

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
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ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, May 20, 2014**

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 70—The Real Estate Services Act**

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection):** I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Jobs and the Economy, that Bill 70, The Real Estate Services Act; Loi sur les services immobiliers, be now read for a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, a home or a condominium is the biggest, most important investment most families in Manitoba will make, and they want to know that they are protected when making this purchase.

The Real Estate Services Act will replace the current Real Estate Brokers Act, which is over 60 years old. The act will modernize the regulation and oversight of the industry, address our evolving real estate marketplace and ensure homebuyers and sellers get a fair deal from their agents.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there will be a code of practice—will be introduced, and we look forward to the opposition supporting this. Thank you.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

**PETITIONS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

**Tabor Home—Construction Delays**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Morden's population has grown nearly 20 per cent in five years.

(2) Twenty-three per cent of Morden's population is over the age of 65.

(3) The community worked for years to get the provincial government's commitment to build a new personal-care home and, as a result, construction of the new Tabor Home was finally promised in 2010.

(4) The Minister of Health initially indicated that construction of the new Tabor Home would commence in 2013.

(5) The Minister of Health subsequently broke her promise and delayed construction until spring 2014.

(6) The Minister of Health broke that promise as well, delaying construction again until fall 2014.

(7) In March of 2014, the Minister of Health broke her promise yet again, once more delaying construction of Tabor Home until 2015.

(8) Too many seniors continue to live out their final days and months in facilities far from home and family because of a shortage of personal-care-home beds in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to stop breaking their promises, stop the delays and keep their commitment to proceed with the construction of Tabor Home in 2014.

And this petition is signed by B. Andrew, H. Penner, A. Miller and many other fine Manitobans.

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

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—  
Effects on Manitoba Economy**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Premier of Manitoba is on record calling the idea of a hike in the PST ridiculous.

(2) Economists calculate the PST has cost the average family \$437 more in taxes after only six months.

(3) Seventy-five per cent of small businesses in Manitoba agree provincial taxes are discouraging them from growing their businesses.

(4) The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association estimates that 1 per cent increase in the PST will result in a loss to the economy of \$42 million and threaten hundreds of jobs in that sector.

(5) Partly due to the PST, overall taxes on new investment in Manitoba recently stood at 26.3 per cent whereas the Alberta rate was 16.2 per cent and the Ontario rate was 17.9 per cent, according to the Manitoba's Chambers of Commerce.

(6) The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce are concerned that the PST hike will make an already uncompetitive tax framework even more unattractive to job creators in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the job-killing PST increase.

(2) To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to reject or approve any increases to the PST through a referendum.

This petition is submitted on behalf of E. Grant, M. Pull, C. Weber and many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Beausejour District Hospital— Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the northeast region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by C. Bender, A. Berry, J. Mellors and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are there any further petitions? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports?

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 2013 Communities Economic Development Fund Annual Report as well as the quarterly report ending December 31st, 2013, for the Communities Economic Development Fund.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are there any further tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 25 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Luke Klassen. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from École Selkirk Junior High 65 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Joan Cooney, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Job Creation Strategy Government Record

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, the NDP job creation strategy, if you could call it that, is pretty clear: grab more money off the kitchen tables of Manitoba families, put it on the Cabinet table and then the Cabinet can pick their favourite industries and hand out subsidy cheques and do photo opportunities.

Last week the government continued with this so-called strategy by announcing more than \$10 million of subsidies to Price Industries, and—too much ballyhoo, and the response from Mr. Price was that Manitoba's, quote, a tough place to do business. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you.

Well, after 15 years, is this the NDP job creation plan, corporate handouts and photo ops?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we were pleased to be part of an announcement of 175 new high-tech, high-quality jobs in Manitoba, and that is exactly what we want in Manitoba. We want our best industries to expand here.

\* (13:40)

Price Industries is particularly noted for its strong research and development program. I do note that Manitoba has the best R & D tax credit in the country. Good R & D creates good products that have the ability to be sold anywhere in the marketplace around the world, and this company has demonstrated they could do that. They have some of the best products for protecting air quality in high-risk situations such as hospitals and university labs and research labs everywhere. They do all that R & D in Manitoba.

We were pleased to support the training component of that, which allows Manitobans to have good jobs. It supports our agenda in high schools where we're building science labs and improving our math curriculum.

We see great opportunity in the future of Manitoba when we support those kinds of initiatives.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, perhaps if we created a better environment here—if the government would create a better environment for real growth here, it wouldn't have to use subsidy cheques to induce people to stay.

Gerry Price is a great Manitoban and his company a great Manitoba company. But it's true that Gerry Price has created far more jobs in the United States during the NDP's term than he has in Manitoba, and part of the reason is that this government hasn't created an environment for growth here. Through high taxes, through high manufacturing taxes, through a high payroll tax, through high income taxes, through a high sales tax, it's actually pushed business away. It's actually hurt our province, and the government knew that before the last election when it ran on a promise not to raise the same taxes that it then went and raised right after the election.

Now, the spenDP claims they create jobs, but what they actually do is raise the PST and fees and so on and take more money away from Manitobans. How does taking \$1,600 on average off the tables of Manitobans actually help create jobs in this province?

**Mr. Selinger:** We are strengthening the math curriculum in our schools. One per cent, if he says it's equal to \$1,600, means that an individual would have to have \$160,000 of disposable income. It doesn't add up.

Now, let's look at the facts. When the Leader of the Opposition was in office, corporate taxes were 17 per cent; under us, they're 12 per cent. We've made a dramatic reduction. And when the Leader of the Opposition was in office, small-business taxes were at 9 per cent, only to a threshold of \$200,000. They are now zero, the lowest in Canada, up to a threshold of \$425,000.

An average family in Manitoba now has seen 85 reductions of various forms of taxes. They now are paying \$3,800 less than they would have been if the Leader of the Opposition would have continued along his path of high taxes, no jobs and privatizations.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, you have to ask yourself, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier had a record he could run on, wouldn't he talk about it? Why does he talk about the record of 20-years-ago government? He can't compete with the neighbours around us, so he compares himself to 20 years ago. Other governments are moving ahead, other governments are competing, other governments are winning.

And the fact of the matter is that this government's economic strategy for job creation is working. It is working for Grand Forks, it's working

for Saskatchewan, it's working for Minnesota; it's working for neighbouring jurisdictions, but it's not working for our province. And that's why this government gets a rating of tied for seventh out of 10 Canadian provinces from the Conference Board of Canada for job creation and economic strategies.

So can the Premier explain how it is that taking more money away from the real builders of our economy, Manitoba working people and their families, is actually helping when all the statistical evidence says the contrary?

**Mr. Selinger:** Actually, it's fairly clear that the member opposite has not read the evidence put forward by the Conference Board of Canada.

On five of eight indicators: GDP growth, A; unemployment rate, A; inflation rate, A; labour productivity growth, best in the country; employment growth, among the best in the country, Mr. Speaker. Those are the hard facts.

The member opposite likes to quote the Conference Board of Canada. Perhaps he will then quote them when they say build good, clean hydro, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps he will quote them when they say we're creating 58,900 jobs in Manitoba with our infrastructure program. Let's quote the Conference Board of Canada; it's a good story for Manitoba.

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

#### **NDP Management Record Provincial Comparison**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The Premier's been down so long, the bottom looks like up for him, Mr. Speaker, 10th so often that when he's seventh, he thinks it's a great achievement.

But seventh isn't satisfactory. In fact, tied for seventh with Quebec, so you're as close to eighth as you are to sixth. That's not great; in fact, that's bad.

And, in fact, their ratings on taxation are bad. Our ratings on red tape creation are bad. On unaddressed social problems, over the long period this government's been in power, this government has a failing record. And in terms of a lot of other areas, such as their large and growing debt, this is a Province that's now vulnerable to downturns far more than it's been in the past.

So the fact of the matter is, no matter how the Premier likes to sugar-coat his marks on recess and

gym, he failed all the major courses. Will he admit that? Will he admit that he's tied for seventh and that, after 15 years, that's the best he can do?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I have to say, Mr. Speaker, the member spewed out a number of statements for which he had no factual evidence.

Our growth rate in the economy during the recession was one of the best in Canada.

He talks about the debt load. When he was in office, the debt load was 13.3 cents on the dollar. Where do we have our debt load? Five point eight cents on the dollar, less than half of what they were paying out. We're putting more money into real things for people. Debt-to-GDP ratio when he was in office, 33 per cent; under us, 29 per cent.

On every measure, Mr. Speaker, we're doing better: job creation, debt-to-GDP ratio, cost of servicing the debt, job creation and disposable income. Manitobans are doing better.

He knows it. That's why he can't quote any facts, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Pallister:** Highest dependency on transfer payments in the history of the province, lowest interest rates in modern times and the only province that chose to raise the PST and use the excuse that they were going to invest in something they haven't invested in for four years under this Premier.

Beneficiaries of wonderful times, no doubt, but that's no Gary Doer over there, and the reality is that this record speaks clearly to a government that is now dependent on handouts, dependent on subsidy cheques and dependent on photo opportunities to try to make a case that it simply can't make. It is depleting the resources of Manitobans by increasing taxes at a record rate, higher than any other province in the last two fiscal years, and the reality is Manitobans are feeling the pain.

Now, on this side, we have faith in Manitobans to help rebuild this economy. Why doesn't the Premier? Why doesn't the NDP have faith in Manitobans to invest and spend and create the jobs in this province that we really want to see created here?

**Mr. Selinger:** You may have detected from that question not one fact again, Mr. Speaker, just another string of personal attacks, something the Leader of the Opposition specializes in, because he doesn't have any evidence.

Mr. Speaker, 58,900 jobs with the commitment we've made to infrastructure; 5 and a half billion dollars of investment over the next five years; strategic investment in organizations like CentrePort, which are going to be—make Manitoba the internal—the interior port for trading in North America; strategic investments in flood protection, something the member should know something about. Oops, he wasn't around when that was required.

We did the job. We rebuilt after the '97 flood. We protected the city of Winnipeg. We protected the Red River Valley. Now we're going to protect the people in Lake Manitoba, in Lake St. Martin and the Assiniboine valley.

When it comes to supporting Manitobans, we're there; he's missing in action.

### **Basic Personal Tax Rates Impact on Families**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, nowhere are complaints about high taxes more valid than right here in Manitoba.

The Ernst & Young website has an online personal tax calculator where people can key in their taxable income, they can click on calculate and compare the tax they pay to other jurisdictions. What that site shows is that a single wage earner with an annual income of just \$40,000 pays \$801 more here than they would in Saskatchewan. They pay \$1,200 more than they would in Alberta. They pay \$1,900 more here than they would in BC.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Finance Minister of this province is this: Why is this NDP government so unsympathetic to the tax burden that they place on Manitoba families?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, you know, we've worked hard over our time in government to ensure that life can be affordable for Manitoba families. We know that's something that Manitoba families value. We know that's something that they expect from their governments. That's why we brought in a law to require the basic costs of running a household to be among the lowest in the country, the lowest in North America, and when you look at even other provinces' comparisons, you will see that that's true.

\* (13:50)

If I look at the Saskatchewan budget, which I know the member opposite will love to quote, you look at the bundle of utility costs for Winnipeg, you

see that it is—for a family of four, you see that it is the lowest cost in the country. Now, it's skewed a little bit because they include the telephone system, which is higher than our neighbour to the west of us in Saskatchewan.

So, absolutely, we have more work to do. We want to be working with Manitoba families to keep things affordable, but we think keeping the costs of running your household down among the lowest in the country, the lowest in North America, that's a good start.

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister is whistling the same tune, telling people to move along, that there's nothing to see here.

Yet on this long weekend Manitobans once again opened their newspapers and read the headline Taxed to the max. In fact, that \$40,000 wage earner in Manitoba pays more tax than any other wage earner in any other jurisdiction in this country.

There's a problem here that everyone acknowledges except for those 35 government members. Maybe the Finance Minister thinks it's no big deal, but I assure her it is a big deal for Walt and Terri and their two small boys that I met just this weekend and talked to about this.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government not see the negative effect that their low-wage, high-tax approach is having on Manitoba families?

**Ms. Howard:** Well, this from a party, Mr. Speaker, that's never supported increases to the minimum wage, that saw the purchasing power of the minimum wage actually decrease in their time in government.

But you know what else is true, Mr. Speaker? There is a recent report from an institute in the States, a Brookings institute, that showed that investing in infrastructure, creating jobs in infrastructure, actually reduces income inequality, helps to reduce that wage gap that the members opposite are talking about, because those jobs pay about 30 per cent more on average than jobs with similar levels of education.

So our plan to invest in infrastructure, create good jobs today, create good jobs tomorrow for the kids that are growing up today and provide a quality education system so those kids can get the skills, that will stand today's families in good stead, but it will also stand our children in good stead when they can get those jobs, when they can make more money.

That's a government that looks forward. That's a government that plans for the future.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, this from a government that widened the PST in 2012, they broke their word to Manitobans in doing it, and then they raised the PST in 2013 and broke their word and broke the law, and at the same time Manitobans see hydro rate increases, vehicle registration rate increases and stubbornly high fuel taxes. There's a problem here that everyone sees except them.

This Finance Minister can say that everything is rosy, but it is a problem for every Manitoba family whose household income doesn't go as far as it used to, who has to stretch every dollar because of this government. Mr. Speaker, this government's record on helping Manitobans with marginal incomes is clear. They paint a target on those Manitobans who can least affect the flurry of tax hikes that this government is perpetrating on them.

When it comes to income tax, why is this low-wage, high-tax government content to be at the bottom of the barrel?

**Ms. Howard:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's simply not true what the member opposite is saying.

If you look at the Saskatchewan budget, you look at a comparison of a single person earning \$25,000, which by any measure would be someone with a low income, that person has the lowest household costs in the country living in Winnipeg. That is a fact.

We absolutely have to work every day to keep life affordable in Manitoba. That's why we've made a commitment in law to keep the costs of running a household down.

That's why we have put in place record high property tax increases to help people stay in their homes, see their homes remain affordable even when housing values have doubled and tripled over our time in office. And also, Mr. Speaker, we've just announced a further reduction, a further rebate for seniors—\$235 this year, more next year, more the year after that—to help seniors afford to stay in their homes and have a good quality of life in Manitoba. That's action.

#### **Basic Personal Tax Rates Provincial Comparison**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Mr. Speaker, an office worker in Neepawa compared her provincial income tax on her \$34,000 salary to other provinces. In

BC she would pay \$1,512 less provincial income tax. In Alberta she would pay \$1,138 less in provincial income tax. In Saskatchewan she would pay \$730 less in provincial income tax. In Ontario she would pay \$1,172 less in provincial income tax.

I ask the minister: Why does this office worker pay more provincial income tax in Manitoba than her peers in all but two of the 13 other provinces and territories in Canada?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** As I've been saying, we look at the entire cost of running a household in Manitoba. We look at the costs that many people face in terms of home-care costs that you pay in some provinces when you're supporting older family members; we know in Manitoba we have a universal home-care system. We look at things like child-care fees, which we know for people of low income are among the best in the country here in Manitoba.

So we look at the entire picture, and we believe that Manitoba is an affordable place to live. But we have to keep working on that. That's why we've made the commitment in law to make sure the costs of running your household are among the lowest in the country.

But the other thing that I would say to the member opposite is that we are proud that we in Manitoba have stood strong to protect the fundamental public services that Manitobans tell us are important to them. When they were suggesting that we make half a billion dollars in reckless cuts in one year to balance the budget, we said no to that. We said we're going to invest in stimulus. We're going to protect jobs. We're going to find our way back to balance in a way that doesn't threaten the economy, and that is the path that we continue to be on: creating jobs, protecting services—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, they're the ones that engineered a half a billion dollars in extra taxes over the last few years on Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, that same office worker compared the basic personal exemptions and found that the basic personal exemption in Manitoba was the fourth worst in Canada.

She asked: Why is her personal basic exemption in Manitoba lower than in all other provinces and territories west of Quebec?



**Ms. Howard:** We have raised the basic personal exemption when we've been in office. We have raised it several times.

We have reduced business taxes in this government. We have reduced taxes on families of all kinds in this province. That is true. The simple truth is that families were paying more taxes when the members opposite were in government than they are today and we've managed to protect public services at the same time. That is the truth.

So I would say to the member opposite, if you look at the whole picture, you look at 'affordability' in Manitoba, it's always a challenge. It's something we have to keep working on. But I believe that Manitoba's still an affordable place to live.

I also believe that we are on a path to create good jobs today, to create good jobs for children so Manitoba can stay an affordable place to live and a place with a high quality of life for all—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's time has elapsed.

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, that same office worker with the same \$34,000 salary actually saw her Manitoba income tax increase by \$213 from 2012 to 2013. No change in employment, no change of status, no change in salary, the change was an increase in her provincial income tax, an increase of almost 9 per cent year over year.

Why does this spenDP government insist on taking more and more of Manitobans' disposable income to fund their own spending addictions?

**Ms. Howard:** Mr. Speaker, in our time in government we have seen more than a billion dollars in tax reductions for families, for businesses, for every sector of the Manitoba economy. We have brought in tax credits to help families with some of the high costs that they face, tax credits like the fertility tax credit that helps families with the high price of fertility treatment.

We have struggled and strived and tried our best to keep Manitoba life affordable for families, and we've put that in law. We have assured Manitoba families that they will pay among the lowest costs for running a household anywhere in Canada. And when you look at outside people who validate that, when you look at the Saskatchewan budget, you see that's true, the utility costs for running a household among the lowest.

We will keep working with Manitoba families to keep life affordable, but we'll also work to protect the things that matter to them, not take the advice of members opposite by firing civil servants—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

### **Tax and Fee Increases Limited- and Fixed-Income Manitobans**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, every time taxes or fees go up here in Manitoba, those on limited or fixed incomes are disproportionately hurt. Increasing the PST comes directly out of their pockets. Increasing service fees of all types come from their kitchen tables. Every time there is an increase in education tax, water or sewer fees or bus fares, these are always passed down to those on limited and fixed income who are most impacted.

Why does this government continue to disproportionately target this most vulnerable portion of our society with a tax burden?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite, why is it that his party has never once supported a minimum wage increase, not only in their entire time in opposition, but they didn't support it when they were in government either.

When we came to office the minimum wage had slipped so low that you could buy about the same amount with it as you could 25 years before. That's where it was at. We've rebuilt that minimum wage every year with increases so that people can now earn a minimum wage that helps them get the things that they need.

But we're not stopping there. We're investing in education. We're investing in skills, because we know that if you can get a job in the infrastructure economy, you can make about 30 per cent more than in other jobs with similar education. That is going to help those families, and I've stood and talked to those people who are in apprenticeship programs now, and the reason they're in those programs is because they want to make a good living for their family, they want to have a good life in Winnipeg, and that's the track—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

**Mr. Wishart:** Mr. Speaker, seniors living in their own homes certainly have suffered under this government. They have suffered increases in education tax, 14 per cent increases in the PST, the broadening of the PST to home insurance—a substantial increase for homeowners—gas tax increases for those that are running vehicles, along with auto rate increases pending.

This government continues to take money from the kitchen table of seniors to feed its spending addictions. Why target this most vulnerable group?

**Ms. Howard:** This year, Mr. Speaker, seniors living in their own homes will be eligible for \$235 more in rebates to their property taxes. That's on top of the up to \$1,100 that they are now eligible for. That stands in stark contrast to the amount of property tax increases that they were eligible for under the previous government.

And I will also say, Mr. Speaker, you look at property tax increases over the last 13 years, Manitoba has the lowest property tax increases in that time. Why? Because we have—every time we've been able to invest it in property tax rebates to keep the cost of owning a home affordable for Manitoba seniors.

We also invest in a home-care system, a home-care system that can help those seniors stay in their homes and a home-care system that doesn't require them to pay user fees. That was the plan under the members opposite when they were in government. It's a plan that we have—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly, you don't hear from seniors that there is a reduction in taxes, that's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, this government is clearly failing those on limited and fixed incomes. Food bank usage is up more than 14 per cent over last year. That's the same as the PST; I wonder if there's a correlation. Even more critical, 47 per cent of those served in food banks are children. Increases to the EIA housing allowance called for by many have not yet happened.

When will this government quit targeting those on low income with extra tax burdens?

**Ms. Howard:** Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite had the opportunity to vote for a budget that increased the amount available to families in need, that increased the amount available to individuals so

they could get better places to live, when he had the opportunity to vote for a budget that the director of Winnipeg Harvest called the best budget in 20 years, what did he do? He voted against it.

I'll take no lessons from him how to help the most vulnerable in Manitoba.

### **Seniors on Fixed Incomes Prescription Affordability**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** What he also didn't vote for was breaking the law.

Mr. Speaker, seniors in Manitoba are being put in a difficult situation thanks to this government. Pharmacare deductibles have increased, and at the same time as seniors are paying more PST and more taxes to this government, they have to pay more for the medication that they need. Tough decisions are being made and many seniors are forced to give up their medication because they can't afford it.

Why is this government fuelling their spending addiction by taking medication away from seniors who need them?

**Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question.

This is the government, on this side of the House, that committed to make sure that anyone who needs a cancer drug, a cancer support drug, will get it free at home.

In the last election, when the Canadian Cancer Society asked us for their help and put on the table some of these things we could do to make that cancer patient journey a little easier, we said, yes, how can we help? They said nothing.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Donna and Grant Connor of Gretna are two of these seniors. Two years ago they paid \$865 before Pharmacare kicked in. Last year it was \$1,040 and this year it's \$1,109, an almost \$250 increase in two years. You wonder where the money came from for cancer? There's where it came from.

An increase of \$250 in their deductible plus 14 per cent more PST makes for a tough decision. The Connors simply can't afford their medication.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government feeding their own spending addiction while taking away medication from those that need it?

**Ms. Selby:** Mr. Speaker, we know how important it is to make sure it's affordable for families to get the

medication that they need. We're one of the few provinces that covers 100 per cent of the drug costs after an income-based deductible is reached regardless of age, regardless of medical condition. That is something that most provinces aren't doing.

But I do have to correct something that the member did say. Mr. Speaker, where those savings have come to be able to put back into front-line services, to be able to make sure that we can provide cancer-care drugs for free at home are because we've got partnerships for generic drug purchases that have allowed us to save \$9 million in annual savings in drug costs for Manitobans that we can put back into providing more drugs on that Pharmacare list.

**Mr. Graydon:** And, Mr. Speaker, they probably could've saved more if they were partnered when the New West Partnership.

Mr. Speaker, seniors on fixed incomes have to watch their budgets in terms of their housing needs, their grocery bills and their medication. High taxes on a low income mean seniors have to make tough decisions. The Connors have had to give up their medications that they need. Other seniors are in the same position.

Why is this spenDP government making seniors choose between food and medication?

**Ms. Selby:** Our focus is always making sure people get the care they need as close to home, and of course we want to make it accessible for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the Pharmacare system that we have in Manitoba, but don't take my word for it. The Competition Bureau called Manitoba's generic price policy one of the country's most important developments in public and private drug plan and generic drug policies. We know that because of that plan, we've been able to add more lists to the formulary.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's even more baffling is when we brought in The Competitive Drug Pricing Act, the member for Morden introduced amendments to that bill that would make it more difficult to fight for better pricing.

### **Manitoba Hydro Demand-Side Management**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, last week, Liberals raised concerns about the NDP government's very low targets for demand-side management of electricity growth in Manitoba, and the Premier appeared to not even know the

demand-side management in Manitoba is insufficient compared to other jurisdictions.

Last week, Liberals also raised the issue of compact line technology, which could be used at least for some sections of Bipole III, and the Premier appeared to have never even heard of compact line technology, let alone considered it.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why is his NDP government so poorly informed of such critical issues related to Bipole III?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, one shouldn't turn this assumption into a fact, which is what he's done here. We have considered ways to increase the reliability of Manitoba Hydro.

Let's recall that 70 per cent of the energy comes down through two transmission lines in the Interlake. In 1996, those transmission lines were put out of service due to very serious weather events. There was an opportunity to do something about it, which was completely ignored by the members opposite. They were too busy privatizing the telephone system as opposed to focusing on hydro.

We're now building additional transmission to provide increased reliability to all Manitoba citizens, to all Manitoba businesses, and a \$62-billion economy, for those transmission lines to go down even for one week, would more than pay for the cost of building the new transmission.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, improved demand-side management to at least match the average of American jurisdictions is surely essential to efficient operation of energy production and utilization in our province. Why are Massachusetts, Arizona, Rhode Island, New York, Vermont, Illinois, Minnesota and so many more states doing so much better than Manitoba when it comes to demand-side management of electricity use?

\* (14:10)

When will the Premier table a plan for much better demand-side management in Manitoba?

**Mr. Selinger:** Part of that answer is just about all of those jurisdictions pay at least double what we pay in Manitoba for hydroelectricity.

But we do believe in demand-side management. When we came into office there was no residential demand-side management for Manitobans. We went from No. 10 on energy-efficiency demand

management programs to No. 1 in the country. We think we can do even better.

We've introduced innovative legislation called Pay As You Save, PAYS, which lets somebody put new technology in their home, insulation, high-efficiency furnace, geothermal, other forms of clean technology. In the first month after they install that technology their bill is lower than it was before. They save money and get the environmental benefit and get the savings. That is a way to go in the future.

We think Manitoba Hydro can take it to an even higher level. Stay tuned for future announcements.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, sadly, Manitoba is a laggard in demand-side management, as the graph which I table shows. Nova Scotia, Washington, Connecticut, Mississippi, Iowa, British Columbia, Ohio, Arkansas, California, Michigan, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are all doing better than Manitoba.

I ask the Premier again: When will his government come forward with an up-to-date effort and a plan for better demand-side management in our province?

**Mr. Selinger:** Not only do most of the jurisdictions he references have double the rates, they're also usually highly dependent on coal and carbon fuels for what they do.

Manitoba Hydro, 98-plus per cent clean hydroelectric power, lowest rates in North America, that's our advantage in Manitoba. And we know that if we conserve more energy—and I believe we can—it'll help keep Manitoba's cost of living low.

We do have the lowest rates in North America for hydroelectricity, for auto insurance and home heating, and by law we're going to keep it that way.

#### **Grain Innovation Hub Project Funding**

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, one of the longest, coldest winters in the history of our province is finally over and farmers are beginning to seed. Of course, a little help from the government is always much appreciated.

On Friday, the Minister of Agriculture met with his federal counterpart at the Canadian International Grains Institute to make an important announcement.

Could the minister inform the House as to the content of that announcement?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** Thank you to my fellow colleague from the Interlake area.

Friday's announcement is the anticipated use of Highway 68. Although some members feel that it's not being used, I believe agriculture will use Highway 68 even more.

But, Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to stand beside Minister Ritz as we announced the Grain Innovation Hub, which is an excellent opportunity to strengthen our grain industry, anticipate challenges and take advantage of new opportunities. The Grain Innovation Hub will bring together partners from across the grain industry to support their initial priority areas.

The Manitoba Corn Development Initiative is intended to increase total acreage by expanding production in new parts of the province and also developing quarter-corn that better meets the needs of the livestock sector and other end users.

The Functional Food and Feed Opportunities Project will turn Manitoba-led research and development into commercial food processing investments, build on related research from consumer behaviour to attitudes towards food and health.

Targeted ag food research and development, strategic investments in equipment, human resources and commercial development will be done in partnerships with the grain industry and stakeholders.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's time has elapsed.

#### **Farmland School Tax Rebate Impact on Families**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Mr. Speaker, why does the Minister of Agriculture insist on penalizing farm families with his clawback on the farmland education tax rebate?

First he changed the rules to cap farm families at \$5,000 per family unit. Then he purposely was late in making the forms available; however, he invoked a strict March 31st deadline for application. In other words, he was setting it up to fail.

Why does this minister and this government insist on penalizing farm families to feed their own spending addiction?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** Obviously,

members opposite haven't heard my answer to the question a few times before.

But, you know, it's quite interesting, Mr. Speaker. When I come back farming in 1985, when I received my municipal tax receipt, where—when they were in government, where was—in the '90s, where was—the '90s—where was the school tax rebate when they were in power?

I know that when this government come into power we started bringing in school tax rebate in 2004 of 33 per cent. Where was their opportunity to do that? They have not done that at all, and they will continue not to do that.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I'm surprised he'd take such a shot at Howard Pawley.

Mr. Speaker, why does this minister and this government choose to penalize the food producers of this province to feed their own spending addiction? Many individual farm families are now at zero per cent rebate.

Why does this minister insist on penalizing individual farm family members, often women farmers, with their tax-and-spend addiction?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Obviously, when the members opposite were in power—and let's be repetitious on what I said earlier. It started in 2004. We started at 33 per cent. We are today at 80 per cent.

So what the score in the hockey game here is, they were at zero. We're at 80 per cent. That's a heck of a lot better than they'll ever be.

**Mr. Pedersen:** First this minister caps farm families at \$5,000 per family unit. Then, in typical NDP fashion, they are deliberately late in making the forms available but imposed a hard-and-fast deadline of March 31st.

So how many claims has the minister rejected? How many individual farm families across this province are now at zero per cent rebate, and does this minister and this—his government not care that he's penalizing farm women with his tax-and-spend policies?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** The fact is that we talk about real money. When we talk about the members opposite, they are really trying to figure out what was the best thing.

The unfortunate thing is the members opposite would sooner close down small country schools [*inaudible*] This government is committed to keep

schools in existence regardless of the school enrolment and we will continue, thanks to the Education Minister who is thinking forward towards rural development and the fact that we need to have country schools. We need to have rural development in the province.

Yet, let me repeat, they were at zero. We're at 80 per cent. That's real money. That is real facts, and this government is here for the farmers and we're here for the industry and the rural development.

### **Tax Rebates Flood Victims**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, the member from Interlake got up and asked a question about giving a helping hand to farmers, and still on the same thing about tax rebate.

In 2005, 2006, 2007 none of the farmers in his area was able to pay any of their property taxes, and that was a time of disaster.

So I ask the minister: Is he going to stand up for those farmers who will no longer be able to pay their taxes through a disaster under the current plan? The way it's laid out, they will not be able to be eligible for any rebate. Is this what they call standing up for farmers? I think not.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** And, obviously, the cattle industry in the Interlake areas that he referred to and the eastern area has done well, and this government provided flood support for the people that were affected by the flood.

But let's not forget what the federal Agriculture Minister said: He only pays for one flood event a year. This government asked for the flood to be—in the second year. What was his reply? We do not pay for the flood two years in a row.

So when the member opposite—I'd consider making a long-distance call to the federal counterpart and ask him that question if you so choose to.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

Time for oral questions has expired.

### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Mr. Speaker:** It's now time for members' statements.

#### **Lorne Collins**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, the Brandon Real Estate Board annually recognizes an

active member of the board who demonstrates outstanding leadership and dedication to the real estate industry through association involvement and community service with the Realtors of Distinction Award. The recipient this year is Mr. Lorne Collins.

\* (14:20)

Mr. Collins has been in real estate for over 30 years and has set himself apart from the beginning, adapting to all the latest technology first but also keeping the age-old standards of professionalism, honesty and attention to detail first at the forefront.

Mr. Speaker, in 1980 Lorne obtained his real estate licence and in '86 became a broker and owner. He has earned the respect of his clients, colleagues and fellow realtors for being outstanding, an industry leader and a gentleman. He goes about his business with quiet strength, which earned him the nickname Silent Lion. His core commitments to privacy, professionalism and perfection have made him stand out from the pack.

After obtaining his pilot's licence and purchasing a plane in 1970, he made Being There his motto. Lorne's community involvement includes being a long-term member of the Brandon Flying Club board, a volunteer treasurer for many community organizations, financial adviser to organizations and individuals, and he is currently on the board of the Brandon Downtown Development Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, long before I met Lorne some 20 years ago, he has always been known as an early adopter of technology. His embracement of technology included one of the first mobile phone briefcases in Brandon. At that time, mobile phones were just barely that, as they were the size of a briefcase and had substantial weight. Lorne saw the opportunity that a mobile phone afforded a realtor, and I would challenge any of you to try to separate a realtor from their mobile device today.

Lorne was also one of the first agents to purchase a computer. This personal computer may have been the first one in Brandon, and there's some debate who owned that first computer. It's not surprising—nor is it surprising that Lorne would have his name mentioned as part of that debate. Lorne is currently working on writing a new website and has remained technologically savvy, adapting to all the modern mobile tools.

His career started in 1956 at a chartered accounting firm, and after obtaining his registered

industrial accountant degree, RIA, now CMA, he started his own accounting practice in 1969. After selling his accounting practice in 1979, he started a development company. The combination of his experiences quickly moved him into the commercial real estate market—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. The member's time has greatly elapsed. I allowed a certain amount of latitude to start with, so you're well beyond. You're at two minutes and 45 seconds at this point.

**An Honourable Member:** Leave to finish, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave to complete his members' statement very quickly? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I congratulate Mr. Lorne Collins for being the recipient of the Brandon Real Estate Board's realtor of distinction award.

### Provincial Mining Week

**Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, this year, from May 18th to the 24th, we are celebrating Provincial Mining Week. This is an opportunity to recognize the value of our mineral industry here in Manitoba. It is the province's second largest primary resource industry, and it directly employs roughly 6,300 Manitobans. It's an essential part of our province's economy, particularly in my constituency of Flin Flon.

So much of what we enjoy in the North is thanks, in part, to the mineral development. We have a rich history in our northern communities, strengthened by the jobs and infrastructure created by the mining industry.

As we mark Provincial Mining Week, we're also celebrating our province's excellent mining safety record. The mining industry in Manitoba is truly a global leader in emergency preparations and response. We have the lowest lost-time rate of any industrial sector in the economy, thanks to the strong emphasis the mining industry places on worker safety and emergency response. I'd like to thank the workers and unions for the efforts in making mining safer.

Unfortunately, the coal mine disaster in western Turkey last week reminded us worldwide of the importance of a safe and prepared mining industry.

The terrible event on May 13th resulted in the deaths of at least 301 miners, making it the world's second—or the world's deadliest mining disaster in decades.

As a member of the community heavily connected to mining, my thoughts are with those—lives have forever changed by the tragedy. It is truly a stark reminder of the potential dangers workers face in such an industry, which is why recognizing Provincial Mining Week and the valuable precautionary measures our mining industry takes is so essential.

Mr. Speaker, the mining industry contributes to our economy and to our quality of life. I am proud to recognize an industry dedicated to providing good quality and safe jobs for Manitobans. Thank you.

#### Dan Lambert

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, a local hockey legend will have the opportunity to coach some of the best young Canadian hockey players this fall. Dan Lambert of St. Malo, who currently serves as an assistant coach with the WHL's Kelowna Rockets, has been named one of the head coaches for one of three Canadian teams at the 2014 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge this fall. This tournament divides the top Canadians under-17 talent into three teams: white, red and black, to play against the best in the world.

Lambert presently serves as an assistant coach at the—of the WHL's Kelowna Rockets, where he has been for the last five years helping to guide the team to a 57-11-04 record, which was the best record in Western Hockey League. Kelowna was defeated in the western conference final this fall, capping an otherwise very successful season.

In his playing days, Dan was one of the highest scoring defencemen in the WHL history when he played for Swift Current Broncos. Dan was named Memorial Cup MVP in 1989. He was selected in the sixth round of the 1989 NHL entry draft by the then-Quebec Nordiques, playing 29 games. He went on to play 1,144 career games across the NHL, AHL, IHL and DEL, garnering 791 career points.

St. Malo is a small community, but is a community that punches well above its weight in terms of professional hockey players. Locals often remark that the community has the most professional hockey players per capita, and thanks to players like Travis Hamonic and Dan Lambert, the community is proud of its hockey roots. St. Malo is a proud hockey

community and teams of all ages are committed to the game from a very young age.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of this House, I want to congratulate Dan on his coaching success and on his entire career in the game he loves so much. Go Canada go. Thanks.

#### École St. Norbert School—Teachers' Appreciation

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, teachers are incredibly important to our families and to our province. They put us on the path of learning, helping us develop our gifts and become stronger members of our community. Every one of us can point to a teacher who was instrumental in shaping our lives, and for this we express our gratitude.

Teachers are with us throughout our lives. They are often the first to introduce us to ideas that will guide us through our education and later on to our careers. Whether it's teaching us how to read, how government works or how to cut steel, great teachers help shape who we become.

In my constituency of St. Norbert there are so many teachers who work hard to help our young people decide where they want to go in life. Today I would like to recognize the hard-working teachers of École Saint-Norbert school. Teachers and educators at École Saint-Norbert school create a welcoming and encouraging learning environment for our kids. Learning is easiest when students feel welcome and supported at the school. Thank you to the educators at École Saint-Norbert school for your dedication to each and every student. Parents place their trust in teachers to help their children succeed. I know that teachers and educators at École Saint-Norbert school live up to that promise.

To close, in appreciation of everything they do for our students, I ask to include leave of the names of the teachers in École St. Norbert School so they appear in Hansard. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to include the names that the honourable member's referenced in his member's statement? *[Agreed]*

*Christine Bisson, kindergarten; Eveline Joyal, grade 1; Liette Weir, grade 2; Guylaine Kostal, grade 3; Melanie Bowles, grade 3; Jennifer Catellier, grade 3, 4; Holly Sorenson, grade 4; Nicole Weir, grade 4; Karen Smit, grade 5, 6; Louise Racicot, grade 5, 6; Tammy Harding, grade 7; Roger Turenne, grade 8; Ryan Molloy, physical education; Crystal Markusson, music;*

*Lee Melnichuk, counsellor; Lori Davis, resource teacher; Francine Lepage-Lemoine, principal.*

### Larry Evans

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Mr. Speaker, 52 is by no means a great bowling score, but 52 is quite an impressive feat for Larry Evans of Neepawa. For 52 years Evans Bowling Lanes have been a staple in the community thanks to the hard work of Larry Evans.

Larry's father, Tony, opened Evans Bowling Lanes in September of 1962 with the idea that owning the business would provide a great opportunity for the family. Original plans called for 10-pin bowling on the lower level and five-pin bowling on the upper level, but after deciding there wasn't enough business, the family opened a roller rink downstairs which later became a banquet hall.

Larry is proud of the bowling leagues that were set up with different skill levels, including local farmers. Larry had to install a buzzer to get the farmers out to play their 8 p.m. game as the farmers loved to sit and talk while forgetting they had to bowl. For 50 years the bowling alley has been part of Larry's life. In that time he has taken only one vacation, and now at the age of 70 he has decided to hang up his bowling shoes and retire. He plans on taking a winter vacation with his wife and plans to enjoy his life away from bowling.

While he felt it was time to give the business up, Larry says that he will miss the people and the countless friendships he has made over the years. The people he has met from all walks of life and all skill levels of bowling have been the lifeblood of his business for a very long time and have provided him with a great 50 years.

\* (14:30)

Larry has long been a supporter of hockey in Neepawa at all levels, including the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Neepawa Natives. Larry's interest, knowledge and personal archives are a valuable part of Neepawa's sport history.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Larry Evans on 52 years of proud community service. The community of Neepawa is very lucky to have such a dedicated individual in their community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, could you please call for second reading Bill 66, Bill 62, Bill 58 and Bill 68 and after that call for debate on second reading of Bill 56, Bill 54 and Bill 65.

**Mr. Speaker:** We're going to call bills in the following order: second readings, Bill 66, followed by Bill 62 and 58 and then 68, and then we'll move to debate on second readings of Bill 56, 54 and 65.

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 66—The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2014

**Mr. Speaker:** And we'll now start with Bill 66, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2014.

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that Bill 66, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2014; Loi corrective de 2014, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Swan:** Mr. Speaker, this bill is an annual effort to correct minor drafting, typographical and numbering errors in the statutes of Manitoba, to ensure that the French translation of statutes is the most consistent available, as well as repeal obsolete acts.

Within this bill, the new Election Financing Act is being amended to reinstate the rules around advertising authorizations that were contained in the old elections finances act.

Mr. Speaker, under the old elections finances act, an authorization for advertising was needed at all times in the case of advertising for parties, candidates and constituency associations. As a result of what I understand was a drafting oversight, the new act says that, outside an election period, authorization is needed only in the year of a fixed-date election. This amendment will restore the original advertising authorization rules.



This bill will also repeal three private acts that are no longer required because the groups or entities established under the acts are no longer active.

And, Mr. Speaker, that concludes that my remarks. I'd be pleased to discuss the bill further at committee stage. Thank you.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that debate be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Bill 62—The Consumer Protection  
Amendment Act (Contracts for  
Distance Communication Services)**

**Mr. Speaker:** So now I'll proceed to call second reading debate on Bill 62, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Contracts for Distance Communication Services).

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 62, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Contracts for Distance Communication Services); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House—of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lemieux:** I'm pleased to bring this bill forward for a second reading today. We all want to know we are getting a fair deal when we deal with companies selling us a service. As part of a healthy economy, it's important that Manitoba consumers know their rights, it is important they feel they are protected from being taken advantage of in a marketplace through hidden costs and unclear promotions.

You'll recall in 2012, we implemented legislation to increase protection for cellphone users in response to consumers concerned about cancellation costs, confusing advertisements, billing practices and contract terms. The legislation ensures cellphone contracts are clear, they explain all charges, fees and terms and that cancellation charges are reasonable.

Now, the Consumer Protection Office has identified that similar issues are now occurring with other communication services, such as cable television, satellite television and radio, Internet and home alarms. We launched a public consultation last

fall asking Manitobans to share their experiences with cable, Internet and satellite TV providers. Over 360 Manitobans participated. In their response, Manitobans told us that protections needed to be put in place. Two thirds of the respondents said they had been enticed by special TV or Internet service, but that half said their bills did not clearly show what the regular price would be when the promotion was over. Half said that they had been charged extra fees for services they hadn't signed on for.

Mr. Speaker, many Manitobans have told us they feel that these promotions are misleading, as it's difficult to determine what the full charge will be after the promotion is over, and they end up surprised when their bills increased, sometimes more than doubling.

As more distance communication services now require equipment to access the service, we have also heard concerns from Manitoba families about paying for a service they cannot access when the equipment breaks, something we seek to remedy with this legislation. To address these issues our government is amending the cellphone contract provisions in The Consumer Protection Act to extend to contracts where distance communication services, including cable and satellite TV, Internet, residential phone, satellite phone and home alarm. This bill will rename part XXII of The Consumer Protection Act from Contracts for Cell Phone Services to Contracts for Distance Communication Services. This will mean the existing provision to addressing disclosure, cancellation and warranty for cellphone contracts will apply to contracts for other distance communication services.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, this is about making sure Manitobans get a fair deal. We are simply asking companies to be upfront about their costs so customers know what they're signing on for. The new legislation will require ads for special offers to include the minimum monthly costs after the promotion ends, ensure advertisements list any one-time charges for installation or equipment, often described as hidden charges, stop companies from charging for services they can't be—sorry—stop companies from charging for service that can't be accessed due to defective or damaged equipment that wasn't caused by the customer, and end unilateral charges or changes to pricing of services if the change doesn't benefit the customer. The legislation will also require that contracts or service agreements include a description of what the services are included, such as which channels and how much data

or any potential additional charges, how a customer can cancel their service or contract that has any cancellation fees are fair.

As is the case with cellphone contracts, the consumer would have the right to cancel a contract at any time. The method for calculating cancellation fees would be prescribed in regulation ensuring this is fair. A key provision in the legislation, Mr. Speaker, is the restriction on suppliers on making unilateral amendments to a contract. Suppliers cannot make a unilateral amendment to a material element of the contract, like an increase to the minimum monthly cost, unless it clearly benefits the customer. For very minor amendments to the contract, the supplier must provide the consumer with at least 30 days' notice.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation also covers warranty for any equipment provided under the contract before a service provider can tell—sorry—before a service provider can try to sell a customer an additional or extended warranty on any equipment, they will have to provide information about any manufacturer's warranty that already applies to the equipment.

Mr. Speaker, we consulted Manitobans when we developed this legislation, and we will continue to consult during the development of regulations. The legislation will take effect on a day to be proclaimed that gives some time for regulation to be developed. It will also apply to contracts for distance communication services made or renewed on or after the day the bill comes into force. This bill ensures consumers are provided with information they need to make informed decisions about what they're buying. It builds on our government's strong commitment to make sure Manitoban consumers are on a level playing field with the company they are dealing with.

Just last month, however, the Leader of the Opposition called our plan to help keep life affordable for families an optical illusion. The PCs have a track record of favouring big business over families. Whether standing with unlicensed contractors by refusing to support warranties for new homes or fighting for the right of car dealers to hide the true cost of a vehicle, they continue to oppose laws that protect our Manitoba consumers.

\*(14:40)

While the opposition likes to call legislation like this red tape, we believe consumers and customer protection rules are important to Manitoba families,

helping them get a fair deal and avoid getting ripped off by misleading or unclear deals. I hope the opposition will reconsider their position on consumer protection and support this bill.

With these comments, I am pleased to recommend this bill for consideration.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Brandon West—to debate?

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** To debate, the honourable member from Brandon West has the floor.

**Mr. Helwer:** I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 62, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Contracts for Distance Communication Services).

Interesting bill, talks about several things that Manitobans thought they were protected from from this government and, indeed, if we're going to protect consumers. But, apparently, we're not going to protect consumers from the largesse of the government. In fact, there was legislation in place that Manitobans believed they had a contract with this government that—[interjection] It seemed to be that Manitobans believed that if there was a tax increase they had the right to vote on that, and that was enshrined in legislation much like this legislation. Manitobans believed they were protected from this government. But, again, they went ahead with unilateral changes and that is what this minister here talked about, that he didn't like companies making unilateral changes.

Well, this government made unilateral changes without consulting the members of Manitoba, the citizens of Manitoba, and that consultation was supposed to happen. Mr. Speaker, indeed, they were supposed to go out and ask Manitobans in a referendum, would you approve this PST increase? But they went and they changed unilaterally without consultation that legislation, and here they are being critical of companies. So it's strange. They must not look at themselves in the morning in the mirror to see that they're doing—they did—not only doing, they did the same things that they seek to protect consumers from.

So, yes, consumer protection, important aspect, Mr. Speaker, but they do need to be protected from this government. And, indeed, a former Finance minister not that long ago did have a slip of the tongue there, I think, as time—happens from time to time, that Manitobans deserve to be protected from

this government, and he's going to give it to them and indeed he did. Indeed, he did give it to them, and we see now Manitobans' taxes increasing across the board.

Let's see what's gone up. We've had fuel tax increases, any of that go to infrastructure? No, no, that didn't happen because there's a \$1.9-billion deficit in what was spent, you know, underspent on infrastructure. They broadened the PST. Biggest tax increase in 20-some years and, again, none of that going into core infrastructure, none whatsoever. It was a promise. It was all going in there, but didn't see any going in because, again, \$1.9 billion underspent on infrastructure by this government. Vehicle registration fee, largest increase in recent history, promises it was going to go into infrastructure, didn't happen. Again, \$1.9 billion underspent in infrastructure. Money went somewhere. Can't tell us where it went. We've asked in Estimates, where'd this money go? They're not sure. They know—we know from looking at the numbers it didn't go into infrastructure. And then, just recently, what was happening here recently? There was something that Manitobans were supposed to vote on. Oh, yes, a PST increase, 14.3 per cent I think was the increase. Again, Manitobans were supposed to have the right to vote on that PST increase. They were supposed to be protected from the largesse of this government.

They voted for this government because this government promised at each and every door that they would not raise taxes. They would not raise the sales tax. They promised, each and every candidate that went out there, some of them successful because they were elected, others not so successful, promised Manitobans that there would be no tax increase, and what happened? We've seen tax increases every year and we've seen underspending in the infrastructure budget by \$1.9 billion. All those promises were that that money was supposed to go there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you've driven on any of our highways, you've seen the deficit. I see every day that I drive on Manitoba highways the effect of underspending, because what happens is when you don't fix the small things, they become—come much bigger. And we've seen that recently in the city of Winnipeg here where we now have potholes that have their own Twitter handles, that you can follow them—

**An Honourable Member:** They're running for mayor.

**Mr. Helwer:** And, yes, apparently potholes are running for mayor. Maybe they'll, you know—another candidate, I'm not sure that they—we can personify a pothole to that extent that they could file their papers, but it's just sad to watch that the basic infrastructure was not kept up. It was not—the money was not spent on it, and then you see the bigger infrastructure failures as we've seen.

And I see highways—I saw highways being paved last year, and I drove over those highways that were paved, some of them with new asphalt last—late last summer or last fall and perhaps into the freezing time, so—but now I see, on that freshly paved asphalt as I drive to Brandon, it has potholes. How can you repave, rebuild a road, claim that you've spent money on it and there's new potholes in that new infrastructure, Mr. Speaker? Obviously, there's something wrong with the whole situation here that they're not able to manage it well. They—this government doesn't seem to understand how to maintain core infrastructure and—but they promise Manitobans they're going to do so.

And here we see them promising that they're going to consult with Manitobans about protecting them for consumer protection. They want to make sure that companies don't change the contracts unilaterally, much like this government did themselves. And, again, we didn't see any consultation on the sales tax increase, but here we are with a government that's hypocritical as represented in this particular bill, makes promises about protecting consumers, and yet again I say that this—consumers in Manitoba need to be protected against this government.

So it seems to me that there's no real credibility across the floor. They speak of transparency in this bill, they speak about disclosure but they don't do the same thing throughout their legislation and the way that they deal with Manitobans. If they had been upfront with Manitobans, then, you know, perhaps we could—some of the Manitobans would support them again, but they misrepresented the facts and now they're concerned about companies misrepresenting facts, so trying to divert attention from their own failures, Mr. Speaker. And it's sad to watch that they made it clear to all Manitobans that they were not going to raise taxes, and we now know that that indeed was the case.

And then they bring in legislation like this particular one here, the Bill 62, consumer protection act, where we're talking about communication

services and they're—they pretend that they want to protect Manitobans. Well, there is a protection that they could have been in place—put in place, and that certainly would have been to not raise the taxes to the extent that they did. If Manitobans were able to keep the money in their pockets, you know, then some of these protections might not be necessary. But what happens is Manitobans feel the pinch across the board from increased taxes. They're trying to balance that with things that they see as necessary, as insurance, other communications devices.

As we see, Manitobans and—following the trend from North America where landlines are disappearing and people now depending on their mobile devices, it is important that Manitobans are knowledgeable about those contracts that they enter. And, indeed, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that you've tried to read some of them, I've tried to read some of them too, and we have to make sure that they are easy to understand. We have to make sure that the sales staff represent it well. And my dealing with sales staff of these companies is they are knowledgeable of their products, they are knowledgeable about the particular contracts that are available and they're trying to transfer that information to the particular client and the people of Manitoba.

So, indeed, the staff of these particular companies, I think they do very well with a very complex issue, and trying to transfer the information to the client about what it means when you sign up for a contract, if it's a one year or two year or three year, or if you should buy your device outright and just pay per use. So those options are all available, and here we have the government that wants to pretend to protect Manitobans against things that may or may not be things that they need to be protected—be protected against. Indeed, we know they need to be protected against this government, as opposed to some of the companies out there that this minister trashed.

\*(14:50)

And, you know, not long ago, in some of the statements that were made, they were celebrating companies, but here they go trashing companies that operate in the Manitoba economy. And apparently they make it out that the company's the bad guy, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, companies are in business—and it's not a surprise that companies are in business to make money, they are not not-for-profit corporations, they are for-profit corporations, so that should not be a surprise to this government. But then

the government, you know, we've seen them throw out some largesse to companies to try to get them to set up shop here, and they're shocked when the individuals that manage and run those companies say, you know what, it's easier to do business elsewhere than it is in Manitoba. In fact, if the government wasn't putting money into this, probably wouldn't be here. But then we hear one of the ministers obviously feel that she knows how to run that company better than the founder and discounting what the founder said.

So, you know, I do have a lot of faith in corporations. I've been involved with them many times, Mr. Speaker, and still am. You look at the employment that the private sector creates in Manitoba and the wealth it creates in Manitoba, the taxes that it pays to this government. And here we—he—we see the government attacking those very corporations because they don't feel that they're representing what they do very well.

So, again, the government could take a lesson from this legislation, go back to some of the legislation that they did away with, something to do with a referendum on sales tax, and take a look at that and maybe think that, well, maybe we should have followed that legislation and not changed it unilaterally. Maybe they should have consulted with the public, allowed them to vote in a referendum.

There was a referendum just recently in another country—Switzerland, I believe it was, something about minimum wage, and resoundingly defeated, where the people got the opportunity to vote in that referendum and make their voice heard. I think that is democracy in action, Mr. Speaker.

But here we see a government that has lost touch with democracy. They attack the very corporations that pay taxes to this government, and now they're looking, of course, to protect—to pretend that they're protecting Manitobans against corporations. It's a sad thing to say, Mr. Speaker, because, as I said, I do have faith in what the companies do.

I know many of the people that work for these companies, and they look at the cell contract bills and they explain them to the individual. Sometimes the individual has to come back to ask further questions, of course. And we want to make sure that those people understand what's going forward here, the—what they're signing on with. And, yes, they are complex and we want to make them as simple as possible, but nonetheless we see a government here that is trying to distract Manitobans from their own

actions and blame things on other people, indeed, the companies that they may be trying to attract to Manitoba as a whole.

So disappointing, Mr. Speaker, to see that the government made—would not take some lessons from this particular legislation, because we know that, you know, they have not followed their own. In fact, they—as I said, they've unilaterally changed legislation that Manitobans believed protected them. And it's a good question of whether this legislation would protect Manitobans if the government's going to change it once again.

And again we see little detail in the actual legislation, but most of it's going to come through resolutions further along. As we go along, we're going to see things that this government will bring in that are not transparent to Manitobans. They bring the bill out and they speak to it a little bit, trash the companies, and then the regulations are going to come in after the fact and it won't—we won't know until we actually see those regulations if this is going to be overly onerous on those companies, if it's even going to be overly onus on the—onerous on the consumers because, certainly, the consumer must prove, in this regard, I'm sure, that it was not transparent and there is an onus on the consumer as well, just as there is on the company.

In any transaction, Mr. Speaker, there is an inherent partnership that's created. And you have the seller and you have the purchaser, and you have to—the purchaser has to make sure that their needs are met; the seller has to make sure that the purchaser's needs are met because he wants them to be a customer further down the road.

So, Mr. Speaker, I must say that when we look at legislation of this nature, it's disappointing that the government speaks this way about corporations in Manitoba. But perhaps they look at themselves and they're suspicious of others because they're suspicious of themselves. They see their own actions in raising the PST unilaterally without consultation and they assume that other individuals would do the same thing when, indeed, that is not always the case.

So I'm sure there's others that wish to speak to this legislation. I know there was one jumping up right at the start there, so we'll make sure that they get their opportunity, and thank you very much for the opportunity here.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Well, it should come as no surprise to anyone in this House that the

member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) would defend the big cellphone companies and probably will be voting against this bill, I would guess.

But, Mr. Speaker, I've been, you know, talking to constituents, and one of the main issues that comes up is, in fact, the cellphone contract issue. That's one of the major concerns of people out there right now. They find these contracts confusing. There's a confusing array of options, three-year contracts, and people are very confused and they're not happy with what they see. They get into these contracts and they can't get out.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is a shared jurisdiction. You're dealing with the federal jurisdiction here: the federal government is responsible for telecommunications and the provincial government, on the other hand, is responsible for contracts and warranty issues and responsibilities like that. So, actually, to solve this problem we need a concerted effort on the part of the federal government as well as the provincial government as well. And it's—I'm very pleased to see that the Manitoba government's upholding its part of the bargain here to try to defend the constituents and make certain that they are treated properly by cellphone and now other companies like television and satellite companies.

So, Mr. Speaker, just by way of a bit a backgrounder here on consumer legislation and history of that in Manitoba, you have to look back to 1970, the legislative session of 1970 where, I believe, that was the—probably the longest and most contentious in Manitoba history except for maybe last summer. But in that first full session of the Schreyer government, the government brought in over, I think, 100-and-some bills. I think, probably a record at that time and perhaps even since, and one of the many, many pieces of legislation they brought in was to set up the Consumers Bureau. And that was the beginning, and I'm sure the Conservatives in that day were voting against that legislation. You could check the record, but I'm pretty well sure that I'd be right about this, that they—Conservatives would've voted against it on the same basis that they are speaking and voting against it now: on the basis that it's red tape for business and it's providing onerous conditions for a business to maximize their profitability.

Well, at that time, Mr. Speaker, we simply brought in the Consumers Bureau, and it had no teeth. It was basically a mediation process. So, if a

person had a problem with a warranty, they would file a complaint with the Consumers Bureau and the Consumers Bureau would write a letter to the company, and letters would go back and forth and at the end of the day the public was not happy with this system because they never seemed to get any resolution. And I remember, if you look at annual reports of consumer affairs over the years you're going to see that warranties are one of the biggest areas of concern with huge numbers of complaints.

\* (15:00)

So it wasn't until—Mr. Speaker, I have trouble hearing myself at times here. But I know that it wasn't until 1986, the Howard Pawley government period, where the government of the day responded to the concerns of the consumers and people in the province, and introduced what we called the unfair business practices act. And that allowed the Consumers Bureau to actually have some teeth and to take action against companies that were chronic offenders because of the—indicated since 1970, when we brought in the first consumer legislation, it was just mediation. And, if the companies didn't want to mediate, they didn't mediate and nothing really happened.

So, after all those years of frustration and limited success, we brought in the unfair business practices act to give the Consumers' Bureau some teeth so it could take action. And what happened was the government at that point was short-lived, and the Conservative governments came in.

And, you know, to their credit, the member for—the previous member for Portage la Prairie, who was a lot more progressive than the current member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), who does nothing but defend corporations in this House—the previous member, at least, while he was a Conservative, at least made some effort to broaden consumer protection.

And you know what he did, Mr. Speaker, he simply took the unfair business practices act and he basically just renamed it the fair business practices act, I think it's called now, and reintroduced it. And I remember, at the time, you know, making some amendments to improve it. And that is the framework legislation that we have in place all—for these last number of years. So it's a constant, constant tug-of-war of battle between the consumers and the companies to see that we get a balance, a proper balance, in the province so that consumers are treated fairly.

And so this government is responding to this issue. It has responded—actually responded in the past, dealing with the cellphone issue. But now, what this bill is doing, Mr. Speaker, is the bill's expanding the application of that cellphone contract provisions in The Consumer Protection Act to other types of distance communication services, such as cable television, satellite television, radio, phone service, Internet and home alarms. Now, you would think the Conservatives, if they were legitimately interested in protecting their constituents, the Manitoba voters, Manitoba citizens, that they would be applauding this, that they would be standing up, not only telling us how great an idea this is, but they might be looking at making some amendments, they might be wanting to make some improvements to make it even better. But we're not—we haven't heard that from anybody over here at this point.

The amendments act on concerns from Manitobans about misleading and unclear special offers for these kinds of services, which can lead to hidden surprises on their bills when the promotional period is over. Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there's a competition in the field between, for example, MTS and Shaw, on these contracts, on phone service, not only cellphones, but actually business phones and home phones as well. And they come in, each company bombards the public with offers, very attractive offers. And many people take them up on those offers, and they think that, you know, Shaw has the best deal, so they go with Shaw. MTS counters with its low deal. But what happens is the low price only lasts for a limited period of time. And when the period of time is up, the rates go right up to where they were before. And members of the public are not happy about that.

And what we're suggesting is that people have to be told. The contract has to be simplified, it has to be explained to people, so that even the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) can actually understand this. Because, clearly, if you look at his—I mean, all you have to do is go back and read Hansard and you will see that he was nine minutes into his speech before he even referenced the bill. And he made some comments about how business was going to be hard done by this legislation. And then he went back off into other issues of—on his 20-minute travelogue around the province. So all I'm saying is that I think that we—the public is owed a clear representation from the Conservatives as to where they really stand on these consumer issues.

*Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

I mean, at this point, we've got nothing to go on here other than to say that they're just against consumer protection in general, but—and we have to draw the conclusion that they're against—they're for the cellphone companies gouging the public. Until we start hearing something to the contrary, I think we're going to have to draw those conclusions.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nearly all Manitoba families use Internet phone service and TV services, and many have told us they've been misled by these confusing TV and Internet promotions that were not clear, upfront about what the service would cost when the special offer was over. We are going to deal with that issue as well as we can in this bill and the subsequent regulations that are promulgated as a result of passing this bill. We believe that Manitobans have the right to clear, upfront information, to understand the full cost of the services before they sign up, not after, and this legislation will achieve that.

Manitobans have told us they're frustrated by the offers, as I'd indicated, for TV, satellite radio, Internet and residential phone services; they're not given a clear description, they don't understand the contract, and, you know, I'm prepared to admit that people oftentimes are not really concentrating on the fine—the wordings of the contract when they sign up for these things. They go into the latest iPhone and they like the—they're involved and excited with the product and they sign up and they don't actually take the time to read the contract. It's—after all, they're not lawyers, they don't refer it to their lawyers, and, of course, then when these—the contract turns out to be different than what they thought it was going to be, they're referred to the fine print.

Well, that's just fine and dandy at that point. They have their signatures on the contract; now they're being told about all this fine print that they didn't read in the first place; and now they have to stay for the rest of their three-year—now two-year contract. So, as I'd indicated, they want these special offers to be clear so they don't end up with surprises on the bill.

Now, the government has a strong record of protecting consumers and, for the Conservatives who don't seem to support this kind of legislation, they should know that this government have been leaders on consumer protection such as car repairs, home warranties, payday loans. You know, where were they on the home warranty issue? They were opposed to the home warranty—home—opposed the

home warranty legislation, home warranty initiatives. Well, I would like to see how that is going to play in all those new developments in the suburbs when those new—when those homeowners realize that their Conservative candidates voted against protection for—that they require in the area of new-home warranties.

Payday loans—I know they're probably not as concerned, perhaps, with payday loans, because I don't think any of them represent any areas of the city where these payday loan outfits operate, but certainly our members represent those areas. And we certainly have—the Premier (Mr. Selinger), when he was the Finance minister, took the initiative, and I think we were the first province in Canada to come in with payday loan legislation which, in reality, is a federal responsibility. And basically three quarters of the responsibility is federal, and since the federal government wasn't doing anything about it, the Premier, the Finance minister at the time, took the initiative to bring in payday loan legislation.

The gift card legislation, that was also action taken by this government, and cellphone contracts. And we're going to continue to deal with more consumer legislation because, you know something, Mr. Speaker—Deputy Speaker, it's very popular with the public out there. And I can tell you, what do the Conservatives call consumer legislation? They take the broad brush and they call it red tape. Can you believe that? They would say that things like home warranties are red tape—red tape for the builders, I guess, right, in their defence of the builders.

\* (15:10)

I don't think the public is going to really appreciate the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) and others who say that we shouldn't have home warranties. Does that mean that if they become the government in the future, that they're going to rip up home warranty contracts? Is that what they're saying? Because that's the way I read what the member said. He indicated that's red tape. And his leader likes to talk about red tape: 3,000 pages of red tape he claims to have gotten rid of when he was a minister, and we can't even find one—not even one regulation that he eliminated.

But now the member for Brandon West is actually giving a little bit of—shining a little bit of light on where they're planning to go. He's fleshing out his leader's issues on red tape. I wasn't aware that they consider home warranties red tape, and

presumably that will be something they would eliminate if they formed the government.

The payday loan legislation: Well, I guess that's red tape. That's red tape on all those payday loan businesses—right?—that are—that have been free to charge whatever they want. Well, his leader and he has just indicated that he and his leader consider payday loan legislation red tape, and they're going to get rid of that. They're going to free enterprise. They're going to open up the—take away the red tape on payday loan businesses and gift cards, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's another area that they would consider as red tape.

Cellphone contracts: Are we to expect that after passing cellphone contract legislation that somehow now the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) and the leader indicate that those cellphone contract rules are now considered red tape on the cellphone companies and, somehow, if they form the government, they're going to take them away? They're going to free enterprise, right? They're going to allow pure competition. They're going to eliminate cellphone [inaudible] Well, my voters are going to be thrilled to be able to find out about this kind of information that we're going to potentially see from these Conservatives, so I was very pleased to hear from the member for Brandon West as to how he viewed consumer protection in this province. And, you know, maybe he didn't exactly intend it that way, but that's the way he explained it and it's there in Hansard, so I would invite him to have to deal with some more questions on that particular case.

Now, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the legislation, as I'd indicated, expands the protection to distance communication, cable, satellite TV, Internet, phone, radio and home alarms. And there was a public consultation that was launched last fall; 360 Manitobans participated and what we learned from that consultation was that two thirds of the people out there had been enticed by special promotions for TV, Internet and phone services. Half said their bills did not clearly indicate what the regular price would be when the promotion was over, and half said they'd been charged for additional fees for unknown or unrequested services. So we're not making this up. People out there in these focus groups and in the consultations certainly drew the government's attention to these issues.

This legislation is going to address concerns about the misleading and unclear promotions, and

there's new—the new rules are going to require promotional material to include the minimum monthly cost after the promotion ends. And that's what we said all along. We want to see this in writing and we want it explained to the people when they sign these contracts. We want to ensure that any one-time charges for installation of equipment are disclosed. We want stop—to stop companies from charging for services that can't be accessed due to damaged or defective equipment, unless the customer's responsible. We want to end the unilateral changes to prices or services, if the change doesn't benefit the customer.

So, if a company wants to reduce its pricing in—to compete against another company for fear of losing its customers, it can do that, but it can't unilaterally increase the prices if it wishes to do that. Now, allow—also allow customers to cancel service contracts before the end of the term and prohibit unreasonable cancellation fees. Cancellation fees are a major irritant to people who have signed these agreements with cellphones and other types of contracts. And also limit automatic contract renewals. What you have is situations out there where, if you're not aware of when the contract runs out, the contract just automatically renews and now you're stuck for another time period. So those will be limited. The legislation will apply to both new customers and existing customers who are contacted with these promotional offers. Now, offers, if the companies don't like this, then they just don't have to come up with all these promotional offers. I mean, the company's creating their own problems here by having these promotional offers written the way they are and promoted the way they have been.

Also, in terms of support for the legislation, I know the Consumers Association of Canada have indicated that this legislation is very important, and I mean the Consumers Association of Canada is hardly a hotbed of revolution. There are hardly a hotbed of radicalism. Over the years, during the Filmon government, the Consumers Association at that time was routinely supporting the Conservatives in their initiatives on the unfair business practices act and other things. And when we wanted to bring in a lemon law in the province here with [inaudible] they lined up with Lefty Hendrickson and the used car dealers to misrepresent the amendments in the bill that we were trying to bring in at that time.

So, when the Consumers Association has left you people, when the Consumers Association is—has—supporting the government, then you really want



to wonder where you're at with your criticisms of the bill. I would pay some attention to what they have to say here because they think this is a very good piece of legislation.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the consumer—as consumers we have the responsibility to seek the most accurate information, the most full information we can, but the companies have a responsibility to provide that information, to make it accessible to us in a format that's easy to understand. If we don't have full information, it's very difficult to make the choice that's best for ourselves as consumers and our families, and that was spoken by Ms. Desorcy from the Consumers Association of Canada, and we certainly agree with her.

Manitobans already benefit from a high level of protection in the marketplace. As I'd indicated, the payday loans, collection agencies, debt settlement services, cellphone contracts, cheque cashing fees and consumer protection rules are priority for the government because we understand that families should not get ripped off or misled by unfair business practices.

Over this year, we're going to be taking action to ensure Manitobans get a fair deal from real estate agents and home renovation projects. In 2012 we implemented legislation that increased consumer protection for cellphone users in response to similar concerns. The Manitoba government has already taken aggressive steps to protect consumers and get Manitobans a better deal. We've introduced new rules for cellphone contracts, gift cards, car repairs, car purchases and payday loans. During the next year, the Province will take action to protect families from unfair business practices in a variety of other areas, including the real estate transactions and home renovations.

Manitoba's consumer confidence indicates that we'll feel positive about our economy, our jobs and our incomes, and this translates into a healthy climate for business and a stronger economy—economic growth for the province, and you certainly don't get that feeling listening to the members opposite who are always saying negative things about the province. The fact—they don't mention the fact that we're the third lowest unemployment in the country, that the economy is humming on all cylinders here and the members opposite just a totally negative, negative, negative in their comments.

We all participate in the economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether we're buying, selling, repairing or leasing goods or services, and we all have a stake in the—ensuring that the rules that govern the marketplace are fair, practical and respond to our needs. As part of maintaining a healthy economy, consumers must have the confidence that the companies they do business with will treat them fairly, honestly and the business must have confidence that the rules that regulate their operations are reasonable and do not stand in the way of innovation and put all competitors on an even playing field. Now, surely, even the Conservatives would agree that the competitors should all be on an even playing field, that we wouldn't want to put one of—one favourite ahead of another one.

\* (15:20)

Now, we're all going forward with a balanced approach to ensure that Manitobans know they're being treated fairly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're consulting on how best to ensure that home repairs are done properly, on time and on budget. We're moving forward to ensure that real estate transactions are done ethically. We're cracking down on unethical and predatory lenders with further controls to the interest rates and added fees that they can charge for short-term loans. These new measures are fair and balanced just like our law to ensure cellphone contracts are written in plain language and cancellation fees were limited.

And, by the way, with these changes when they came in, did we hear an outcry from the business? Did we say oh, there's too much red tape; we're going to leave the province, we're moving out of Manitoba and we're going to Alberta or wherever, Saskatchewan. No, we didn't hear that. I don't think any cellphone company—are you aware—I got to ask the Conservatives, just to make sure they're paying attention here—are any of you aware of any cellphone companies that have packed up and moved to Saskatchewan because they don't like the rules that we brought in? No, I never heard a complaint. I never heard—now I heard a lot of advertising on television last year against the federal government, against their federal cousins about this—about cellphone issues, but I didn't hear any complaints about the Manitoba NDP government.

Now the PCs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would put all of these initiatives as risk. They would scrap the warranties on new home purchasers; member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), pretty clear about that,

where he would stand. And as I indicated before, I just think that people in those new developments are going to love getting leaflets indicating where the PCs stand on their new home warranties. I can see a lot of calls coming into PC headquarters, you know, protesting that one, putting at risk the largest purchase that most families make.

And rent controls, we all know where these people stand on rent controls. I remember in the old days there, they would—they were trying to bend over backwards to give the landlords the upper hand and they eliminate rent controls completely. And this created skyrocketing rent costs in Winnipeg, throughout Manitoba.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they put in place two-tier, American-style health care. The leader spoke about this. You know, he, trying to keep the cat in a bag, it doesn't always work does it? You know, it escaped. And ordinary families would be unable to see their doctor and that's the kind of system of health care that these Conservatives support, you know.

And certainly it was the NDP that eliminated the medicare premiums. People will remember back in the old days, Manitobans had to pay medicare premiums. It wasn't a Conservative government that eliminated these, it was the NDP government of Ed Schreyer who eliminated the medicare premiums. Matter of fact, they would be a Conservative government who'd be bringing things like this back.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know my time is running short here and I—*[interjection]* And there's many, many more points to be made, but I think there'll be another day for that.

Certainly, we will be—certainly, we'd be prepared to explain the Conservative position, what they have put on the record in the past and what they put on the record today and what they will more than likely put on the record in the future on this bill; we'll be more happy to explain it to the voters of this province. Thank you.

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was great to hear that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is in favour of red tape. That was amazing, that he would stand up and allude to all of the benefits of the red tape. Great. We like to hear that. We know that you hate business; we don't understand why you hate business, but we do know you hate business. Is there any special reason?

He talks about protecting Manitobans, but they need to be protected from the NDP. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is who they need to be protected from.

When he talks about protecting Manitobans for service, let's talk about the service a little bit, let's talk about the service that we had in 2011, in southeastern Manitoba, with the wildfires going every direction, over 20 different fire departments with no communication, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the reason there was no service there is because of the neglect of this particular government. This particular government would not involve themselves. And why? They were not protecting Manitobans. They weren't protecting Manitobans when they took the vote tax. They're not protecting Manitobans when they're spending an extra billion dollars running down the west side of the province through prime farmland.

They're not concerned about Manitobans. We know that after the last election, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They went door to door saying, oh, we will not raise taxes, we will not raise the PST; that's ludicrous. And what did they do? They turned around and did exactly that as quickly as possible.

And yet the member from Elmwood says, no, no, we're here for Manitobans. No, he's here to take the money out of Manitobans' pockets. And what does he have to show for it? Debt; that's all we have to show for it. Mismanagement, continued mismanagement and debt. They have not provided—they have not provided—the necessities, the environment that we need for businesses to grow in this province. In fact, what they have done—and there are a number of members on the NDP caucus—what they done is exclude Manitobans from the necessities that they need. And I could reference a highway in northern Manitoba where businesses have left this province because of the highway or neglect of providing one of the core services. You need an infrastructure, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no infrastructure coming. There's no relief for these companies.

And so one company just sends down—or goes down to Tennessee, and I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you've heard of that in the past, of a company moving 100–100–employees to the United States over a two-year period. And why would they do that? Why would they do that? Because there was no services provided for them. That's huge in a small community like Arborg. That's a very, very small

community that will not benefit when those 100 employees leave the province. And how many more are going to go the same way because the NDP is not even interested—not interested in one bit of supplying the necessary services so that the businesses in Manitoba can grow?

Why do they hate business? Why? Why, I ask, does the NDP hate business? They have raised taxes, they've raised taxes and raised taxes, and then finally, in desperation, they went door to door in the last election—after they deferred their debt payment for two years, they went door to door and said to the people of Manitoba, we will not raise taxes. They also said, we will not raise the PST, and I don't think I'm mistaken when they said, we will balance the budget by 2014.

Is a balanced budget in effect today? No, we're \$30 billion in debt thanks to this government. They have tripled this, and just to give you an idea of how much money has been wasted and is continually wasted on a yearly basis, I recently was in Oklahoma and talked to the people there. They have a population of 4 million—4.1 million, and I asked them what their budget was, and they said it was \$12 billion—\$12 billion. I said, come on. I said, we have a population of 1.2 million and our budget is \$12 billion. What are you guys doing right and that we're doing wrong? And one of them quickly pointed out and said, you have a socialist government, that's what it is. They're wasting money; they don't know what management is.

And when they talk about cutting red tape and then we see the member from Elmwood that—stand up and say I'm in favour—I'm in favour of red tape. No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he has no idea how to run a business, nor does any of the others on that side of the House, his colleagues.

Sadly, this bill is simply hypocritical and plays to the recurring theme of do as I say, not as I do. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what this bill is saying. We can break the law as a provincial government—we can break the law, we can raise the taxes without the required referendum. The law is there and it's broken, and they expected—they expected us to be a part of that on this side of the House. They expected us to support them breaking the law.

Manitobans don't want that law broken. They've asked for a referendum, but instead the NDP are standing on democracy. They're standing right on top of Manitobans, not giving them the opportunity to

prosper at all. Businesses are necessary. They necessarily have to also make a profit in order to stay in business, to employ people, and they have to be productive. The people they employ have to be productive in order for the company to be productive, that they can hire more. But, when they're being taxed out of business, then other small businesses that supply these, the feeder chains that supply the large businesses, they go out of business too.

\* (15:30)

And that's why, in Manitoba, we have an excess—exodus of people for 13 years in a row. We have a net output of people to Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC, Ontario and points anywhere but in Manitoba. Those are our young people. Those are our progressive young people. Those are progressive small companies. But they're being beat up here in the province. But, when we go back to take a look at that fire in 2011, what did we learn from it? We learned that there was fire trucks. There were people that were trapped in different areas that were at risk because of the lack of communication, because of the lack of communications throughout rural Manitoba—

**An Honourable Member:** Because you sold MTS.

**Mr. Graydon:** Buy it back. I hear a member from St. Norbert talking about, we sold it. Buy it back. They've had 13 years to buy it back. What's he been doing with the money? What have they been doing with the money? They're in debt so far, but they will not buy back what they think they need. Buy it back. No, no. It's all show and no go with these people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The people on that side of the House, it's all show and no go.

What you need to do is supply. Supply the environment so that business can grow. You also need it for the safety factor, which was proven with the fire in southeastern Manitoba. Twenty-some fire departments, at risk with no communications whatsoever. The cell tower was down; the police service queue was backed up; 25 people in the queue. Ambulance services had no communication. What did we learn from that, Mr. Speaker—or Mr. Deputy Speaker? We learned nothing. We learned nothing. The federal government was co-operating. The municipalities were co-operating. And, when the NDP government was asked to co-operate, to supply this type of a service throughout Manitoba, they refused, flatly refused to come to the table, wouldn't even talk about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it repeated itself in 2012. In 2012, another wildfire headed into the community of Vita. Three houses were destroyed. The thing that saved the town was that an individual had summer fallowed a field on the other side of the highway. Bridges were burned. Houses were burned. The town was evacuated. The school was evacuated, the personal-care—the seniors home. Everything was evacuated in the town but no communications. We had fire departments that were water bombed because there was no communications.

And yet they're worried because the business can't print big enough for some of the NDP to read. They talk about the small print, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely to goodness they don't have to have it enlarged in large font for them to understand. You read a contract. You need a contract. When you go into any business deal, you have a contract. When you hire a lawyer, you have a contract. When you hire someone to dig your ditch, you have a contract. When you hire a home builder, you have a contract. And yet we hear the member from Elmwood saying, oh, no, no, no, we're going to add extra protection right after we tax you for all of these. All of these services, we want to tax you for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not that they're concerned about the welfare of Manitobans. They're concerned because the tax base is shrinking so badly in Manitoba, and that they knocked on the doors, day after day, in the last—prior to the last election, making promises that they had no intentions of keeping. No intentions at all. And so now, to get people not to understand or to change what they're thinking, and they use it as a smokescreen. It's a deflection away from the real, real serious issues of misrepresentation—misrepresenting what they were going to do.

They knew full well; they knew full well when they deferred the debt for two years that they were going to have to raise taxes. Well, really, they didn't have to, but that was the easy way out. They knew that they would break the law. They knew that they would expand the tax base to take in everything. It takes in anything that moves, doesn't move, that breathes, that doesn't breathe. It doesn't matter; they will tax it. They will tax it, for what purpose? Our debt is growing. The debt is growing, and what have we got to show for it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you and to this House, that they have mismanaged Manitoba so badly that the Manitobans are ready and willing right

now to have a referendum on the PST. Why don't they call it? Why wouldn't they call that? Why wouldn't they call a referendum on a number of the bills that they put forward? Any of their money bills, call a referendum on them and we'll see whether you get your mandate that you're asking for. No you won't get that mandate. You won't get it because you went to door to door lying to the people in the province of Manitoba.

You see, they feel that they're privileged, that they're privileged politicians and they are above the law. They take the vote tax, and what do they do with it? Who knows. Door to door, we won't raise the PST, we won't raise taxes. They have no credibility when they speak of transparency and disclosure, and yet they stand in the House and rail on businesses. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is they've never been upfront with Manitobans and they misrepresented the facts during the last election. In fact, they performed the exact actions which they're now trying to put an end to. Every single member of the NDP went door to door and made a promise to Manitobans that there would be no new taxes. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was quoted of saying an increase in taxes is nonsense.

Well, it appears this government's actions have been more like a questionable used car salesman, and I have a lot of respect for a car salesman rather than someone who wished to represent Manitobans in this House. It's unfortunate that they forgot what they were elected to do. They—it's unfortunate that they forget and they left their integrity at the door when they said, we will not raise taxes. Since the last election this government has made it clear to all Manitobans that it's always their intentions to raise taxes even if the opposite was promised. In just a few weeks after they took office, we know what happened; they raised the taxes.

Manitobans begin to feel the pinch. The NDP has implemented the highest tax increase in over 25 years. And then there's fees for the Crown corporations, MPI, vehicle registrations, haircuts, pedicures, manicures and many, many others. House insurance, for example home warranties, you pay the PST on them. Because you do pay it. That's—it's not a gift. You pay it on everything in your new home as well, and then on a new homeowners—you have to pay not just the tax on that. You have to pay it up front, a fee, and then a tax on top of that.

Where was the disclosure to Manitobans so they could have an informed decision? There was none,

and it was clear that the NDP did not want Manitobans to be informed or they would have told them at the door. And each and every member went to the door again and again and again and repeated the same falsehood.

How many more hidden fees are there in unfriendly contract amendments can Manitoba expect from the NDP candidates? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I submit that there will be a lot more coming down the pipe in the very near future.

And we'll see more instances of exactly the same thing that's happening in the Arborg area with the businesses up there and the manufacturers up there. They'll be told that they—not their fault—or not the candidates fault that they built in the wrong spot. No, no, they'll be told to look after themselves. Well, they can look after themselves and go where they're wanted. That's what they were told in the past and that's what they'll be told in the future. We know that because of—that road that they need, so desperately need, is not even in the five-year contract—not in two, but not in the five.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I would like to let someone else have an opportunity to try and defend—try and defend this bill.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I want to be clear that I'm not up here to defend the bill, but rather to speak on it.

That being said, the nature of this bill, which brings together provisions regarding not only cellphone service, but Internet services, cable TV, satellite TV, satellite radio, remote surveillance services and so on, it's not unreasonable, given what's happening with conversion, to start lumping these together in one bill instead of them having scattered all over the place. Certainly, people who are using Internet, now, very often are using Internet phone calls, and so there's a lot of overlap here.

\* (15:40)

I think it's going to be quite important, actually, to listen to the presenters at the time this bill, to get into some of the details. And I look forward, therefore, to hearing more at committee stage. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 62, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Contracts for Distance Communication Services).

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

### **Bill 58—The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology Act**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Now move on to second reading of Bill 58, The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology Act.

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I'm so enthused to get on to it.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 58, The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Allum:** It's not often that one gets a chance to be part of something transformative, and it—and also to be able to table something transformative into this House is a great honour indeed. And so I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 58, The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology Act.

This bill takes a venerable institution, the Winnipeg Technical College, and gives it a new, strengthened mandate as a stand-alone, hybrid institution that will grant high school credits and diplomas and offer college-level technical and vocational training to high school students and adults.

Now, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Winnipeg Technical College has been serving south Winnipeg high school students and adult learners for over 30 years. It has grown substantially and now has an enrolment of more than 5,400 students.

Winnipeg Technical College has developed a reputation with Manitoba business, industry leaders and educators as a place where students can get hands-on technical training in a variety of fields. The best word to describe WTC is nimble. In addition to its core programming, WTC has been able to develop and offer high-quality programming targeted to meet the needs of industry and the economy.

As the need grows for more and more 'skilled' trade people here in Manitoba, Winnipeg Technical College has been poised to play a key role as our government works toward its plan to add 75,000 skilled workers to Manitoba's labour force by 2020.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite WT's–WTC's record in the community, we believe it is capable of doing much more. On this side of the House we want WTC to live up to its potential, and Bill 58 has been drafted to transform Winnipeg Technical College into something altogether special and innovative in our education system while remaining true to its vision and expertise. By 'reconstituting'–reconstituting Winnipeg Technical College as the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology and giving it a strong mandate to provide technical training to high school students and adult learners, our government is placing MITT on the path to continued excellence and success.

When I've gone to events and announcements at Winnipeg Technical College, I've been very impressed by the enthusiasm and passion that students and staff bring to their work. I've listened to adult students talking about how Winnipeg Technical College programming has given them the confidence to go after their dreams and get good jobs, Winnipeg Technical College's ability to work directly with students and offer programming that is convenient for students and adult learners so that they're able to succeed.

And it's not just about the adult learners, however, Mr. Deputy Speaker. High school students have long benefited from the programming at Winnipeg Technical College. When I was there a couple of weeks back to announce this very bill, we heard a young man talk about how he had gone from not liking school very much to winning metalworking skills competitions right here in Manitoba. He told us how he thought he wasn't going to amount to anything, and now he is going to have his level 1 certification. His story is not unique. The stories go on and on, but what is important is that Winnipeg Technical College is already doing good work with high school students and adult learners, and with this bill, we are ensuring that the newly formed MITT will be able to continue to grow their programming and reach even more students, especially on the K-to-12 side of things.

Now, what makes this legislation so exciting is that for the first time, there will be one place where

high school students can go to take their high school programming, academic and technical training and at the same time take college-level instruction. We will be seeing more and more students graduating from high school with job-ready skills and apprenticeship certification. This gives them a head start on their career and the skills they need to succeed.

Under this legislation, MITT will be empowered to enter into agreements and establish stronger ties with school divisions, industry and other educational institutions to ensure a more seamless pathway from high school to post-secondary education and through to employment. People in education circles often talk about the seam or the gap between the K-to-12 system and the—and post-secondary education. The new Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology erases that gap for its students.

What is more, for adult learners, MITT will now be able to grant officially recognized diplomas and certificates for their programs. WTC already has a strong reputation and credibility in Manitoba, and this official recognition will help it attract students from outside of Manitoba and bring more people into the province to get good jobs once their training is complete.

Basically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation is a win-win-win for Winnipeg Technical College, for students and for the economy. Winnipeg Technical College gets a new mandate and the ability to grow. Students get better access to the training they need to get the good jobs available right here in Manitoba. And our economy grows by having the high-trained people we need to fill those jobs and get down to building and growing this fine province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is investing in good jobs and skills training to grow our economy and build Manitoba for the future. We are focused on helping Manitobans upgrade their skills to meet the needs of our employers and compete for good jobs. Our government is committed to investing in education and providing training and skill opportunities for students to succeed and build their future here in our great province. We won't do what others have done. We won't cut funding for education or allow tuition rates to skyrocket, both of which led to young people leaving our province.

With Bill 58, Winnipeg Technical College will become the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology and take on an expanded role in providing jobs and skills training to high school and post-secondary students. Better training and

education opportunities are the key to keeping Manitoba on the right track. More people with access to a better education will translate into a better trained workforce that's ready for the jobs of tomorrow. Our plan focuses on improving the quality of education in Manitoba, helping young people get good jobs and keeping education affordable for parents and students.

\* (15:50)

A strong education system, from public schools through post-secondary, is essential for a modern growing economy and the foundation of our government's jobs and skills agenda. That's why we're not going to be cutting post-secondary education funding as we have seen in other provinces. Under our government, funding for universities and colleges has more than doubled, increasing more than \$300 million. While other provinces are cutting back on post-secondary investments, we are investing at one of the highest rates in the country. Additionally, we've frozen university tuition fees at the rate of inflation. This year we have the third lowest university tuition fees in Canada and the second lowest college tuition fees. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to say our plan is working.

Since 1999, enrolment at colleges and universities has increased by more than 44 per cent. To keep post-secondary education affordable and accessible, we have made a substantial investment in supports for university and college students since 1999, including providing more than \$240 million in grants, scholarships and bursaries through the 2013-14 academic year. We've provided \$90 million to students to stay and work in Manitoba through the 60 per cent tuition rebate, and we've reduced interest on Manitoba student loans, first in 2008 to prime plus 1 and a half per cent, then again in 2012 to prime rate, saving students nearly \$1.2 million and counting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new MITT is an important part of our government's plan to add 75,000 skilled workers to Manitoba's labour force by 2020. We have reached a milestone of over 10,000 active apprentices. That's double the number when we came into government, and they're in over 55 provincial and Red Seal trades. There are now over 1,300 high school students getting their level one apprenticeship training while they complete high school. We are providing a \$1,000 bonus for businesses that hire apprentices for the first time, and

we increased the apprenticeship tax credit to up to \$5,000 for every apprentice that businesses hire.

We have increased funding to schools every year since we formed government, and this year we are increasing funding to schools, universities and college at or above the rate of economic growth.

Our plan to help Manitobans get skills training they need includes introducing the apprenticeship employment and opportunities act which will require the hiring apprenticeships—apprentices on public works projects, first in kind legislation in Canada; opening Manitoba's Jobs and Skills Development Centre at 111 Lombard Ave. to provide employers and job seekers a one-stop shop for employment services; and we're investing \$1 million this year in equipment upgrades for high school shop classrooms, and over the last decade we have invested more than \$10 million in shop classroom equipment upgrades.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, manufacturers like Boeing, New Flyer and Canada Goose are expanding their operations and creating new jobs. Last year, while the rest of Canada was losing good manufacturing jobs, Manitoba saw an increase in manufacturing jobs which is rare in a Canadian province this year.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to put Bill 58, the Manitoba institute of technology—trades and technology act forward today for debate for the other members of the House. As I said, this is a transformative bill that seeks to transform a venerable institution. Our position on this side of the House is we want to educate our young people. We want to position them for a good job, and we want them to stay and live happy and productive lives here in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is one tool in our tool kit for making sure that Manitoba stays strong into the 21st century. Thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure again to rise and put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 58, The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill 58, basically concurring that we on this side of the House want to give all Manitobans the skills and opportunities they need to succeed. We are glad to take a close look at this bill and ensure that changes are made in the best interests of Manitobans and we do—and we will do our due diligence on this.

First, let me go over the details of the bill as it has been explained. This bill continues the entity known as Winnipeg Technical College as the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology. The institute will continue to provide high school and post-secondary education and training in the fields of technology, vocational training and adult learning. Its consequential amendments are made to aid other acts—*[interjection]* It's nice to know that the members on the opposite side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are awake now and ready to listen to what I have to say.

Winnipeg Technical College has a long history of providing educational and skills training for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, established in 1983 as the southwest technical college, SWTC, a joint project between the St. Vital, Assiniboine South and Fort Garry school divisions in order to provide technical training in south Winnipeg, the divisional collaboration was a Canadian first, and its name was changed to Winnipeg Technical College in 1999. Winnipeg Technical College currently occupies four separate campuses, having expanded from original Pembina Highway location with the addition of the Henlow, Fultz and Erin campuses.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that many of the marketers and various staff who were working at Winnipeg Technical College would go throughout—travel throughout the province, trying to recruit high school students to the centre—or to the college and they were promoting the fact that they could finish off high school credits and, in addition to that, get working towards a trade of their choice.

Under Bill 58, the Winnipeg Technical College would become the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, allowing it to take an expanded role in providing jobs and skills training to both Manitoba high school and post-secondary students. It is said that this new legislation would: No. 1, expand and encourage access to MITT for all Manitoba high school students, leading to a high school diploma; No. 2, improve the marketability of job training at MITT by providing greater recognition for MITT certificates and diplomas; No. 3, grow Manitoba's workforce by officially recognizing MITT's role in delivering training programs for in-demand jobs in partnership with industry and better attract out-of-province and international students by offering officially recognized job training credentials.

I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was not at the table when they were deciding the name of the new—of the changeover, but it is interesting that they named—that they're proposing to change it to MITT, which is awfully close to the MIT, which we all know as a highly regarded educational institution in—throughout North America. And, as that, I would not argue that Winnipeg Technical College has served many Manitoba students throughout the years very well.

The proposed new mandate would allow the institute to remain flexible with business and industry partners in developing and administering training programs that are responsive to changing labour-market needs and in-demand jobs. It would also allow MITT to pursue further partnerships with industry and school divisions and allow high school students the opportunity for skills training while they are still in high school setting—while they're still in a high school setting, which would be setting them up for a career in the trades.

This bill establishes the power and composition of the board, seven to 11 board members. Board members can serve up to a five-year term and can be appointed at—to no more than two consecutive terms. This bill also establishes the duties and powers of the institute's president. The precedent can be—president can be appointed by the board, subject to the approval of the Education Minister. The president's term of office cannot exceed more than five years, but can be renewed.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill makes amendments to the following eight acts: Adult Learning Centres Act, Advanced Education Administration Act, Apprenticeship and Certification Act, Consumer Protection Act, International Education Act, Labour Relations Act, Municipal Assessment Act and The Private Vocational Institutions Act.

\* (16:00)

We will not rush to judgment. We will act in a diligent and balanced manner with our guide and principle being what is best for all Manitobans. We are committed to creating opportunities for every Manitoban, equipping our young people with the skills that will help them thrive in the economy of the 21st century, and we will carefully study this bill to determine whether, in our minds, it achieves this goal. Thank you.



**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I rise to put a few words on the record on this bill. First of all, I think some praise is due for the good work that Winnipeg Technical College has done over the years providing help to quite a number of people who are high school students, providing help to many, many who are adult education students, including to new immigrants.

And I am certainly supportive of this bill moving forward and the broader mandate and the more precise mandate for the Winnipeg Technical College now to be as the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology. Indeed, two years ago, you know, Bob Axworthy and I put together a proposal that would, in fact, have expanded the mandate of the Winnipeg Technical College in this direction, and even further, to be a polytechnic institution. But certainly this is—provides both the position as the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology to continue work providing school experience and learning environment for those in high school and particularly those who want to learn trades, to enable them to complete their high school. And certainly there's an important role for this for some students don't do as well as others in the traditional high school environment and will do better in this kind of environment where they can be actively engaged in learning trades and skills and often in co-operation with businesses.

I think it is the mandate as well to be able to offer diploma courses. Certainly positions the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology well, both in being able to take high school students, give them coursework—which will allow them to take part of their diploma training while they're still in high school and thus shorten the whole period of training that they would need to fulfill the roll in the diploma—and also to be able to link students up so that they can go fairly easily from the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology on to other post-secondary education opportunities in colleges like Red River College or at the University of Manitoba.

So I look forward to comments which may come forward at the time of the committee hearings, but certainly welcome that the NDP have recognized that it's important to take the Winnipeg Technical College to the next step as we proposed some time ago. Thank you.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** It's always a pleasure to get up and put a couple words on the

record about great bills like this. I myself actually took some courses from what was Winnipeg Technical Centre, what will be the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology. I did some advanced TIG welding courses through there years ago before I took my courses at UCN, which was Keewatin Community College back then, and Red River College where I've done many courses there too.

So it's a—it was a really great day to see the evolution of this when I attended this with the minister, and I know that a lot of credit goes to the previous minister, the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan). She did a lot of work getting this ready for this, and I know this is one of her babies and a—it was a vision for her to have this happen. So I'm—I give her a lot of credit for that and for the current Minister of Education for taking it over the finish line.

It's a really—it was a really exciting day, and the—you know, we had some young people from the college there, and they were talking about the opportunities that exist for them and how that their future looks really good in Manitoba and that the college and the courses that they took from here were key to that success. One of them was a—just a young gentleman who's doing his high school education and doing credits towards an apprenticeship. He actually is going to the Canadian nationals for millwrighting because he was the best apprentice there. And another one was a woman who had had some—taken some time out of work—the workforce because she'd had children, and went back to—decided she wanted to go back to school for something that she was passionate about, and I believe it was in the drafting in arts that she took the courses at, and she was going to go back and start a new career and she's very excited about it.

So this college has grown considerably, and, you know, I'd like to note that it was the Pawley government that actually built this. It was a fantastic initiative back then, and now it's just evolving further as we go on, you know, with 5,400 students registered there. It's quite the amazing accomplishment.

Now it is on the border of my constituency, and the member for Fort Garry and the member for—Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) and the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), so all of our constituencies have benefited from it, but now what's going to happen is even more students will be able to benefit. They'll be able to come from all over the province, if they wish. There's actually some plans in

place to possibly have some dorms, and I know that the international students have been taking advantage of this school. It's just a fantastic facility where you can get trained up on the latest technologies and the latest—with partnership through industry too—a lot of the latest things that are going on in industry.

The industries approach them. They're very quick and nimble to be able to help industry train the people up that they need for what they're looking at, and I think that it speaks volumes of what was WTC and now is going to be MITT, and their ability to do that is to be able to take that training and tailor it towards an industry to help the industry employ people in Manitoba. And these are very well-paying jobs. The trades industries where I was from before, you know, you—it's definitely not a minimum wage. It's a—you know, you start out earning as you learn and you earn all the way through your learning experience, and you make a very good, comfortable income on this. So it's a really great initiative and I'm really happy to see that this has gone on, and it is taking it to the next level where we're going to be able to take it even further and offer the opportunity to more Manitobans, not just in the south end of the city, but we'll be able to offer it to all Manitobans.

I heard some interesting stuff put on the record in the last debate from members opposite, but, you know, I just want to talk a little bit about what we did see when the members opposite were the ones who had their hands on the tiller, you know, trying to steer the ship. What we did see underneath them was tuition fees skyrocket 132 per cent and enrolments went down 8 per cent from 1993 to 1999. Then the leader of the opposition ran away, you know, and I don't blame him. I mean, with that record, you'd probably want to run away too. His government cut \$50 million from public school funding, and that led to 700 fewer teachers, crowded—very crowded classrooms, fewer opportunities for children to learn, and then he ran away. And, like I said, I mean, with that record, I don't blame him. I'd want to run from that, too.

You know, we've doubled apprenticeship—10,000 now in the province, up from 5,000 when they were in, so, you know, another record he might want to run away from, and that's fine. His approach is the same today. He's now demanding \$550 million cuts across the board, and then he tried to run away from that. Last year he put that on the record that that was his approach, and then he tried to run away from it. Then he said, no, no, no; he would only cut \$250 million from the budget and he would make

sure that, you know, it would be through some job losses and such, but now he's trying to run away from that statement.

So I guess there's a pattern here, if we look at it. It seems to be that the Leader of the Opposition really likes to run away from things. He likes to run away from his past record. When we say that, you know, the Filmon era, they sure clap and have a jeer and have this great vigour about how the Filmon era was great, but we just heard the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) complaining that cellphone service in Manitoba has put people at risk because they couldn't get cellphone service during wildfires. I was just blown away by that debate and I thought it was very bizarre considering him and his leader were the ones who sold it. And, let's see. Who's the—who was one of the people who benefited the most from that sale? Who's the head of the board of Hydro or of MTS right now? It would be the past leader of the opposition.

\* (16:10)

So, you know, it's rich that he talks about it. Then he says, well, we should buy it back. He said that in his speech. Yes, so they sold it for \$13 a share, which was very undervalued and underpriced, and now we should buy it back at three times that. I guess that's how Conservatives make their money. They go out and sell private—or public assets to the private. Then, when those shares skyrocket—and they all bought shares in it, and they—you know, those shares skyrocket. Then they all of a sudden want us to buy it back at three times the cost, because, well, who would benefit from that? The shareholders.

And I just find it absolutely absurd, actually, that the member opposite would talk about the phone service being dangerous during wildfires. Well, if it's dangerous during wildfires, he has no further to look than in the mirror as to who's putting those people in danger. They were the ones who cut MTS. They were the ones who took our phone system, who—we would have had the capability to demand that they put up cell towers in areas like this. They were the ones who took it out of the hands of the public and they were the ones who put it in the hands of the private. And they benefited from it. Now they have the gall to come into this House and blame us for a situation. It's absolutely unbelievable.

I mean, you know, and we'll see, you know—hopefully, we won't see it, but, you know, in years to come, when, at some point, you know, maybe in 15 or 20 or maybe 20 terms from now, when we

actually might lose government, then maybe we'll see it again with Hydro, when they decide to privatize it and sell it. And then they'll, you know, then they'll demand that our rates are the highest in North America. Maybe you should buy it back; that's exactly what we hear from them all the time. No real solutions, just complaining about how things are when they were the ones who did it to this province. Not us. We didn't sell MTS. We were vigorously against it. We stood up in this House. We demanded that they don't sell it. We held demonstrations. It was all on them. So, you know, for them to talk about this is a big game.

You know, I'd like to talk about something else that affects education, and it affects this MITT, is that, you know, the Leader of the Opposition talks about the thousands of pages of red tape he cut when he was in power. We really can't find them. But you know what, some of the red tape that I did find that they cut, you know what they cut? They cut red tape called bursaries. They cut red tape called scholarships. That's some of the red tape that they cut. So when I stood up and I said—and they're going to take my words out of context like they always do, when I said I stand behind red tape—I stand behind tape that is things like that, protecting students, protecting the environment, protecting our scholarships and bursaries. I mean, we know that he cut it. He's very proud of it. He's very proud that he cut 1,000 pages or 3,000 pages or whatever it is, and it was definitely, you know, in the red tape that he claims he cut. It was scholarships and bursaries. It was also funding to education.

So, you know, it's no wonder he wants to run from his record. You know, he makes—he's very—they get very upset when you talk about his record. He gets really angry and he starts to, you know, show it visibly in this House because he doesn't like his record. And with a record like that, you can hardly blame him. I mean, we wouldn't want their record.

You know, the other thing that I want to talk about is, I really stand, on this side of the House, we stand for education. We fund education at the rate of inflation or more since the time we have taken government. That's a really important thing to note, not like when they were in government and they had cuts. Now, you know, they want to talk about a big game about what they would do or what they wouldn't do. I mean, we keep hearing all the different stories. It's cuts and then it's not. And then, you know, they devastated the education system with their cuts. Now, I mean, it's kind of like the

Conservative method of MTS being our fault, that they can't get cell service during the—during these fires.

I mean, we'll—that's why we want to make sure we have the education system in place, so we can actually have students who can actually do real math. Because unlike the Conservative math, where the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) wants to talk about, you know, the phone service and getting rid of it and then buying it back at three times what it actually costs, we actually have real math, which says, you know what, why didn't we keep it in the first place. And then we would be having public control. We could have put those towers up, just like we do with Hydro.

And look at Hydro, lo and behold, is the lowest rates in North America, because we own it publicly. So we want to make sure that our math systems are intact in our schools, so that way, you know, unlike when the member for Emerson, obviously, took his math courses—they're very different math courses—you know, sell something for really cheap and then buy it back at really high.

I think that, you know, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), I know he's a very astute financial person; I think he would disagree, that that's probably not the way to do it. Usually, you sell high and buy low. But, you know, the member for Emerson, with the Conservative math mindset—and I don't blame him. I mean, you know, there were a lot of cuts during his time, so he probably didn't get the advantage of taking extra courses at night or having bursaries or scholarships to go to school, to learn that stuff, because, you know, well, they had all been slashed. All the educational programs had been cut, so there was no way that he would be able to know that, you know, you actually want to buy low and sell high.

Now, you know, that's why we want to make sure that we're going to continue on with building the education system, and this school will do exactly that. We're going to be training more students than ever with this school. And I had a great meeting with the president of the school, and talking about his vision for it, and it was actually probably one of the most exciting hours that—since I've been in office, to tell you the truth, because he talked about the benefit to the students and what they're going to do to help young Manitobans get a career, get their education to get a good career and to move on in their lives and end up with fantastic paying jobs and be very

portable. So, if they decide they want to—you know, they want to move up north and work on a hydro station or a hydro dam that we're building, you know, they would have a job there. But, you know, that only provides that we're still in power because we know that the members opposite would stop that development and all those thousands of man-years of jobs would be lost and those students who get a good education would have to go somewhere else to work because they couldn't work on those hydro projects if they're not being built.

So our government has been investing in good jobs and skills, and we continue to do so. You know, we're training people, we're building the economy, more apprentices than ever. We have apprenticeship grants to companies who want to hire apprentices, and we've actually increased them so we can have more of them. You know, what we're not going to do is cut funding for education and allow the tuition rates to skyrocket and leave—to the young people leaving our province.

You know, we heard last week where the members opposite complain that the Minister for Education stepped in and told the University of Manitoba to go back to their drawing board, they're not going to raise the tuitions by 300 per cent, and they complained about that. Well, we could see exactly what they would do, they would allow that tuition rate to skyrocket because they did it before. This is their record. I know they like to run from it, but this is their record. They have a past history of doing these things. They like to allow things to get—to go skyrocketing because it's not about affordability, it's about a company getting the best deal. That's what it's about to them.

We have a balanced approach here. I mean, you know, they like to say that they're all about the—building the economy. I mean, you know, 17 per cent taxes—for corporate taxes when they were in power; we've lowered them, 9 per cent small-business tax—we've lowered them, made it friendly for small businesses here. And we're training more people all the time, so that way those people can get good jobs and maybe even open up one of their own small businesses in Manitoba and create more jobs for more Manitobans.

And this hybrid solution that MITT is going to have is going to be a key to that and a key to the success of Manitoba, just like UCN is and Red River College. And the investments that we put into universities and colleges is phenomenal. If you look

at what their investments were, the roofs were leaking on the science labs in the schools when they were in the power during the '90s. We've built a brand new campus up in Thompson. We've expanded the campus up in The Pas where I went to school. We have satellite campuses across the province. Brandon is seeing record investments in their campuses.

Now, you know, I mean, I just—I think it's kind of a loss leader when they talk about how bad it is in Manitoba. They're always so negative about Manitoba and how bad things are. But, you know, you read reports in the paper about consumer confidence being up and more cranes dotting the skyline and investments coming here and people are building more houses. I mean, in my area, I know that people were shocked to learn that they stood against the new home warranty because I've got a whole area where there's going to be 50,000 more Manitobans calling it home in that nice little pocket called South Pointe and Bridgewater Lakes and Forest, which is the Leader of the Opposition's area.

There's going to be a lot of people moving into there and they're going to want to know that they are being protected on the biggest investment of their life. We're talking \$750,000 homes on average in that area. And they like to complain how bad it is in this province. Well, how are people affording these homes if it's just so terrible here? New homes going up all the time. Since I've been elected, over 800 new homes in South Pointe alone, and not one of those homes in South Pointe is below \$350,000. So how can it be bad here if those people are buying those homes? If people are working and they're affording these homes, it can't be that bad here.

\* (16:20)

We saw a record year for travel in Manitoba because of our harsh winter. We saw people taking a record amount of, you know, one-week, two-week vacations to get away from the cold to the south. Well, I ask again: They want to say how bad it is here and if people don't have disposable income. Well, how come we see a record amount of people spending money on these little vacations to get out of the cold for a little bit? If they didn't have a job, they wouldn't be able to go away, and, underneath their plan, that's exactly what would happen. With all the cuts that they're proposing, there would be thousands of people that wouldn't have jobs and the travel industry would suffer.

We saw a record amount of car sales last year—or last month. I think it was up—it's up from the year before for the same period of time, and, once again, people must be working because they're affording these vehicles. And, if people are working, the economy's ticking along just fine.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, we hear from them all the time the negativity about what's going on. I don't think that, you know, three-quarter-of-a-million-dollar homes being purchased and bought and built, more cars being sold, record amount of vacations being taken away to get out of the cold points to a bad economy. I think it points to a very strong economy where people have disposable income and they're able to afford to do these things.

These are all things that wouldn't be possible underneath their plan. And, underneath their plan, 33,000 people left this province, and housing prices were at the bottom. You know why they were at the bottom? Because there weren't people moving here and the population wasn't growing, so there was no one to sell them to. It wasn't uncommon to put a house on the market for three or four months at a time back when they were in power, because you couldn't sell it. There weren't people coming here. People were leaving here—mass exodus of people from Manitoba.

Now, they like to try to say that there's less people here in Manitoba. We all know that's not true. There's over 100,000 more people in Manitoba since we've come into office, and the proof—I mean, I know that they, like, don't like to believe facts and figures and stats. I'm offering them. You know what? I'll offer to take anyone of them in my tiny little Honda Civic, and we'll jump in the car and I'll drive them around their Leader of the Opposition's area. I know he doesn't like to go there very often, but I'll drive them around his area and I'll drive them around my area, and I'll show them the houses that range from 350 to \$1.5 million that are being built right now as we speak in our province. So, if things are really that terrible, I'm willing to take them there.

And, if people are buying those homes, then there must be a market for those homes, because there's a demand. And I can tell them right now, we can go round my area and I'll show them a house that might pop up for sale. I know that there's—there was one the other day; it went really quick, though. It lasted all of three days because there's a demand. People are working here; there's jobs here. And

people buy those houses really quickly. Three days, a house goes for sale, and three days in my area is about the average for a sale. They're not lasting months and months because there isn't a mass exodus of people. There's people living in this province; there's people coming to this province; and our population is growing. Manitoba is on the right track.

You know, they want to—their plan would just be to cut—recklessly cut education, cut the bursaries, let the tuition go out of control, and what would we see then? We'd see people leave our province, just like they did back when they were in. During that decade that they were in, 33,000 people—net loss to the province. We've seen 100,000 people net gain to the province.

So, you know, I know they don't like to count newcomers to Manitoba as part of the population. I welcome the newcomers. You look at them in my area. They build beautiful homes and bring a lot of money, and it's fantastic. And I'm looking forward to them getting a great education at this new school, the MITT, in Manitoba, and I look forward to this bill passing.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I move, seconded by the member from Lac du Bonnet, that debate now be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Bill 68—The Child and Family Services  
Amendment Act (Critical Incident Reporting)**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We now move on to second reading of Bill 68, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act.

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Braun), that Bill 68, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Critical Incident Reporting), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, enshrining in legislation the duty for individuals within Manitoba's child and family services system to report critical incidents is a government priority. I am certain that I speak for all of the honourable members in this House when I say that one child who dies or is hurt is one child too many. When a child dies or is

seriously injured, it is extremely difficult for all of those who have touched the life of that child, including social workers. Most significantly, it's heartbreaking for children's families and caregivers when such tragedies occur.

Children's safety is, and will continue to be, the highest priority for Manitoba's child-welfare system. The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Critical Incident Reporting) will achieve the following three major objectives:

While—(1) While Manitoba currently has a strong reporting system through Child and Family Services standards and policies, this act enshrines in legislation the duty to report critical incidents.

(2) This legislation expands the list of those who are obligated to report critical incidents to include people who come into contact with the children throughout the entire child and family services system, including social workers and foster parents and those who provide places of safety, volunteers and others who provide services to CFS agencies and authorities.

(3) This act ensures that critical bodies in the system receive critical incident reports without delay, including the provincial director of Child and Family Services, the mandating authority and the licensing and/or placing agency.

As a social worker, I know first-hand that the men and women who have devoted their lives to protecting children from harm need every tool available to meet the challenging demands of delivering Child and Family Services. Families also need to have confidence in the child and family services system that's charged with the responsibility of keeping their children safe.

I believe that it is our collective responsibility to do everything within our power to continuously improve Manitoba's CFS system to better protect our provinces most vulnerable children.

While Manitoba has a robust child-death review process in place, there is currently no legislative responsibility for those working in the child and family services system to report serious injuries of children involved with child welfare. For these reasons our government has introduced critical incident legislation to ensure that those involved in the child and family services system report child deaths and serious injuries without delay and without fear of reprisal for making such reports.

We also strongly believe that this amendment act will enhance current standards, policies and reporting processes within the CFS system. By requiring the mandatory reporting of critical incidents, this legislation will help to strengthen case management and result in better outcomes for Manitoba children.

Under The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, people who work for or provide services to a Child and Family Services agency or authority will be required to report critical incidents. Critical incidents include the death of a child or serious injury to a child who is in the care of CFS or whose parent or guardian received services within one year before the critical incident occurred. The duty to report will also be extended to volunteers, student trainees, foster parents, child-care facility operators and those providing services in a place of safety, such as a family residence. These critical incident reports will be made directly to the agency responsible for the care of the child or that provided services to the child.

The legislation requires that the Child and Family Services agencies inform their mandating authority and the provincial director of Child and Family Services of all critical incidents without delay.

I'd like to highlight that, by a-compelling residential-care providers, foster families and volunteers and those who work for CFS authorities and agencies to report critical incidents under this act, we are helping to ensure that no child will fall through the cracks with respect to critical incident reporting.

\* (16:30)

Further recognizing that the four CFS authorities and their mandated agencies are critical partners in the delivery of Child and Family Services throughout Manitoba, this bill does not alter the structure of the child and family services system or the responsibility of the authorities to oversee their mandated agencies. Authorities will continue to have a vital role to play in ensuring that every effort is taken to review critical incidents, to ensure that the response to each event is appropriate, and to identify systemic measures that could be taken to prevent such incidents from happening to other children.

In accordance with this act, retaliation against anyone making a critical incident report will be strictly prohibited. This will help to create a culture where those involved with the child-welfare system

may come forward without fear and participate fully in the critical incident review.

As articulated by Commissioner Hughes, sharing information about critical incidents is necessary for us to learn and to make the necessary changes to improve how we protect our province's most vulnerable children. Importantly, when a critical incident occurs, the affected agency or agencies, the mandating authority and the director will receive copies of the critical incident report under this act. The legislation requires that the provincial director of Child and Family Services reviews each critical incident and investigates the incident further when required. Following his or her investigation, the director may make recommendations to the minister about the incident and that he or she considers necessary or advisable.

When appropriate, the minister has the power to issue directives to authorities under The Child and Family Services Act. Critical incident reports will be reviewed at every level of the system and further investigated when necessary to ensure that appropriate actions were taken when the incident occurred and to examine how similar incidents may be prevented in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these reports will also help to support system-wide co-operation and collaboration when reviewing critical incidents and developing appropriate responses to protect the safety and well-being of Manitoba children. Once passed, proclamation of this act will be deferred to allow for consultation with CFS authorities, agencies and other stakeholders as we work to develop regulations to support critical incident legislation prior to its implementation. To strengthen existing CFS standards, the critical incident reporting regulation will enshrine in legislation the timing and content of a critical incident report. It is expected that critical incident reports will be made as soon as possible and without delay and as soon as an individual becomes aware of the critical incident.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by moving forward with critical incident legislation, the government in Manitoba is continuing to build a strong legislative framework that strengthens protection for children and enhances the tools that those protecting vulnerable children will have at their disposal. Our government is committed to strengthening Manitoba's child and family services system. We trust that, by passing Bill 68, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Critical Incident

Reporting), the honourable members of this House will be taking a step in effort to protect children from harm.

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to put a few words on record regarding Bill 68, critical incident reporting. And, certainly, we recognize the need to do critical incident reporting. It was one of the major recommendations that came out of the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair. And that death has made a significant impact in the—in memories of all Manitobans. Not only did we have a large number of reports done on—total of six—to get to the bottom of what actually went on in that particular situation, but during that whole thing we had the chance to review what is going on in our child-welfare system. And there was a significant failure of the child-welfare system in that situation, and there are a number of others that have been—led us to the same conclusion.

The final report on the inquiry into the death of Phoenix Sinclair includes a number of very detailed and well-thought-out recommendations. Judge Hughes, after hearing from 126 witnesses, made 62 recommendations for improving the child-welfare system, and this, of course, is the outgrowth of one of those recommendations. These recommendations not only went through the superficial and the more active in terms of agency impact changes that need to be made, but he actually reached out further and went after things like the causes of child abuse, neglect or deaths in the system and looked at the issues of poverty as it related to that and made some recommendations, including, as we all know, the changes to the EIA housing allowance, which had been called for for a number of years prior to that.

And, certainly, we would have to commend the judge for doing a good job with this rather painful process that it went through, and we all know that it went on for quite a period of time because there were court procedures that dragged it out, so that we could hear from all of the people that we needed to hear from in this whole process. And we're glad that the recommendations have come forward, and I think that this is an important piece of the puzzle. However, the minister stopped short of making this a critical incident reporting that has the transparency that I suspect Manitobans want. Certainly, Manitobans wanted, in the situation of Phoenix Sinclair, to hear the final results, not just a report on the final results. They wanted some transparency on the issue, and that's why we had a public inquiry in the end. And despite the fact that

we had six inquiries prior to that, they were not satisfied. Reporting to yourself is not necessarily the end result that Manitobans want to see.

So outlined in Bill 68, the process of reporting critical injury is very important, but also the reporting of deaths, of course, which, right now, goes through the office of the Child's Advocate. But it is somewhat similar to the health-care system. Critical incidents are aimed to rectify systemic problems, and should, and create important changes to prevent the same kinds of incidents from reoccurring. And that is one of the problems we are seeing in the Child and Family Services. We seem to be learning very slowly from the incidents that have occurred and not taking the actions that is necessary to prevent reoccurrence.

In fact, if we were doing our job right, we would be making changes to prevent the incidents from happening in the first place. This act would require immediate reporting of critical incidents or death involving child in care. But the reporting, as currently outlined, is more to the agency and authorities themselves and, then, ultimately to the minister. There's nothing really public about that unless the minister chooses to make it public. So we're certainly thinking that something a little more open will make Manitobans feel much better.

More especially, this act would require anyone who's involved in the child-welfare system, whether it be the agency or authority staff, whether it be the volunteers, of which there are many, student trainees, whether it's the foster parents, the child-care centre operators or those providing services in a place of safety such as a family residence, be both legally obliged to immediately report critical incidents to both the agency and the authority involved and the director of the Child and Family Services. Just like the members opposite, we do not want to see another tragedy like Phoenix Sinclair happen in Manitoba. Our children deserve the best care we can give them. All children and youth in Manitoba must be—must feel protected. Implementing critical incident reporting in Manitoba will ensure that our child-welfare system is accountable, but we need to work on the transparency side.

Whatever—I would like to make sure that we make Bill 68 as strong as it can be and are adamant about holding the NDP government to account to make this right. We also believe that there are other measures that will be taken—that must be taken to protect children, and we expect support from members opposite for our introduction of these

measures, as well. But, sadly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this NDP has neglected the other measures for far too long. Government has a duty to care for our society's most vulnerable, and, in this regard, the NDP is failing in this—that duty. The failure is hurting families and putting lives at risk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Phoenix Sinclair is a name we're all familiar with. How about a few more: Gage Guimond, Jaylene Sanderson-Redhead, Dillon Belanger, Heaven Traverse, Shanelle Audy, Patsy Desmarais, Michel Helgason [*phonetic*], Tracia Owen, Baby Amelia and, most recently, Matias De Antonio. These are all children that died while in the care of CFS. This is a list that is far too long, and it indicates that we are not making the changes necessary to improve the system and we are not dealing with the problems as they arise. These are only a few of the names for children that have died under the care of this NDP government child-welfare system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, tragically, since 2005, more than 20 children have died in the care of the child-welfare system. The child-welfare system must immediately implement all of the recommendations of the Phoenix Sinclair report. Foster parents and CFS workers are crying out for accountability and transparency, something we currently don't have. Child-care spaces are in high demand in Manitoba. Currently, there's a one-and-a-half to two-year waiting list in Winnipeg, and much longer in many rural communities.

\* (16:40)

Manitoba has witnessed the greatest increase in food bank usage in Canada in the last five years, increasing 48 per cent. In 2013, 4.72 per cent of Manitobans were using food banks, a clear indication that we have a problem in the system. Of these, 17.8 households accessed food banks for the first time, and this is an increase of 13.3 per cent from the previous year. And we know, from other numbers, that 47 per cent of those people using food banks are, in fact, children. So, clearly, we have a significant problem. The number of welfare recipients in Manitoba has grown by more than 5,200 since 2008.

Nearly 2 per cent of children under the age of 14 are in the foster system of Manitoba, the highest portion in Canada. And, if you look around and see what other jurisdictions are doing in terms of child and family services and children under care, it would appear that we are very nearly a third of the total children in Canada, under care. That is certainly a



disproportionate number and makes you wonder what is wrong with our system, that we have so many more than other jurisdictions that, in fact, reflect almost identical demographics. So, clearly, there is something different about our approach to this.

Family breakdown, addictions and violence have resulted in more children in care than ever before, with only 3,400 more—with over 3,400 more kids in care in—since 2005, an increase of 51.5 per cent.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

The NDP promised a while ago that they would raise the rental allowance, and yet that's still not accomplished. It will occur, oh, sometime over a span of four years. But, in the meantime, of course, people are in—struggling to make ends meet.

And we hear all the time from people that, basically, just ran out of money for food, and the only remaining out for them, of course, is to go to the food bank. And I don't know if everyone appreciates that you just can't go back and back to the food banks, more times—as many times as you like. They keep track and they have some limitations on their ability to meet the service too. So there are often gaps that simply no one is there for, and those households simply have to struggle along and try and make ends meet, and it's very, very difficult for them.

And, if you happen to be in the attention of Child and Family Services, and they turn up when one of those tight periods occurs during the month, when you don't have the money and you can't go to the food bank, and they walk over to your fridge and they find the fridge empty, which can occur, obviously, despite everyone's best intention and best money management, and Child and Family Services has the right, and has, on situation, basically gathered up the kids and taken them away, because you don't have adequate resources on-site to feed your children. Obviously, you can't look after them, so they certainly take—are quick to seize them in situations like that. Now, who's ultimately responsible when there's situations like that?

More than eight years later, we know that Child and Family Services is still in a bit of a disarray because of the devolution process, and we certainly think that more leadership and more guidance to the boards and agencies would help them deal with the problems.

And it wasn't very long ago, we had an instance where workers were being sent out of province for trips that—on money that probably should have been spent on the children. And, I know that this is not the first time that this has occurred, and we would certainly encourage the government and the minister to make it really clear to these agencies, that this is not an appropriate use of public dollars. And I don't think Manitobans are prepared to accept that that ever will be appropriate use of public dollars. And that kind of transparency just is not occurring in the system right now, and I hope that this bill will lead us to some more—better transparency. But it would appear that right now all we're going to get is a report to another level of bureaucracy, and that's not what we want to see.

On this side of the House, we believe, as well as—we believe, that apprehension of children should not be used as a last resort. Although cultural identity and education about one's heritage is extremely important to all children in Manitoba, achieving the goal of safety for the children should be No. 1. It should not be slipped down the list. And we believe that there have been some instances where that has been lost in terms of the priority.

Mr. Speaker, a PC government would immediately raise the employment and income assistance rental rates to 75 per cent of the market medians. We've been very upfront with that and certainly committed to that some time ago.

On this side of a House, we understand the important connection between housing, community development and family services. We need to work with the NGOs and other organizations in the community to build success stories. They will be built one at a time. They will be individual in nature. But that is what we've got to do: more wrap-around approach to dealing with family problems; not, this is your problem, that's my problem, and we won't necessarily consult on that. And the family often gets left in the position of having to run back and forth between different branches of government to try and find the solution. And, you know, it's even been suggested, well, we need to find the navigators for them, to make sure that they can deal with the system. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think a navigator would very quick to tell you, simplify the system, make sure it's completely all-inclusive, wraparound and deals with the issue, not just pushes it into somebody else's lap, which we see more and more of.

On this side of the House, we are committed to building a strong, experienced, knowledgeable, sensitive and responsive child-welfare system, a child-welfare system that puts the child at the centre of the system, respects their rights and privileges. And, certainly, that is something we have not seen in the child and family services system. I can talk at great length about the situation with the de Antonio family and their rights and their privileges. And they were offered almost nothing. They were offered no explanations. They certainly received nothing to this point in time. They have not received the cause of death. They are left, a month and a half into the process, wondering what has happened and what overcame—what became of them when they came here to Manitoba.

They made a decision when Maria Herriera discovered that she was pregnant. They made a decision that it was too dangerous to have the baby in Colombia where she was with her husband at the time, because of immigration issues. It was too dangerous to have a baby there, so they decided to come to Manitoba to have a baby. Well, how has that worked out for them? Things like the actions of Child and Family Services, the seizure of the child without due explanation, has certainly left them wondering whether they made the right decision, whether, in fact, it's safer to come to Manitoba or safer to stay in Colombia where, certainly, they would never have had that kind of action take place. And they are really wondering whether they made a mistake, and, certainly, I think, we're going to hear a great deal more about this as it works its way through the system, because I don't think we've come anywhere near to finding the resolution that needs to take place.

Mr. Speaker, my hope today is that this government will take the safety and security of the children of our province first. It is our responsibility as elected officials to do what we can to assist the most vulnerable people in our society and to also create the conditions for our front-line workers to best serve the—this most vulnerable sector of society. Bill 68 is a chance for us to do something that is in the—move in the right direction. It's a way to help strengthen the system, but we certainly need to go much further in trying to strengthen the system. It is meant to protect children so that it's—the best we can.

The establishment of a critical incident reporting system is to better protect children, and we need to get this right—not a halfway measure that has really done more to make staff in the ministry feel good

about themselves just for reporting this, but not giving public in Manitoba the type of answers that they need to get about what is going on in the child and family services system. Although the NDP continue to make analogies to the critical incident reporting in health care, we must remember that the child and family services system is very different, and these differences have to be taken to account.

I urge the NDP government to work closely with each and every person who has advice on strengthening this bill, and I know that there will people—be people coming to committee late—later this week to speak to this bill, and I hope that the minister is listening very carefully and takes these suggestions very seriously. I urge the NDP not to fumble this one. The lives of our children are at stake.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I recognize that it is a move in the right direction. I think we've had far too many critical incidents that have not been reported in the system in the past, and we have not taken appropriate actions on them. But I do not believe that reporting through another level of bureaucracy and then finally to the minister is moving far enough.

Clearly, the public has spoken through the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and the reports and recommendations that they have an interest—the public has an interest in what is happening to our children. The types of numbers that we're seeing here in Manitoba of children that are under care indicate that we have a very serious problem and that we need to do something to change the nature of the system to deal more to focus on the needs of the family, the needs of the children. And we need some—take some different actions. So just to report on a critical incident does not guarantee those types of actions.

We need to do more to deal with the problems as they arise and try and make the improvements in the system that will provide the supports to the family that these children need.

So I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill. It's a good start, but it's only a start.

\* (16:50)

#### House Business

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Mineral Resources, on House business?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Government House Leader):** On House business, Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce, in addition to the bills previously referred, that Bill 62, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Contracts for Distance Communication Services), will also be considered at the May 22nd, 2014, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development. As well, I'd like to announce that Bill 23, The Co-operative Housing Strategy Act, previously referred to the same committee, has been removed from the agenda.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in addition to the bills previously referred to, that Bill 62, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Contracts for Distance Communication Services), will also be considered at the May 22nd, 2014, meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development. And that Bill 23, The Co-operative Housing Strategy Act, previously referred to the same committee, has been removed from that agenda.

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**Mr. Speaker:** Now any further debate on Bill 68?

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** I just—I'm grateful to have an opportunity to speak a little bit to this bill.

I spent a lot of years working in the field. I can't tell you how grateful I am that during those many years I never had to write this type of report. Of course, people were writing them before this legislation; it just wasn't in legislation. We all wrote incident reports for many, many things, you know, whether or not it was a critical incident report, and in all of those years of working I never had to write one about the death of or a serious injury of a child, for which I am forever grateful.

I'd like to say that that was because I'm just so good at my job, Mr. Speaker, but it really isn't true. You dealt with—*[interjection]* Yes, exactly. I tried to be good at my job, but you could be incredibly good at your job and still have one of these incidents occur, and so for those who have had it happen to them as a worker, whether it's a social worker or a youth-care worker or *[inaudible]* foster parent, it is absolutely devastating for them.

So I know I stood on the ground as kids with mental-health issues got on roofs and teetered on the edge, and I waited hours for somebody to arrive who would help with those kinds of incidents. I had kids who, you know, dealt with suicide, suicidal ideology

many, many times, and whom we always managed to keep safe somehow, but I know of workers who spent their day, you know, that was their day trying to make sure that someone did not commit suicide in their care.

So is it incredibly complex field that is often, you know, a heartbreaking one for the families, for the workers, for anyone that's involved in it really, and so I certainly agree that, you know, we are always trying to make things better all the time in this field, always working to make things safer for our children. And I was interested to hear the member from Portage. I know later he did acknowledge that these are good reports, that we do want to have these reports. At one point he said that we don't want them, but he later did change that, for which I was relieved, because I think, you know, getting these reports into legislation is certainly of value and important and we need to do that.

It's only one, of course, of many things, and many, many of the recommendations that came from the devastating case of Phoenix Sinclair have already been put into place and—for which we are all grateful, and we will continue to work to make sure all of those, you know, come into being.

I'm curious to know how the member opposite with \$550 million in cuts is going to bring about improvements, either to poverty or to the child and family services area. I know that, in the '90s when they were last in government, I was working in that field then, and I can guarantee you that it was not better. Issues around poverty were not better. Issues in the Child and Family Services were absolutely not better. There was a tremendous number of cuts that occurred during that time. Some of them were to the Foster Parents Association, of course, but it was just sort of an endless array of cuts. And I wish I had—in fact, I had had a press release from 1993 that outlined a number of the cuts that perhaps you're not aware of being new, by your own government that were devastating, and certainly, you know, when it came to snitch lines and things like that, I'm not sure that that actually helped to reduce poverty at any point in time. So I'm just not at all clear how it would be better.

I think what will make it better is many of the things that we're doing, certainly the reversal of the PCs' cuts to foster rates, the return of their foster parents association, the launch of the foster family recruitment campaign, Circle of Care, which increased foster and emergency beds, the specialized

training for both foster parents, youth-care workers, social workers. Those things actually make a difference. I know I was a trainer myself, Mr. Speaker, working with youth-care workers and providing training for some of the effects of neglect and abuse on child development and how kids are affected and how we can best work with those kids; how to provide care to kids in group care as well; working with sexually aggressive youth, we certainly did lots of training around that as well; working with kids who are suicidal—all of those sorts of things actually make a difference.

And we have put in place all kinds of training that didn't exist in the past and have grown and increased, and we need to continue to be able to do more of those things and really been working to implement some of those.

I can remember when the face-to-face contact came into being—that was brought in 2006—and so that social workers always had to actually see in person that child, every child every time, and I think that was extremely important. Adding, you know, 280 new positions to reduce the workload because the workload in the child protection system certainly back in the '90s was devastating. I know of people that carried just a tremendous number of kids; there was no possible way they could have ever seen every child every time because there simply were not enough of them unless they worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Mr. Speaker. So how cuts are going to allow these things to happen under another government, I really truly just am mystified by it.

We've more than doubled the child-welfare funding to about \$440 million a year, Mr. Speaker, and that is key because that funding provides real-life workers who can spend the time, you know, working with families, coming up with care

plans, really doing the job that they need to do and doing it properly; implementing new, internationally recognized risk assessment tools—that was something that made a difference, that makes a difference, that changes what happens; renewing our emphasis on early intervention and providing families in crisis with resources to create stable homes—that makes a difference. None of those things are going to happen with \$550 million in cuts; they're just not. It's absolutely not possible to do that. Bringing more than 5,000 new foster care and emergency spaces into the wild-child-welfare system for children at risk can't be done if you don't have the money.

So restoring funding for the Foster Family Network, expanding the Children's Advocate's powers to review every issue that occurs and increasing the investment into the Child Advocate's office—those things make a difference so that we can learn from things that happen and actually make changes. Increasing the number of emergency beds, Mr. Speaker, that makes a difference. But cuts to the system, they're not going to give us what we want.

The member opposite had spoken a bit about poverty, and certainly some of the things that we're doing right now is going to make a huge impact on poverty, has made changes now, but we'll make more in the future as we ensure that there are jobs available for people, that they're good-paying jobs. The Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) was actually speaking, I think today—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) will have 21 minutes remaining.

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



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