expect the government, when they read the report, when they put aside some of their mythologies and some of their incorrect beliefs, they will actually see that there are smarter ways to have a minimum wage policy than to lock people into poverty for time—for ever.

We could also provide that those minimum wage increases are a bare minimum and it would be open to the government each year to come out and suggest that there should be a greater amount. That's another way to do it. That would make it less likely that we'll have to change the law in 2020, when Manitobans elect, once again, a government that actually cares about ordinary Manitobans, that wants to lift people up and not punish people who find themselves at the very bottom of the economic scale.

So, for all those reasons, Madam Speaker, we believe that a higher minimum wage is good for a number of reasons. It helps people who are earning minimum wage to get by, whether they are students, whether they're single moms, whether they're people at the end of their working career, whether they're older people who've just rejoined the workforce, it is appropriate to pay them a fair amount.

I believe, my colleagues believe, and, of course, we have lots of evidence that having a

higher minimum wage actually serves as an incentive for more people to want to join the workforce. And I know, when the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) was with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, we talked about a lot of things. One of the things we talked about was a shortage of workers. I can't imagine why we wouldn't want to pass an improved law that would increase the pool of people working in the province of Manitoba and allow people, hopefully, to start moving up the ladder.

So we are prepared to have this bill head to committee. We think that there's things we can do to make the concept of a guaranteed annual raise in the minimum wage better and more civilized and more humane that will result in a better Manitoba.

So I'm very pleased to have a chance to speak on this bill. I know there's still a few members who wish to speak, and I look forward to committee hearings.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just a few words on Bill 33, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act.

Minimum wage is a reality well-known for many of my constituents in Logan. Personally, I am well familiar with it myself. Here in Manitoba, minimum wage earners have been struggling to make ends meet after this government refused to give them a raise for two years. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) froze minimum wages for workers, but made sure to give himself a 20 per cent raise in his first year in government. Then he locked it in.

* (16:30)

This bill fails to do enough for minimum wage workers. Our NDP government raised minimum wage every year when we were in government. Under the Conservative government, minimum wage workers are now earning half of what they've earned under us. We raised minimum wage 30 cents in 2015 and this government is raising 15 cents in 2017. By refusing to guarantee an annual raise for minimum wage workers, they are locking Manitobans in with a wage that is too low.

Many minimum wage earners are women, some of them single mothers and many are working students. Many, many years ago, as a high school and then university student in the Philippines, I have met many students with dire circumstances just like me, if not worse. We lived a very difficult life of hand-to-mouth existence.

I remember sharing in this House the story of a university student I know that, when asked what she had for dinner the night before, she said, typewriter. How was that, asked the friend. The family of this university student friend of mine ate with their bare hands, as spoons and forks were expensive and people with very little money to spend can do without them. The female student responded, well, I scoop morsels of rice with my bare fingers and then hit the salt in a small saucer with bare fingertip. The way fingertip hits the salt is similar to hitting a typewriter keys with one finger. Madam Speaker, that female student graduated from university and became a certified general accountant.

Another classmate of mine, a male student, faced with many challenges including a jobless, alcoholic father. After university, that male student was—pursued masteral studies while working full time, then he took the highly difficult, competitive foreign service officers exam and became a career diplomat, assigned to so many international posts until he reached retirement age for career diplomats.

Another amazing success story—and this is very close to home here in Winnipeg. A few weeks ago, I had attended a beautiful gala event, the 2017 celebration of excellence awards honouring distinguished alumni of the University of Manitoba. One of the awardees was Sister Lesley, who was at the public gallery this afternoon. By the way, the honourable Minister of Education was also at that event and he gave a remarkable, eloquent greetings or speech. At that event, the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement award was the husband-and-wife team of architect John Patkau and Patricia Patkau. In his brief acceptance speech, John extolled the virtues and value of public education. He shared that he came from a family of very modest means, yet a family of hard-working, caring, civic-minded parents who passed on their children the love for learning and pursuit of higher education. John Patkau stated that without public education from K to 12 and the resources provided to colleges and universities by government, his phenomenal professional success would not have been possible. Imagine what Manitoba would have missed if funding public education was uncertain, as it is getting to be these days. We would have an economy and community bereft of the benefits the likes of which John Patkau and many others in varied professions and trade, who have been successful in pursuing their dreams despite encountering huge challenges are providing our province right now.

So, for those struggling students working on minimum wage, a 15-cent increase will hardly bring comfort nor lessen the hardship they are facing each and every day.

How long will it take the students to finish a university program or even a vocational technical program if they work part-time and take their courses part-time? And if they are paying rent in addition to budgeting their earnings to make sure they have food and clothing, how much would be left for their school tuition, especially now that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is imposing, what, 5 to 7 per cent tuition fee hike? How can a single parent, who's not so lucky to have a good-paying job, yet persisting to provide for his or her family and desiring to help the children obtain education that will allow them a modicum of a level playing field later on in their working career?

Madam Speaker, if people are—people of Manitoba are provided support such as a living wage, affordable housing, adequate health care, education and training, we will have way less or very little social ills that we see happening right now.

So we in this side of the House are urging the Conservative government to increase the minimum wage, make it a living wage and not just 15 cents, as they are proposing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 33, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act, Employment Standards Code amendment.

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

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I'm wondering if we could have that recorded as unanimous.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have it recorded as unanimous? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, we'd like to call Bill 4—oh, pardon me, if I may just do a committee announcement.

House Business

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a committee announcement.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on May 25th, 2017, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report—Manitoba East Side Road Authority, dated September 2016; Auditor General's Report—Public Interest Disclosure Investigation, Manitoba East Side Road Authority, dated September 2016. Witnesses to be called: Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), Deputy Minister of Infrastructure.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on May 25th, 2017, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report—Manitoba East Side Road Authority, dated September 2016; and Auditor General's Report—Public Interest Disclosure Investigation, Manitoba East Side Road Authority, dated September 2016. Witnesses to be called: Minister of Infrastructure and Deputy Minister of Infrastructure.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 4—The Provincial Court Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: And, as indicated, we will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

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

Motion presented.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm pleased to put a few words on the record in third reading with respect to Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

The bill—this bill, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, will provide for an administrative judicial justice of the peace and will also allow for senior judicial justices of the peace.

The administrative JJP will assist the chief judge in the administration and management of the JJP program. The administrative JJP will be appointed for a five-year non-renewable term from within the complement of JJPs. The administrative

JJP will also perform the duties of a JJP as directed by the chief judge.

Senior JJPs will be retired JJPs who indicate to the chief judge that they are available for JJP duties. The ability of the chief judge to assign senior JJPs provides the courts with the flexibility to address a variety of circumstances that affect the availability of JJP resources such as times when a full-time JJP is on an extended leave, such as maternity leave or sick leave.

Senior JJPs can also assist the court in ensuring timely JJP service when there is a strain on the JJP resources of the courts.

The JJPs perform an integral role within the Provincial Court system, and this bill will help to address the JJP resource needs of our province. This will, in turn, contribute to enhanced court services for all Manitobans, and I look forward to the passage of this bill.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, we're prepared to support Bill 4. Bill 4 will increase—or at least we hope will increase—the resources available to the Provincial Court of Manitoba by creating a senior judicial justice of the peace program. I know today, of course, we've heard—we've had a couple of examples where we pointed out that the new government wasn't prepared to accept some of the good ideas brought forward by New Democrats. We are pleased that the minister has actually accepted an idea from the previous government. It was, of course, our government that brought on the senior judge program, and we think it only reasonable that we do the same with the judicial justices of the peace.

When I asked the minister questions in our committee meeting, the minister put on the record that it's her intention that we would add the equivalent of one judicial justice of the peace position, which may be taken up by a number of different senior judicial justices of the peace who indicate their wish to perform that role, and if that means adding another judicial justice of the peace to the court system, we see that as a positive thing.

Judicial justices of the peace, or JJPs, because that's a very difficult thing to say over and over again, are truly front-line justices in our court system. They perform a lot of the work hearing applications for protection orders or protective relief in situations of domestic violence, Madam Speaker. They are often the ones who hear requests for

warrants. They do a lot of work and not always from 9 to 5 or in the course of the courthouse from 10 to 4. A lot of the work they do is in the evenings and on weekends because that's when people need those legal services.

And we support that. I'm hoping I will see the minister's Estimates books tomorrow and we'll confirm that, indeed, they have budgeted for that additional—those additional resources and I hope that will be the case, and I do take the minister at her word.

The other only caveat I have to put on this is that this bill will create a position called an Administrative JJP, and as I understand it, the idea is that individual will serve as a regular JJP but they will be, as directed by the provincial judge, also performing some other functions that don't involve being in a courtroom but are administrative, presumably dealing with training, presumably other responsibilities that will be given.

And the minister in the questions put on the record that she will not actually have control over how much time that an administrative JJP spends on those administrative matters as opposed to in the courtroom. I suppose in the worst possible case the chief judge of the Provincial Court could have that JJP doing administrative work full time, which would be no gain for the system. I'm hopeful, knowing the chief judge as I do, and hearing what the minister had to say, that will not be the case, and, hopefully, it will add to additional efficiency for the system.

So, as Tom Waits once said: The small print giveth and the large print—"the large print giveth and the small print taketh away". I hope that, in this case, this bill will, indeed, add to the resources for JJPs who do such an important job in our system.

So, with those comments, Madam Speaker, we're quite prepared to have Bill 4 pass third reading, and I do look forward to just confirming in the minister's Estimates that, in fact, the requested resources have been budgeted and will be part of the justice system in years to come. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Oh, pardon me. I missed seeing the honourable member for River Heights.

The honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, we see this as a positive step, and are supportive of this legislation.

Madam Speaker: Is the House now ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I'd like to see if there's leave to have this as recorded unanimous agreement.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to indicate that this House was unanimously supported? *[Agreed]*

Bill 15—The Department of Justice Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to Bill 15, as indicated earlier, The Department of Justice Amendment Act, concurrence and third reading.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 15, The Department of Justice Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Justice, reported from the Standing Committee on Justice, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to this motion for third and final reading for Bill 15, as it will provide for needed protection to Crown attorneys from difficulties that can result from being personally named as defendants in lawsuits by persons who have been the subject of a prosecution.

The important amendments contained in Bill 15 will require that the Attorney General is named as the defendant in civil lawsuits rather than the individual prosecutor who was assigned to the criminal case. The ability of those who have been prosecuted to bring lawsuits for behaviour they believe is actionable will not be affected. They will still be able to bring lawsuits, but the defendant will need to be identified as the Attorney General rather than the Crown attorney who was assigned to the particular case.

Sometimes lawsuits filed against the individual Crown attorneys can be vexatious, frivolous, and without merit. While these may ultimately be dismissed, it can take months for that to occur. In the meantime, the individually named Crown attorney can be impacted personally and professionally by their name being associated with the allegation, no matter how frivolous or without merit the claim may be.

So in conclusion, Madam Speaker, these amendments responsibly balance the protection of the names of individual Crowns from lawsuits arising from their difficult but required work in the prosecution of criminal cases while preserving the rights of those individuals who bring an action they believe has merit.

I urge the House to support third reading of this bill, and I look forward to moving this forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I can put on the record that the NDP caucus supports Bill 15.

Bill 15 will provide Crown attorneys with some measure of protection against lawsuits. Right now, of course, if somebody is unhappy with the way that a case has been prosecuted, whether they have a valid reason or not, they can name a Crown attorney personally as a defendant, and although the Department of Justice would very quickly step in and conduct a defense of that case, it still is an issue if the Crown attorney has a claim that's against them. If a Crown attorney is going to purchase a home or refinance their home or vehicle, that can actually be a problem because the bank wants to know the nature of the claim that's provided—or that's being made against them.

And also, emotionally, I can attest, it is quite upsetting to be named as a defendant in a lawsuit, and we want Crown attorneys to be able to focus on the important work they do, which, of course, is prosecuting cases to their best of their ability, prosecuting people when it's in the public interest and also when there's a reasonable likelihood of success. In prosecuting them, we want them to be focused on that and not on a frivolous or vexatious lawsuit.

* (16:50)

Now I'm glad the minister has put this on the record: this bill does not in any way prevent Manitobans from being able to bring claims if

they believe that they have a valid reason, and unfortunately in Canada there have been some cases of malicious prosecution, most recently there was a case in Saskatchewan. That would not stop an individual in Manitoba from being able to bring a lawsuit, but nothing would change. It would still be the Department of Justice that would handle the defence of that; it would just mean that while that case is outstanding, the Crown attorney would not have that hanging over their head.

Now, certainly, on our side we support the work that Crown attorneys do. When I was minister I was very pleased to increase the number of Crown attorneys in Manitoba, increase the number of articling students working for the Crown's office, and actually making sure that we paid Crown attorneys a fair wage—not just because we think that they should because of their training, but because we know it's important to attract Crown attorneys not just to work in Winnipeg, but also other centres across Manitoba, including the city of Thompson where there are a number of judicial—number of Crown vacancies. I'll have the chance to discuss that at more length with the minister in Estimates.

And certainly on our side, we would not have sought to impose a wage freeze on Crown attorneys because we really respect the work that they do, and they are, like other—like tens of other thousands of other people, they are front-line public services. And although this bill is certainly something we know the Crown attorneys support, I expect they would have a very different tune if they were asked what they thought of a government that was purporting to freeze their wages and disrespect them in that way.

So we are certainly prepared to have this bill pass. The Attorney General needs to know she might be the recipient of more lawsuits, but I think she's—hopefully she's been briefed on that and what to do, and we're prepared to have this bill move ahead.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is—the honourable member for Burrows.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Remarks are very short. Just wanted to put on record again that our party is in full support of Bill 15.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House now ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 15, The Department of Justice Amendment Act.

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

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): I'd like to see if there is agreement to record this as unanimous?

Madam Speaker: Is there agreement to record this vote as unanimous? [*Agreed*]

Bill 32—The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017

Madam Speaker: And as earlier determined, we will now move to Bill 32, concurrence and third reading of Bill 32, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 32, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017; Loi corrective de 2017, reported from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm pleased to be able to speak to this motion for third and final reading for Bill 32 as it will make minor but necessary amendments to various statutes to ensure clarity, consistency and accuracy.

The amendments captured in Bill 32 corrects spelling errors, translation errors and drafting errors that have been identified by various departments and stakeholders. Some of the amendments make minor changes to language to ensure consistency with other statutes so that the legislation can be operationally implemented more easily. Other minor amendments ensure consistency with organizational changes made by public institutions including government. Although these amendments do not create significant changes, Madam Speaker, they are necessary to ensure the effective operation of government departments and the delivery of services to Manitobans.

And I want at this point in time, Madam Speaker, to take the opportunity to thank all of those in legal services who identify some of the changes that should take place throughout the year, and the tremendous work that they do for us in the drafting of our legislation.

So, Madam Speaker, I urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to support the passage of this bill through third reading.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, indeed this bill is an annual tradition in this Legislature—that someone—usually the Minister of Justice—has to bring forward the list of changes, of things that are found by the legal officers that could be improved, whether it's translation, whether it's a comma, whether it's a period or a semi-colon, or simply something that was missed that could be a minor change.

I appreciate the minister providing and putting on the record answers to some of the questions that I asked in the question and answer process that went ahead on this bill.

This is the first year, of course, we've had questions and answers taking place when bills are introduced, and it think it will be helpful to monitor how that system works. There have been some question-answer periods that have been very positive. There have been some question-answer periods that have been less positive, and I'm hoping that we'll take a look.

I think, in this case, even though the question and answer period itself wasn't very positive, I do appreciate the minister coming to committee and providing those answers which allowed us to then move ahead.

There is one aspect of the bill that I think I do need to comment on. This bill is going to standardize—I guess you would say—the way that various independent officers are appointed. It's a little bit unusual for that to be part of this annual law. I don't know there's anything nefarious about that, but I think it is a good time for all of us to think about whether the way we appoint independent officers truly is the best way, and here I'm speaking about the Auditor General, the Children's Advocate, the Ombudsman, Chief Electoral Officer.

Right now, there is a process which apparently the government of—the new government of the

day believes means that they can ultimately push through who that individual is going to be, even if there's further questions being raised by one—by an opposition party or by an independent member. I think we can do better than that, and this bill is a missed opportunity to have that discussion.

It is still—when I look at it, it's 2017. After a committee makes its recommendation, who is it that actually has to approve the independent officer being appointed? It's actually the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and I don't say this to criticize this particular Premier; I have all kinds of other things to criticize this Premier about. But in—it—I don't know if it makes sense right—any more that these independent officers actually have to go through the process of actually having their employment contract come because of the Premier approving the committee.

Maybe if it is to be independent—Madam Speaker, I know I've had some concerns about certain things coming to Speaker's Office—maybe the independent officer should be approved by the Speaker of the House if it's to be truly independent.

We're going—not going to oppose this bill going ahead, but I think I have to put on the record that this is a missed opportunity. If the minister was going to spend the time thinking about this, this would have been the time to talk not just to the official opposition but to the independent members and see if we can improve the process and improve the way that we hire these very, very important independent officers.

So, with those words, Madam Speaker, the bill in large part, is fine.

This is a missed opportunity, but we look forward to having that discussion and improving the way this works in future.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, we concur with the changes here and look forward to further discussions along the lines suggested by the MLA for Minto at some future time.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 32, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017.

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

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, wondering if we could have that recorded as unanimous.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have that recorded as unanimous?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Micklefield: I'm very tempted to call a point of order, but I would actually prefer to seek leave of the House and see if we could call it 5 o'clock.

Madam Speaker: Well, the hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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