

Fifth Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 10—The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Nevakshonoff), that Bill 10, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la confiscation de biens obtenus ou utilisés criminellement, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this seeks to clarify and streamline the legislative framework that this very successful regime operates under. It extends the amount of time that an interim order can be used to preserve property, better reflects the level of proof required in civil court, requires that disputes must be heard by a judge of Court of Queen's Bench and allows the maximum dollar value of property eligible for forfeiture under the administrative proceedings be increased through regulation.

This, Mr. Speaker, supports the achievement that, since 2010 alone, \$12.7 million in assets connected with unlawful activity has been forfeited and those amounts distributed to law enforcement and victims.

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

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table, under The Statutes and Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered and required to be tabled, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: And also under tabling of reports, I am pleased to table, in accordance with section 28(1)

of The Auditor General Act, the report on the follow-up of recommendations on waiving competitive bids, dated November 2015.

Any further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, ministerial statements.

World AIDS Day

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, today I stand in the House to recognize World AIDS Day. This is an internationally recognized day when individuals and organizations around the world come together to raise awareness about HIV and to remember those who have passed on.

In Canada, December 1st is also the kickoff to Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week. The government of Manitoba continues to invest in clinical services that work to improve the delivery of care and treatment for those living with HIV/AIDS and to ensure that those who test positive for HIV have more immediate and accessible care when they need it. We also invest in community-based programs that collectively work to increase education and awareness, as well as improve access to resources aimed to reduce and/or prevent the transmission of HIV.

I want to acknowledge and thank all of the dedicated advocates, health-care providers, volunteers and community-based organizations here in Manitoba who have made invaluable contributions to addressing HIV. The passion, hard work and dedication of those who work tirelessly in this field will help us to achieve the goal of Getting to Zero, which is this year's international theme.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage my colleagues to wear a red ribbon today, December 1st, in acknowledgement of those Manitobans lost to and those living with HIV. I also respectfully request that we further honour everyone whose lives have been directly affected by HIV and AIDS with a moment of silence after others members have spoken.

Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize World AIDS Day. The theme for World AIDS Day 2015 is On the Fast Track to End AIDS.

World AIDS Day is held on the 1st December each year and is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate those who have died.

Mr. Speaker, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day held for the first time in 1988. By the end of 2014, an estimated 75,500 Canadians were living with AIDS and an estimated 2,570 new HIV infections occurred in 2014. The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates more than 17,000 Canadians are infected with HIV and don't know it. These statistics are troubling and they are indicative of a government that has not done nearly enough to prevent the spread of this devastating disease.

While some now see the disease as preventable and manageable with treatment, that perception comes with further risks. Fewer Manitobans are being tested because they may believe they are not at risk. While early detection and treatment, people with HIV are able to live longer than before.

Mr. Speaker, the rate of HIV infection is not the only cause for concern. Reports have shown that most new cases of HIV in Manitoba are being diagnosed so late that patients are already ill and in hospital. Some aren't diagnosed until they have full-blown AIDS. This is a disturbing revelation because the longer someone goes without a diagnosis, the higher the chances that they will unwillingly spread the disease. This speaks to an urgent need for this government to be more proactive in reaching out to vulnerable people to stop the spread of HIV.

World AIDS Day is important because it reminds the public and government that HIV has not gone away; there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the hard work of the many community-based agencies, public health units, volunteers, family and friends that provide ongoing support to Manitobans who are living with HIV/AIDS and who work diligently to try to prevent the spread of this disease.

We also commend the individuals who work tirelessly in our province and around the world to bring about a future without AIDS.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join others today with concern about those with HIV and what is happening in our province and globally in terms of the prevention and treatment of HIV. I note that in the most recent report, with the results for 2014, there are estimated to be about 1,200 people with HIV in Manitoba and that there were 87 individuals who entered into care during 2014. The 87 remains too high a number; I will speak out once again for moving toward a Treatment as Prevention approach, as they they're doing in BC, which has been shown to be much more effective in reducing the incidence of HIV.

I think that this is going to be vital if we're going to actually get towards zero, which is the goal that has been talked about. I note from the HIV report that they are calling for a number of things. Late diagnosis and presentation to care continues to be a concern. Limited access to services outside of Winnipeg creates challenges and they are calling for HIV testing to be expanded across the province with particular attention to access to care and improvement for those indigenous people in Manitoba.

With those words, I join others in remembering this day and working—congratulate and thank all those who are working hard to help those with HIV and to reduce HIV in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to observe a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Honourable members, please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker: Any further ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: We'll move on to members' statements.

Dale Jersak

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): Joining us today in the gallery today is Dale Jersak, a resident of the Swan River Valley, who saved someone's life this spring.

On May the 5th, Dale was fishing for suckers in the Swan River near the ford crossing. Another local resident, an older gentleman named Henry Natyna, was fishing from the bridge. The river was flowing over the bridge as it does every spring. Suddenly, Dale heard his name shouted, and he saw Henry fall off the bridge into the current.

Dale's first aid training kicked in. He made sure to protect his own safety first, and he couldn't help anyone else if he could injure himself or killed. Dale ran along the riverbank to someone—to some shallow rapids, where he was able—where it was safe to enter the river. Wading chest deep into fast-moving, icy waters, he managed to grab Henry and haul him to the shore.

Henry was bruised and disorientated. He may have been knocked out at some point while he was swept along the river. But we knew enough to say to Dale, I owe you my life.

Dale's story should remind us of a respect of our natural environment and how easily it can take our life. In Swan River and many other water bodies, the current is fast and the water is ice cold. We must keep this in mind and keep our family members safe when we've never—when we're near water or ice.

Dale chalks up his actions up to luck; he was at the right place at the right time. But it was more than that. Dale's first aid training and quick action saved Henry and Henry's family from a terrible loss.

Fellow members of the legislator—Legislature, please join me in commending Dale Jersak, who is in attendance today, for saving the life of a fellow Manitoban.

Virden Golden Bears

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to honour the Virden Collegiate boys football team, the Golden Bears, who captured the rural Manitoba football championship last month in Neepawa.

The Virden Golden Bears had their typical slow start of this football season, which is consistent of the last 28 years. For the most of those years, the Golden Bears often were winless and were referred to as the bad news bears. The team had not won a league championship since 1987.

Once the Bears won their third game of the season, the players came together as a real team. For the rest of the season, they only lost one game against Swan Valley. The Golden Bears were able to defeat Souris in the first round of the playoffs, and the coaches had home-field advantage for the first time in their careers.

The team was excited to move on to play the Neepawa Tigers on November 7th in the finals. The score was very close throughout the game. At the start of the fourth quarter, the game was tied 20-20. Virden worked very hard to score two touchdowns to win the game in the championship 34-20.

This was my son's first year of playing on the team, and what a great season for him to be part of.

Congratulations goes out to the Virden Golden Bears and players, parents and coaches for winning the Murray Black trophy as the 2015 champions of the Rural Manitoba Football League, and best of luck for the next year.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the leave—the House leaves that the names of the players be listed in the Hansard.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the names that the honourable member referenced in his member's statement to be entered in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Nathan Price, Tyson Gompf, Brandt Unger, Beth Whiteman, Rhys Perstinski, Aidan Pivniuk, Max Wagner, Connor Bjornsson, Dalton Wilson, Coyle Wilson, Quinn Langavin, Mitchell Morton, Deacon Eilers, Tanner Decroliere, Trey Panche, Josh Crawford, Dylan Gompf, Alec Anderson, Ben Bajus, Paul Winters, Bradley Westbrook, Mathew Elliott, Kyle Elliott, Ryan Winters, Brendan Berry, Josh Whiteman, Dustin Siemens, Jayden Rookes, Zane Anderson, Matthew Cochrane, Brandon Martins, Caleb Lesnar

Flood Protection

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, the flood of 2011 was one of the largest natural disasters Manitoba has ever faced. Our

communities came together to face and recover from this challenge. The flood waters have since receded, but we know that now is the time to protect against the next flood.

Mr. Speaker, communities along Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin and across the Interlake expect their government to pursue flood control as a top priority. However, both of the opposition parties have introduced platforms that clearly demonstrate their callous disregard for those who live in the path of flood waters.

The Conservatives have pledged that if they formed government, they would cut taxes for the wealthy and they would cut half a billion dollars from the budget. Simple math: To make these cuts, the Conservatives would have to delay or cancel investments in front-line services, roads and vital flood-protection projects. Their plan would leave Manitobans vulnerable to the next flood.

In the face of flooding, Duff Roblin made historic investments to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. I want to reference, for ministers, rule 26(2): A minister of the Crown may not use the time allotted for members' statements to comment on government policy or ministerial or department action.

I know I have provided guidance to members of the House on this in the past, and I want to ensure that all ministers of the government are aware of this particular rule. And so I'm going to indicate to the honourable Minister of Conservation that a statement such as he's making at this point in time is not permitted under our rules. And so that will end your member's statement at this point in time, and this is a caution to all ministers of the Crown.

Now we'll move on to the next member's statement.

Friends of Spruce Woods

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate the Friends of Spruce Woods. The Friends of Spruce Woods was founded in June 1986. It is a volunteer citizen advisory group who provides supplemental and auxiliary assistance to the parks branch in the ongoing operation of Spruce Woods Provincial Park. Their emphasis is to promote and enhance the public's enjoyment of the local flora and fauna.

Friends of Spruce Woods is a very active group who have continually fundraised for the many

services and facilities at Spruce Woods Provincial Park. They have been instrumental in ensuring the interpretation program is well supported and funded.

During the 1990s, they conducted an aggressive fundraising campaign and were able to fund a new interpretive centre for the park. This centre includes a complex of buildings including an interpretive workshop, resource centre, exhibit building, gift shop, outdoor amphitheatre and campfire circle.

They continue their support by helping to maintain the interpretive centre and have purchased a classroom-sized teepee for interpretive programming. They also assist with the maintenance of the buildings, promote events and programs and purchase necessary program supplies and equipment required by the interpreters. They have been instrumental in preserving the program at the park. Without them, the program would not be available today.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, November 13th this year, the Friends of Spruce Woods received the National Association for Interpretation excellence in the interpretive support at the national conference held in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

This award is presented to an organization that has shown the value of interpretation through exceptional and sustained support. The award recognizes outstanding achievements of those working to advance the profession of interpretation.

The Friends of Spruce Woods won the region that takes in three prairie provinces and a central part of the United States. Rosalie Sigurdson and Lorelie Mitchell, twin sisters from Glenboro, Manitoba, made the trip to Virginia Beach to accept the award on behalf of Friends of Spruce Woods.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize and congratulate all members, past and present, of the Friends of Spruce Woods. I offer special congratulations to Rosalie Sigurdson, who has been a member of Spruce Woods since its inception and has held all executive positions, some of them more than once. Rosalie has recently retired from the board of Friends of Spruce Woods. I would like to thank her for her many community contributions and to her support of Friends of Spruce Woods. I wish her all the best in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Natasha Vokey

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, recently, I had the opportunity to participate in Take Your MLA to Work Day, where I was able to spend the afternoon with Natasha Vokey and Natasha's job coach from the Eastman Employment Services.

Natasha showed me her work at the Steinbach Credit Union, and it was clear to me in the afternoon that I spent with her that she is important in keeping things running at the Steinbach Credit Union.

Every day that she's working, she spends time going from the different photocopiers and making sure that they continue to be full and continue to be operational, as well as patrolling the different coffee areas in the Steinbach Credit Union in their new building to ensure that not only the staff but the customers also have that service provided to them.

* (13:50)

It was clear to me that the staff at the Steinbach Credit Union treasure Natasha and that they consider her part of the team. In fact, when I was speaking with her, I asked her the thing that she enjoyed most about her time at the Steinbach Credit Union, and she said that it was the sense of teamwork that she had and all the different friendships that she's made working there.

I got to know her a little bit personally. She told me about her love for football, in particular, her love for the New England Patriots and the Green Bay Packers. And even after I told her that I cheered for the Minnesota Vikings, we still got along.

Mr. Speaker, Natasha will be representing all of us at the Special Olympics in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, in February in 2016, and she's the lead on her curling team.

I want to thank the Eastman Employment Services for inviting me to spend time with Natasha. I also want to thank Glenn Friesen and all the staff at the Steinbach Credit Union for welcoming me, but more importantly, welcoming Natasha in the work that she does there.

And I especially want to thank Natasha for allowing me to spend time with her that afternoon and getting to know her. It was truly my honour to spend time with her, and I hope that we can continue to be friends in the future, and we wish her well in the Special Olympics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 from Henry G. Izatt Middle School, we have 65 grade 9 students under the direction of Joe Martin. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Throne Speech Promises Balanced Budget Timeline

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier announced through the Lieutenant Governor a few days ago a \$6-billion, Hail Mary, go-for-broke pre-election spending spree. And so I have a few questions in respect of that for the Premier today.

Given the magnitude of the promises that were made in that speech, \$6 billion-plus, the biggest announcement, I believe, pre-election, of any in Manitoba history, I have to ask the Premier: What is his current target date to balance the budget for our province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Setting aside the inaccuracy of the member's numbers, Manitoba is a growing economy, the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, the highest job creation rate in Canada, more people living in the province of Manitoba ever in the history of the province, a younger population of 37 years old. And even though people are living longer, when we have a growing economy, we have the resources to look after people, and that's what we're doing in Manitoba.

The biggest risk to the people of Manitoba is the Leader of the Opposition's plan to have two-tier health care, which is privatizing health care, is to privatize the daycare system and to privatize social services. Those are the biggest risks to the people of Manitoba.

Tax Increases

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, half the members of the NDP don't agree with the biggest risk theory the Premier put forward. They didn't support the Premier in his leadership bid, so they think he's the biggest risk.

But that being said, just think how good we could do with a good, new, fresh government in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

So the kids will notice that the members in the backbench yell a lot, and that's why they're going to stay back there, Mr. Speaker.

And now this question's for the Premier, since he failed to answer the first one: Which taxes will the Premier raise to fund the \$6 billion in new spending he proposes in the Throne Speech? Which taxes will he raise?

Mr. Selinger: Perhaps the member missed it, but the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) today made an announcement with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that they will reach the full \$500,000 threshold for the lowest taxes for small business in the country, the lowest tax rate for small business in the country; that is a rate of zero.

And at the same time as we grow the economy, we generate the resources that allow us to provide high-quality public services, not privatized public services, public services provided by public employees in the province of Manitoba, employees that do a good job for the people of Manitoba. And all of that will be at risk.

They've announced they want to privatize daycare. They've announced they want to privatize social services. They've announced that they want to have two-tier health care, which is another way of privatizing social services. They've announced they would not build hydro for export, which would make our rates among the highest in North America. Those are the risks to the people of Manitoba; they are embodied in the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Pallister: Kids, you know when somebody's desperate they yell loud, and the Premier's yelling loud but not answering the question. So I'll try another one here.

Will the Premier commit to not broadening the PST so he can keep his pre-election go-for-broke, Hail Mary promises, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: What we will do is keep faith with the people of Manitoba. When they need flood protection so their communities aren't under water, we will provide it. We will be there for them. When they need health care, we will be there to provide that for them, Mr. Speaker. When they need a daycare spot so they can work for the good jobs that

we have in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, we will provide that daycare for them.

And we will keep Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live in the country, one of the most affordable places to live when it comes to the cost of post-secondary education, when it comes to the cost of going to a daycare centre, and we will not have user fees on home care, such as the members opposite tried to bring in when they tried to privatize it.

Manitoba will remain a place to live where everybody belongs, everybody has access to universal health care, everybody will have access to daycare. That is the promise we make to the future, and we will do it while having one of the strongest economies in the country.

You don't have to yell to do that, Mr. Speaker. We just have to have the right government, and I can tell you the Leader of the Opposition is taking us backwards, not forward.

Mr. Speaker: Not to be taking pictures in the gallery. I'm asking for your co-operation. Okay, thank you.

Balanced Budget-Taxpayer Protection Act Manitobans' Right to Vote

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, if you need higher taxes, the Premier will be there for you. If you need broken promises, the Premier will be there for you. If you need to double the debt of the province, the Premier will be there for you. But if you need straight answers on the cost of the \$6-billion pre-election spending spree, he won't be there for you. He'll be running down the hall dodging the cameras, Mr. Speaker, and that's what he does.

So let me ask the Premier this: Will the Premier, who has failed to answer any of these straight-forward and simple questions, will the Premier promise today to return the right, which he took away from Manitobans and went to court to fight so that he could have it, will he return the right to vote to the people of Manitoba, which he promised he would not take away in the run-up to the last election? Will he return the right to vote?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in the year that we celebrate Nellie McClung's tremendous victory on behalf of women in Manitoba to enfranchise them with the vote, in a year when we're going to have an election, I can tell you what we

won't do. We won't do what the Leader of the Opposition did when he was in government: rig the election. The largest election-rigging scandal in the history of Manitoba occurred while the member opposite was a member of the government.

We will have free elections in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We will protect the democratic traditions of this province. We will ensure people have that opportunity to vote and they will have the opportunity to vote on a vision that grows the province, creates employment, protects services, seeks out reconciliation with indigenous people, makes Manitoba a welcoming place for refugees. That's what we will do.

The vision of the leader opposite: a narrow, exclusive vision, leaving out people, making sure that they don't have opportunities. No plan for the future, Mr. Speaker. That's the dark vision. We have the sunny vision for a bright future in Manitoba.

Government Intention

Mr. Pallister: Well, it's great rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, but it's more heat than actual light. See, the Premier says he'll protect democracy, but he took away the right of Manitobans to vote, which he promised he would protect. And now he invokes Nellie McClung?

Mr. Speaker, please. You know, this is the incredible contradiction of this Premier. He ran for election in the last provincial election on a promise that he wouldn't raise taxes, knowing he was going to, and then did. To do it, he took away the right of Manitobans to vote, and now he speaks in this Chamber about Nellie McClung. Shame on him for doing that.

Is the Premier—is the Premier—who has repeatedly pushed back the date at which he promised he would balance the books and who said in the last election he was ahead of schedule to balance the books and is now continuing to push it back in spite of the largest tax hikes in Manitoba history, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier planning to repeal the balanced budget act?

*(14:00)

Mr. Selinger: No government has brought in more balanced budgets than this government: 10 in a row, Mr. Speaker, 10 in a row. And when the recession came, we joined with every other province to provide stimulus to the economy to keep the Canadian economy going.

And then we had this thing called a flood in 2011; \$1.2 billion of immediate protection we provided to Manitobans. And then we saw a report that came out that said, you need another \$1 billion of investment to keep communities from being under water, where there is no economy when you're under water, Mr. Speaker.

And we made a decision, and we know that it wasn't a perfect decision. We made a decision to protect Manitobans, to build our infrastructure, to protect communities, to provide good jobs for young people to have a prosperous future in this province.

And what is the result of that, Mr. Speaker? The lowest unemployment rate in the country, the highest job creation rate in the country.

But you could only appreciate that if you were out there on the dikes and saw the suffering of the people. You had to be there to understand what decisions had to be made for the betterment of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Sales Tax Future Increase

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): PC members were in every flood site in Manitoba before there was a Premier in sight, Mr. Speaker, every single one.

It took our beautiful province—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: It took our beautiful province, Mr. Speaker, 109 years to get \$18 billion of accumulated debt and this Premier six years to double it—six years to double it—after promising he was on target to balance the books and said he was ahead of schedule, after promising not to raise taxes and invoking enormous tax hikes on Manitoba citizens and seniors who can't afford these higher taxes and fees. This is deception. This is the politics of deception.

I've asked the Premier five simple, straightforward questions about a \$6-billion spending commitment that he made the week before last. He refuses to answer a single question. I'll ask him one more, but let the record show he has failed to answer any of my questions so far.

Will the Premier commit today to Manitobans that he will not raise the PST?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member put misinformation on the record. The debt as a proportion of our economy is lower than it was when he was in office. The cost of servicing the debt in Manitoba is 58 per cent less than when he was in office. They spent 13.2 cents of every dollar on servicing the debt. We're spending 5.6 cents on the dollar to service the debt.

And what are we getting for that, Mr. Speaker? Hospitals, personal-care homes, schools, roads, flood protection for Manitobans, assets that make a difference, that grow the economy, that educate young people, that look after the elderly, that make sure people can live in their community in affordable housing. Those are assets which make Manitoba a good place to live for everybody, no matter what their level of income.

And you only have to go downtown and look at the new Convention Centre, look at what we're building down there. Go to the university and see all the assets that are built there. Go to the University of Winnipeg and see the assets that we've built there, Mr. Speaker, to know that we're on a positive roll with a strong economy.

What's the plan of the member opposite? A plan of austerity and cuts and returning to the dark days when there was no opportunity and people left the province. We have more people living here than ever before—

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

Labour Productivity Growth Government Tax Policies

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I guess we can take from that non-answer from the Premier that he is, in fact, intending to raise the PST. Shame on him, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, according to Statistics Canada, in the year before the Selinger government's PST hike, Manitoba's labour productivity growth was the highest in Canada. In the year after the PST hike, Manitoba's labour productivity growth had the second lowest increase among the 10 provinces and territories that saw labour productivity improvements. Mr. Speaker, we're almost dead last in Canada again.

Will the minister just admit that his government's high-tax-and-spend policy has had a negative impact on later-labour productivity in our province?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Let's talk about productivity.

Winnipeg's North End: Canada Goose, 500 jobs now; in the next three years, over 1,000 jobs. We call that productivity, Mr. Speaker. Loewen Windows—it's always worth the trip to Steinbach—668 jobs over the next five years. We call that productivity. Shaw Communications, in the riding of the Leader of the Opposition: 500 new jobs. We call that productivity.

Any time the member from Tuxedo wants me to take her down, she can see first-hand productivity in Winnipeg's North End at Canada Goose. She can come with me to Steinbach and see productivity. In fact, I'll take the Leader of the Opposition to his own riding and he can see productivity with 500 jobs at Shaw Communications, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Stefanson: I can see why the minister doesn't want to talk about the labour productivity, Mr. Speaker, because the numbers are not very good for Manitoba.

Before the PST hike, Manitoba had the highest labour productivity growth in the country, but after the PST hike, we had the second lowest. These numbers are going in the wrong direction. This is not a good thing for Manitoba.

Will the minister just admit that his high-tax-and-spend policies are having a negative impact on our economy?

Mr. Chief: Let's talk about productivity. What are people saying about the productivity of Winnipeg and our province?

Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg downtown in a period of unprecedented growth, study finds, CBC News. We call that productivity. Lowest unemployment rate in Canada right here in Manitoba. We call that productivity. Winnipeg has the lowest business costs in western Canada and lower than every US city examined. We call that productivity. Manitoba, an economic elite. We call that productivity. Job numbers up nationally, strongest growth in Manitoba. We call that productivity. Construction business is booming in Manitoba. We call that productivity. Province's economic growth ahead of the national average. We call that productivity.

Any time, Mr. Speaker, any time she wants to come down to Innovation Alley and see what's going on with Michael—

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't call it productivity to refuse to answer questions in this House.

Mr. Speaker, according to Manitoba economist John McCallum, he said, and I quote: Economists don't agree on all that much a lot of the time, but one thing there is a pretty good agreement on is that the growth of an economy is your labour-force growth plus your productivity growth. So if your productivity is going down, that's not good, and if it's hovering around 1.3 per cent, that's not a great number. End quote.

We used to be No. 1 before the PST hike. Now we're almost dead last. This Selinger government is taking us in the wrong direction. I shun to think what will happen when this government raises the PST again, Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Chief: Well, Mr. Speaker, look at—let's look at the Leader of the Opposition's plan, when he sat around the Cabinet table, on productivity. Businesses were closing, storefronts going dark, buildings sat empty; the Leader of the Opposition called it productivity.

They sold MTS, Mr. Speaker, while his friends got richer and the rest of Manitobans had to pay more, and I travel to all of their ridings and their constituents tell me that's still the most devastating thing that they're dealing with. The Leader of the Opposition calls that productivity.

In the middle of the flood of the century, Mr. Speaker, when he was the—when the minister of Emergency Measures, when Manitobans needed him the most, he quit his job. He calls that productivity.

On this side of the House, we stand with world-class businesses, we stand with world-class workers and we stand with world-class families, and we call that productivity, Mr. Speaker.

Personal-Care Homes Bed Shortage

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Maybe this NDP government should stand with the MGEU workers who are here today wondering when this government is going to help them.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has failed to build the number of personal-care-home beds that

seniors and Manitobans need. In fact, there is a significant deficit of beds because this government has grossly mismanaged this issue.

I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to tell us why she has ignored the fact that on any given day in Manitoba there are over 1,000 people who need a PCH bed but can't get one.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question, and I would invite her to join myself and the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) to see the Tabor Home under construction.

We have made investments there. We are making investments in other PCHs across the province. We are working with all partners, because we know the value of construction and infrastructure and building PCH beds. We also know the value of keeping home care public rather than privatizing it.

So I will take no advice from members opposite, and their cutting and closing practices of the past are no example. Over here, we build and we invest and we look after our seniors.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, what Manitobans are getting from this Minister of Health are news releases and photo ops. What they aren't getting is the number of beds needed to address what has become a crisis now in Manitoba, and it's a crisis that they have created.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to explain to Manitoba's seniors: Why is she failing them? How could she have made such a mess out of such an important issue?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, I, again, thank the member for the question and remind Manitobans that we are working with communities.

And I've met with many community groups about the prospect of where we can work with them in developing even more PCH beds, and we are working on best-practices models. We are working on a variety of ways of working with communities to ensure that their seniors get the care that they want and they need. There will always be construction under way; we will always continue to work with seniors.

And, again, I remind Manitobans, the capital infrastructure—members opposite, in their term in office, would not have built a single bed.

We have more beds. We're growing beds. We're going to keep working with Winnipeggers, with Manitobans, and we're going to keep looking after seniors.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the previous government built triple the number of PCH beds that this government has done. That's right. That is, in fact, a fact that the previous government built triple the number of beds that this government has done, and we did it in 11 years. In 16 years, this government isn't anywhere near that number.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a catastrophe in the making. Manitoba, right now, needs 250 new PCH beds a year for the next 21 years. That is not happening; there are no shovels in the ground, and a lot of the things she talks about haven't even been approved.

So all we're getting from this government, Mr. Speaker, is broken promises and broken trusts.

So I would ask her: Why should anybody trust anything she has to say again?

Ms. Blady: We actually have added over 1,000 PCH and supportive-housing beds. There are 125 PCH-licensed PCHs, which is six more than when they were in office. There are shovels in the ground in Tabor Home.

And need I remind members opposite of the wonderful words of Dr. Adrian Fine, who said: Several years ago, when ERs were overflowing, the government decided to close many acute medical beds in the city and at the same time to considerably expand PCH beds, the latter part being part of an election promise. But guess what? After the election, it cancelled the PCH development but maintained the cuts in acute medical beds. This dishonest and stupid decision had the entirely predictable result that ER overcrowding would continually worsen. Total government liability here.

The words of Dr. Adrian Fine, Mr. Speaker.

Sunnywood Manor Review and Recommendations

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I understand that the Health Minister has done a study or review of Sunnywood Manor Personal Care Home in Powerview-Pine Falls.

Can she get me a copy of that study or review today and share with the House some of the key recommendations, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question.

And I have to say that I'm very happy to have met with members of the community and a variety of other communities at AMM in this past week, and we discussed a number of issues that they all felt were important to their communities.

And what I have to say is that I really admire the commitment and the collaborative nature of each of those communities in wanting to work with us. Some of them came with very innovative visions for everything from PCHs and other front-line medical care.

And so, again, I'm looking forward to working with that community and many others in terms of developing everything from PCH beds to front-line medical care.

Mr. Ewasko: So I'm taking that as a no to my question, Mr. Speaker.

It's upsetting to me, as the local MLA, to hear and see the inaction by this Health Minister, Mr. Speaker. There are families that have loved ones in the Sunnywood Manor who have experienced emotional, verbal and physical abuse. There's been a review done, but it's been buried. Seems to me that there's a safety concern here, not only for residents but possibly also for staff.

The Health Minister's photo ops and empty promises are not reassuring to Manitoba families.

Where is the review? What are the recommendations? And will she admit that her government is failing Manitoba seniors and their families, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Blady: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

We have actually worked on safety within personal-care homes, whether that's the instruction and the creation of the PPCO in 2001, again, put in place rigorous PCH standards in 2005, and, again, we've done inspections.

So we continue to work with communities around patient safety. And, again, every PCH is visited on a regular basis. And we do work with the PPCO to ensure that all patients and their family members and all workers are safe, because a safe workplace and a safe living environment is what we want for both those that care for our loved ones and

for our loved ones. And we'll continue to work with them in that regard.

Mr. Ewasko: And still no report, Mr. Speaker, no commitment by this minister.

This is another prime example, Mr. Speaker, of NDP waste and, specifically, mismanagement that is hurting essential front-line services. It is hurting Manitoba families and their loved ones, like Denise and Louise, here in the gallery today.

We are short 270-plus personal-care-home beds in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority alone, and I know that there are vacant beds for now almost six months, Mr. Speaker. I know that the members are heckling, but it's because they know it's the truth.

Hard-working Manitoba families are waiting for personal-care-home beds, and this minister is too worried about photo ops and empty promises and not enough on the needs of Manitoba seniors and families.

How can Manitobans believe anything this Health Minister says, or anyone, for that matter, in the Selinger government, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Blady: And, again, I want to assure, whether it's guests in the gallery or Manitobans, that we are working to build PCHs.

And if we want to look at credibility issues, maybe the member opposite should think about his own leader, who said that two-tier American health—American-style private health care was something that Manitobans wanted to see more of. He said that the private sector would be better at serving—providing health-care services in Manitoba, the dedicated doctors and nurses working every day. And then at the AMM debate, the Opposition Leader denied ever having said those things.

Now, it would be acceptable, Mr. Speaker, if the leader had—if the Opposition Leader had changed his mind. It would be acceptable if our side had finally convinced him that public, universal health-care system was the right way to go. It would be acceptable for him to support doctors and nurses in Manitoba. But, however, it is not acceptable for the Opposition Leader to deny ever having said those words that are clearly on the public record.

Manitoba families deserve better than to be told it's their—

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

Child and Family Services Children's Special Allowance Payment

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, every child in Canada is eligible for the Universal Child Care Benefit. When a child comes into the care of an agency, such as CFS, the UCCB payment ceases to go to the parent or caregiver and is paid to the agency responsible for the care of the child. This funding is then called the Children's Special Allowances.

Since 2011, the Province has made a policy change demanding that the agencies that care for children remit the Children's Special Allowances to the Province. Since the policy change, this allowance just disappears into the general revenue of the Province of Manitoba, commonly known to Manitobans as the black hole.

Why is this federal transfer, intended for the care and maintenance of nearly 11,000 children, not going to the benefit of those children?

*(14:20)

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Every day in the front lines of child welfare, we have workers that are going into homes, that are assessing situations, that are celebrating the successes but also providing families a road map of how to support themselves better, how to better support their children, and we are gratefully—we value that work every day that they do it.

We are going to continue to make those investments in the child-welfare system. We've hired more workers; we're going to continue to do that. We're going to ensure that we have no more children in hotels; we're going to continue to do that.

We're going to work in promoting prevention programs. Right now \$29 million is being spent on prevention. That means 17,000 children are left in their homes with their families, getting the support that they deserve.

We're going to continue on that path. We will not revert to the methods of the members opposite: cut, cut, cut and then privatize.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a minister who is responsible for nearly 11,000 children in care

and has risen that to a new high across Canada. I'd be ashamed if I was her.

As I asked previously, prior to the 2011 change, the agreement was in place that the agency responsible for the care of the child was to receive the UCC benefits known as the Children's Special Allowances. Many agencies had a practice of putting half of the money in trust for the CFS child when they reached 18 and giving the rest to the foster family for extra money for the child in care.

Why did the NDP government end the practice of directly benefiting the child in care with this federal transfer money?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, the investments that we make to support families every day are seen in this province, whether it's more affordable housing, whether it's child-care centres, whether it's the creation of jobs.

And when families are involved within the child-welfare system, we continue to support them. We continue to provide them with a variety of services. If a child is in need of protection, we're there to support them but always with the goal of reunification when that child can be safely reunified with their family.

We continue to invest in prevention. We're going to continue to do that. Mr. Speaker, \$29 million is spent; 17,000 children are at home with their families, and they're going to continue to be there with our continued support.

What the members opposite did when they were in government, \$4.5 million was taken away from children in care, as well as cutting foster parent rates.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, this federal transfer the minister is taking comes to \$25 million a year. Benefits under the UCC have been raised this year and expanded in age qualification, which translates to an increase in the Children's Special Allowances. That means the CF agencies will be receiving extra funds from the federal government.

Can the minister tell this House whether the nearly 11,000 children in care will receive any of this additional benefit from the funding increase?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell all Manitobans is this side of the House is here for all families. We're here to support families, whether it's through affordable housing, whether—if it's a family that's reaching out for support, they're reaching out for support in a community organization like

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, we're there providing that support of Families First workers going into their home, \$29 million. We're making those investments for that continuum of support, starting with prevention but, when necessary, an intervention.

What the members opposite did when they were in government, they slashed child-welfare rates. They had fired workers. They also continued to have an argument with the Children's Advocate.

What we're doing is working in partnership with the authorities and the agencies to better support families.

Ride-Sharing Services Driver Compensation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has consistently opposed any exchange of resources in the context of ride sharing. This would suggest the Premier is opposed to fair compensation to the individual, such as covering the cost of gas and mileage travelled for the ride share they are providing in their own vehicle.

Why is the Premier opposed to an individual other than a licensed taxi driver receiving agreed-upon fair compensation for the ride sharing that they are providing to others in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have regulations in Manitoba that require a person to be a licence holder for driving a taxi, a special licence. They also have to have their vehicle licence. They have to have the appropriate insurance. That protects the drivers. That protects the customers.

We're undertaking a review of taxicab services in consultation with the industry and the public to look at how we can improve services.

The member opposite's proposals would result in people losing employment, full-time jobs. They would result in higher risk to individuals in Manitoba, both people providing the service and receiving the service, Mr. Speaker, and that's not really the way we want to go.

We want to have an economy—we want to have a community where people have access to good, well-paying jobs and good quality services. They go together, whether it's in the transportation sector, whether it's in the public sector, Mr. Speaker.

Government Co-op Membership

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, even while the Premier and his government are opposed to ride sharing in

the context of any compensation, I now table a FIPPA response which clearly shows that his government has been paying for ride sharing since 2006. This payment involves a membership in a ride-sharing co-op so that he and members of his government can benefit from ride sharing.

Why does the Premier say this is illegal when the government is itself involved in paying for ride sharing?

Mr. Selinger: I think the member is referring to an investment in a co-op, a ride co-op, with—provides vehicles that people can then make an application to drive that vehicle, Mr. Speaker, and provide their own—they drive themselves. What they're getting access to is the vehicle.

That's very different than the Uber system, which provides part-time jobs, inadequate insurance, rates that go up when people need the vehicle the most, rates that go down when people lead the—need the vehicle the least.

Mr. Speaker, let's not kid yourselves, the member opposite is on the record, with his leader of the Liberal Party, saying they want to privatize liquor and lottery services. Now they want to do the same thing with transportation services. That's not the future of good jobs and low unemployment and prosperity for Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: Most taxi operators are private sector, unless his government is going to take over this as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier stated very strongly and clearly on October 26th that it is illegal for a ride share to operate in Manitoba unless, and I quote, they have a taxi driver's licence and unless they have a taxicab licence.

Can the Premier table evidence that each driver and vehicle being used for the ride sharing that his government is paying for has the required licences and insurance, or does he simply have one set of rules for his NDP government and another for the rest of us in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: As I indicated earlier, there's a review going on of the entire taxicab industry with consultation of the public, with consultation of the industry. Everybody's committed to providing a good quality service to the people of Manitoba, and a safe service, Mr. Speaker, for the people that use the services as well as a safe service that—for the people

that provide the services. That is what we're going to follow through on, and we're happy to do that.

I can say to the member opposite, his desire to continue to privatize services in the transportation sector, in the liquor and lotteries sector, is not really the way forward. He has a proposal on the table; one of their major election planks is a 450-plus-million-dollar tax reduction to the largest corporations in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. That corporate tax giveaway will leave no money left for public services. That's the issue he needs to be accountable for to the people of Manitoba and the members of this House.

Rent Assist Shelter Benefit Program Enhancements

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, keeping Manitoba affordable is a top priority of this government. We know that quality training, good jobs and affordable housing are key elements for all Manitobans in need, especially for refugees and all newcomers trying to build a better future here for their families.

Can the minister tell the House about the important commitment on Rent Assist that was fulfilled today, two years ahead of schedule?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): I was proud to join hundreds of people—families, advocates, employers—at New Journey Housing this morning, Mr. Speaker, to announce the Rent Assist program.

I think all of us in this House can recognize that some of our most exciting times, our most happiest times can also be some of our most difficult because we're in transition. We know that coming to a new country or transitioning into a critical first job is exciting, Mr. Speaker, but we also know that people do need some support, some stability while they're doing that transition.

*(14:30)

That's what the Rent Assist program does, provides stability for those individuals, for those families, for employers, Mr. Speaker, who recognize that hiring local people, that helps them make a good living for themselves and their families, is good for everyone.

The Rent Assist program, our government stands with families, we stand with employers, and we stand with helping people get good jobs.

**Princess Harbour Community
All-Season Road Connection**

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the current East Side Road Authority website states that an all-season road will provide reliable year-round access to Princess Harbour and a number of other communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

When can the residents of Princess Harbour expect to be connected to an all-to that all-season road?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the work that's being done by the East Side Road Authority.

There are two elements to the east-side road, as the member knows, through various briefings and meetings that I've had with him.

The first portion, of course, is between Hollow Water and Poplar River and connections with Bloodvein and Berens River and spurs to Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids.

The other portion is part 2, and that's on the northeastern side of Manitoba with the north-central communities, the Island Lake communities, that'll connect up in Norway House and ultimately through Highway No. 373 and then Highway No. 6, the main thoroughfare.

We are working with each of the communities. Each of the communities have benefited from the community benefits agreements. And we're very happy about the employment and the training opportunities—

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

Mr. Briese: Ferry service to Princess Harbour on Lake Winnipeg was discontinued on October the 15th of this year after 35 years of service. The community of Princess Harbour has no all-season road, no winter road and now no ferry service.

The community is only 10 kilometres from the all-season east-side road, and the residents were led to believe they would be connected to that road.

When will that happen? Or is this just another broken NDP promise?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely incredible that the member opposite

would get up and ask any question about the East Side Road Authority, because their leader has said if they get in government they'll cancel the entire thing.

And I want to put on the record that, Mr. Speaker, this government has extended all-weather-road access into Bloodvein. That's why we removed the ferry service.

And I want to put on the record that it is part of the future of this province. And as we stand here today, I also want to put on the record that it's being built by public servants.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite have a difficulty with public servants. They paid lip service when they were government. They fired them. They legislated them in terms of wage freezes.

We respect the public service. We respect the East Side Road Authority.

We are building the future. They're destroying it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in

Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by J. Poirier, T. Jeroski, C. Jeroski and many other fine Manitobans.

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

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 T. Turner, G. Ross, T. Bachman and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Studies conducted by Manitoba Health in 2003 and 2006 and the Brandon Regional Health Authority in 2008 identified the need for community-based brain injury services.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by J. Booth, R. Price, G. McGregor and many other Manitobans.

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. The provincial government—to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

* (14:40)

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

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

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

(6) Waiting lists, decrease in services and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from

eligibility for ABA services if their diagnosis still remains and their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services, maintain the current successful program and fund true ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder until they reach age 21.

And this is signed by C.N. Braun, M. Funk, S. Seibel and many other fine Manitobans.

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

And the background for this petition as follows:

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

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

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

(4) The current provincial government policy now imposed on ABA services provides a decrease that's scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven program and force children to go to school at age five before they are ready, thus not allowing them full access to ABA services promised them as they wait on their wait-list.

(5) Waiting lists, forced decrease in service and denials of treatment is unacceptable. No children should be denied access to or age out of eligibility for the ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by C. Toews, C. Froese, M. Penner and many fine Manitobans.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning consider making funding available to eliminate the current wait-list for ABA school-age services, maintain the current successful program and fund true ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder until they reach the age of 21.

This petition signed by I. Hunt, P. Hunt, M. Hunt and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Manitoba Interlake–Health Care

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) There is severe shortage of emergency and regular medical care in the Interlake region of Manitoba.

(2) The staffing levels within such units such as the hemodialysis and chemotherapy, emergency-outpatient services at the Johnson Memorial Hospital in Gimli are below operational levels.

(3) This lack of essential front-line services is causing patients to travel 45 minutes away for regular and emergency life-saving treatments, often at their own expense.

(4) This highway medicine approach places the welfare of residents and visitors to this community at further risk.

(5) This shortage causes additional strain to the limited rural ambulance services and results in all Manitobans paying more and getting less.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider implementing a plan to cover the immediate shortfall in staffing levels and to develop a long-term solution to provide timely and quality health care to the residents in the Interlake.

This petition is submitted behalf of K. Henderson, S. MacFarlane, S. DeSante and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: No further petitions?

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: Then we'll move on with grievances.

The honourable member for Portage La Prairie, on a grievance.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): On a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to grieve this government's treatment of children and their families caught in the network of child and family services. Manitobans have watched with growing concern as the number of children in care has continued to grow, reaching 10,861 last April, 87 per cent of these children being First Nations. Further information requested—has been requested by FIPPA, but as this department is continually six months behind on FIPPAs, we have no more recent numbers.

When you compare this number with neighbouring Saskatchewan, which has nearly identical population demographics, and find it only has 4,600 children in care, only 60 per cent of which are First Nations, you begin to wonder what is wrong with our system here in Manitoba. In fact, if you look across Canada, you will find that although there are a couple of provinces with higher absolute numbers, there is nowhere in this country where population—where percentage of the population is in care, as in CFS care, as here in Manitoba.

In fact, if you look around the world—and it gets very difficult when you're looking around the world to get comparable numbers—there is certainly every indication that, despite a few regions in other countries of the world that have difficulty with child welfare, we may well be the worst in the world.

*(14:50)

Absolute—that absolute numbers in one area concern, but the impact on the families—the high number, rather, is an area of concern, but the impact on the families is probably the greatest impact as far as I'm concerned.

We recognize that there are certainly times when removing a child or children from their family is the only option available to CFS, and I am sure that front-line workers and agencies and authorities only act out of concern and need, but the separation of a child and parents is a traumatic event for both. We've certainly heard from many children about the severe trauma that comes to pass when they are separated from their families and really have an uncertain future laid out before them.

In my—in the role of critic I have met many times not only with the children, but with the families that have lost these children to CFS often during short-term times of dysfunction in the family, and with some families it becomes the catalyst for their repair and they are certainly able to rebuild their families because of the crisis, and that is very positive.

However, even in those cases, reunification can take many years before we can get the family back together, and it is a very long-term process and many people actually—their patience wears out. They are given the endless runaround from different government departments and different agencies and different lists of things that they are required to do before they can get their children back, and then they do all these things and then they get another list, Mr. Speaker, and there's no consistency and certainly no accountability offered to them as why suddenly things have changed.

It is very frustrating for these families. But also for the child themselves because in many cases the children are put in temporary situations, certainly initially, and maybe if they're really lucky they'll end up with a foster family that is permanent or a semi-permanent placement for them that is a loving, caring family and provides them with a good alternative from where they came if that was necessary. But often the children are bounced around a number of times.

And I have spoken to children that have aged out of the CFS system that during their period of time in CFS some of them only in a matter of a few years have been in 20-plus placements, Mr. Speaker. That cannot be a good situation, and certainly leaves them with a very uncertain future available to them. And they're very frustrated and they have really little trust not only for the CFS system, but for mankind in general. It leaves them very doubtful about their future, and who can they trust?

Some the removal of the family—of the child from their family is very destructive to the family, and we have seen situations where the family has simply dissolved and collapsed following the removal of children. It is stressful, and perhaps in some cases both parents were the cause of removing the child, but in many cases it was dysfunction or addictions or mental-health issues with one parent and the other parent was trying their level best to keep the family together and keep the child there and it becomes very destructive to them and, in fact, I

think it's driven many families to complete destruction, Mr. Speaker.

This is not a positive relationship and it's certainly not positive for the family. There's actually often very little support supplied to those families following the removal of the children. What they get very often is, as I mentioned earlier, a list. This is what you must do, this is what you must accomplish before we'll consider bringing your child back, and in many communities access to those services or the training or the additional services available to help strengthen the family doesn't exist. So it's simply they're given a list of impossibilities, Mr. Speaker; it is certainly very destructive and leads, I think, to many families' complete destruction.

For the children apprehended they are often in a very long period of instability. Some find placements, as I said, with stable long-term loving families, those are the lucky few. For those—for many there are only short-term placements with a variety of foster families, and certainly the foster families are trying their best, or a long list of group homes, some of them so many that they frankly can't remember how many they were in. Temporary placements leading to often in—certainly in excess of 10 or more placements during the period of time that they're in the system.

And then you get closer to 18 if you stay within the system, and many do, and it becomes difficult to know what your future might be when you age out of the care of CFS. And certainly many of us know that for our own children to suddenly take them to 18 and say, okay, fine, you're on your own, would be very traumatic without any additional supports, and it is the same for these children that have grown up in the CFS system. They find it conflicting and terrifying in many cases.

Extensions of care are an option, but qualifying for extensions of care is extremely uncertain, Mr. Speaker. There is not clear criteria made available to the children approaching that age.

If they're in a good, solid education system, there often is some options available with extensions of care, but I think you'll find that with many kids, especially those that have been moved around in multiple placements, they quit going to school a long time ago, so they're not in a good position to go back to school and get additional training. It certainly leaves them very vulnerable.

Suddenly, they reach 18, and they must develop all of their own supports inside a system that has made them, frankly, pretty dependent on someone else. For many, they are so disillusioned with the whole CFS system that they really want nothing more to do with that agency and basically do not follow any options available through CFS. They just simply want out.

And what happens with many of those kids, they actually become what Siloam Mission refers to as dumps—kids that are brought to their doorstep on their 18th birthday and left sitting at the door of the Siloam Mission with their goods in plastic garbage bags—a wonderful way to be introduced to the world, Mr. Speaker.

They have, fortunately, put in place a program not only to provide some temporary housing for those, but also to set them up and get them through other programs, such as income assistance, and actually put them in contact with other training and, in some cases, they've even found them housing and found them jobs, in particular through their Madison facility, which has been fairly effective for that. And I thank them very much for providing that service, and I know there are other agencies out there that provide that service as well. It appears to be an increasing need.

For many, their entire time under the care of Child and Family Services is filled with uncertainty, generated by both constant change in placements and a constant change in workers, and I know that, having spoken to a number of children who aged out of the care of CFS, they, frankly, can't even remember how many workers they had in some cases and certainly are very distrustful of any workers because they—it's just a constant revolving door. They have developed no relationship with their worker and certainly are very distrustful.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that my time is running out, but certainly we can do better than we have been doing with children under the care of CFS. The children are our future. There are way too many of them in this system. Certainly, that's another issue as to support of the families, as I mentioned earlier. But those that are coming out of the system at 18 years of age, we certainly owe them more than we're giving them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll go on to orders of the day, government business.

Hon. James Allum (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we would like to call for second reading of Bill 11. After that, we would like to resume debate on second reading of Bill 7. After that, we would like to call for second reading of bills 3, 4, and 5.

SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: We'll be calling bills in the following order: For second reading, we'll call starting with Bill 11, and after that we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 7, and then second readings of Bill 3, Bill 4 and Bill 5.

Bill 11—The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: And we'll start by calling Bill 11, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services who's responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 11, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la violence familiale et le harcèlement criminel, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (15:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, since what is now called The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act was enacted, thousands of victims of violence in our province have applied for and been granted civil orders of protection. Although many Manitobans have benefited from those orders, the tragic deaths of two women in recent months, Selena Keeper and Camille Runke, have highlighted the need to take a hard look at both the application process and the conditions that can be included when a protection order is granted.

We've received invaluable assistance throughout this process from the thoughtful responses we've received in consultations with community groups, with police, and others who have taken the time to share their experiences and their expertise, their

feedback, indeed has helped to guide change that we're confident will significantly strengthen the legislation.

One of the most significant changes in the bill was the restructuring of the criteria for their granting of a protection order based on the seriousness or urgency of the circumstances. In addition, specified factors relating to the rate of domestic violence or stalking are introduced into the legislation and will have to be considered by the court in determining whether to grant an order.

The bill contains an important amendment providing that where a protection order is granted and the designated justice of the peace hearing the matter determines that the other party is in possession of a firearm, the protection order must include a provision requiring the other party to surrender their firearms and ammunition to a peace officer, failing which the legislation provides that police may seize the firearm and ammunition.

Further, the bill contains provisions designed to ensure that the Chief Firearms Officer of Manitoba is made aware of all the protection orders that are granted as soon as possible. This important information will assist that office in determining whether to grant, revoke or impose conditions on the PAL, that's a position and acquisition licence for firearms, under the Firearms Act of Canada.

These amendments will strengthen the ability of a victim of domestic violence or stalking to seek a protection order without notice against a respondent when necessary due to the seriousness or urgency of the situation, and where a designated justice of the peace determines that an order is required to ensure a victim's safety. Even with these changes, the legislation continues to ensure that the rights of a person alleged to have committed domestic violence or stalking are recognized. If a protection order has been granted against a respondent, the respondent will still be able to apply to the Court of Queen's Bench as set out in the existing act, to set aside the order and present evidence.

The bill also includes a provision that will allow a victim seeking a protection order to be accompanied at the hearing by a support person, where the support person is also an individual designated under the legislation to provide assistance to a victim when applying for an order. Such a designated individual may also make submissions to the court respecting the application for an order.

The definition of stalking in the act has expanded to include the Internet, or the Internet to threaten or harass another person.

Mr. Speaker, the changes in this bill will significantly improve the operation of Manitoba's domestic violence and stalking legislation. Manitoba will continue to have the broadest civil domestic violence and stalking laws in the country, and these changes will benefit Manitobans for years to come.

We look forward to co-operative efforts in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any questions on this matter?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): To the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), can he speak a little bit about the GPS monitoring which, I understand, was part of this announcement? Will it be the same electronic monitoring that's currently being used with auto thieves, or will be a different type of monitoring?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, I—that certainly goes beyond the ambit of the confines of the bill, but I'm more than happy to speak about that.

This province has had an experience working with GPS monitoring. It started with auto theft and then was expanded for domestic violence. And I know that there have been two studies so far completed on the work and the application of GPS monitoring within Manitoba, but of course many, many studies beyond the borders of Manitoba. I think every study has mixed results in terms the ethicacy of GPS monitoring and I think the results do depend on what one might be looking for.

First of all, we know that in Manitoba there have been 79 individuals on electronic monitoring with regards, I believe, and I'm just going by recollection, with regard to auto theft. And of the 79 I think about half of them were either removed or tampered with. And, as I recall the 79, 11 of those offenders actually stole a vehicle again wearing the electronic monitoring. So that reminds us that we have to guard against electronic monitoring being a false sense of security, a false sense of safety, and obviously it's been proven that it's not a one-line answer, Mr. Speaker.

But it's time to expand it and get beyond the pilot phase, and we want—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable minister's time and response has elapsed.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for the response. Just more specifically, is the type of electronic monitoring that would be used in the case of domestic violence—which was part of his announcement yesterday, Mr. Speaker—is it the type of electronic monitoring that identifies where a person actually is, or does it just indicate that they aren't somewhere, so they aren't within a certain radius? Does it indicate where they actually are, however?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, there are different applications available, and the technology is rapidly developing. Indeed, there's technology that's being experimented with in the state of Florida, and we've made contact with that company whereby the victim, by agreement, would be notified of the whereabouts of a respondent—or an offender.

And I—we'll—I have tasked a new GPS expansion team, which will include Winnipeg Police Chief Devon Clunis, University of Manitoba law professor Karen Busby, our head of Victim Services, an expert in high-risk offender prosecutions, as well as the head of probation in Manitoba to determine who should be getting the monitoring on an expanded basis and what are the objectives and what the technology should be. And, as well, there are some contractual issues that will have to be determined. But it's time that we made a greater application of it but do it in a way that's based on evidence, that's based on the Manitoba experience. And whether it's exclusion zones or whether it's active monitoring, those are issues that we look for advice on.

Mr. Goertzen: The government announced—I think in the 2011 campaign, so now more than three years ago—that they would be expanding the use of electronic monitoring, and, certainly, one of those areas to be considered was domestic violence.

Why is it that four years later, the government's announcing again, essentially, the same thing, and they still don't know which technology they're going to be using? And how long is it actually going to take, if it's taken four years to make good on this promise and it's not even made good on yet? How long will it actually take until electronic monitoring such as the minister describes will be used in these domestic violence cases?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is one of the jurisdictions that has applied GPS monitoring, electronic monitoring, and it started with

auto theft. It then expanded to domestic violence. There are eight orders of the court currently requiring electronic monitoring with regard to domestic violence offenders. And now the task is to expand significantly the application of GPS monitoring in Manitoba, looking at the emerging technology. The technology is changing so fast that we have to keep abreast of that and be attuned to what the best application is, given the state of the thinking that's going on, the objective analysis that's been taking place all across North America. So we're going to be state of the art; we're going to have an expanded use of GPS monitoring when it comes to domestic violence offenders.

Mr. Goertzen: And is there any time frame that this will be in place, because, again, it was announced three years ago? The minister talks about eight individuals who've had orders applied for electronic monitoring when it comes to domestic violence, but eight doesn't seem like a large number after a commitment three years ago.

How long until this new enhanced or robust program is actually going to be in place? Is it just—is it a promise that's going to happen quickly or is it likely to take place after the spring?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the GPS expansion team is charged with the implementation of that one, and as I said yesterday, we expect the plan to be completed by the spring. That should give them ample opportunity to determine the emerging technology, the piloting of the new direct-to-victim notification, and as well to make sure that we proceed in a sure-footed way, recognizing, of course, that the application of GPS monitoring is always the decision of the court. And, indeed, there have been cases identified by the Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit that were—did not end up with orders. So we always have to keep that in mind as we proceed. But, given that, it's our view, as government policy, that it is time to expand this application now.

*(15:10)

Mr. Goertzen: The portion of this announcement and the portion of this bill that deals with the prevention of individuals who have protection orders against them from having or possessing firearms: Can the minister indicate how is that going to be enforced to ensure that that happens, because, obviously, protection orders haven't necessarily been followed in some of the 'tragacashes'—tragic cases that we've seen, and so a large part of this is

enforcement. How does one—or how is the department going to ensure, the government going to ensure, that that is actually going to be enforced, that individuals who are not supposed to be in possession or have ownership of firearms, that that is adhered to?

Mr. Mackintosh: Currently, under the legislation, a justice of the peace, a judicial justice of the peace, may order the surrender of a firearm. That is entirely discretionary, and we saw in the case of—tragic case of Camille Runke where that order was not made despite evidence that the respondent was in possession of a firearm. So this makes it mandatory in all cases where a firearm has been identified in the possession of the respondent. At that—the police have experience doing this. The order, then, will go to the police for execution, and, second of all, it will go to the Chief Firearms Officer, who operates under the licensing regime for firearms in Canada, and the regime there is under the Firearms Act.

So what this is is really a melding of both the provincial jurisdiction for civil orders and the federal jurisdiction under the Firearms Act of Canada. So there are two approaches: the Chief Firearms Officer can do a further investigation to determine if there may be other firearms and as well could revoke or take other action with regard to a PAL.

Mr. Goertzen: More specifically, just in terms of the enforcement side of it, I know that they—we've seen special units that deal with warrants. We've seen other special units. Is there the plans, or is there in place a special unit to deal with high-risk domestic violence cases to ensure that these orders are actually being followed?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, if we were talking about the surrender of firearms, the legislation specifically empowers the police then, who will go and serve the order and require the surrender of firearms, and if that doesn't take place, the bill enables the police to do the search and seizure that's necessary to achieve that result.

In terms of the broader enforcement of protection orders, of course, the regime here in Manitoba is the—that is enforced by police, based on the law and the evidence. I can also assure the House, one of the components of the announcement yesterday was for a new tranche of training, of enhanced training, for police across Manitoba with regard to domestic violence and this legislation, Mr. Speaker. We always have to recognize the importance of enforcement when it comes to

protection orders, and we are going to do our level best to make sure that those on the front line have all the tools at their disposal, including information about the dynamics of domestic violence.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm aware that the legislation would require the seizure of firearms that a person has in their possession. I think, of course, the minister knows as well as I do, that people who are intent on breaking the law often don't follow the law. And so the question would be, you know, whether or not somebody obtains firearms after they've already had the order in place, and, certainly that would be the concern, and to have an active monitoring through a domestic violence unit or something along those lines. I'm just wondering whether or not there's going to be that follow-up to ensure that individuals are actually, where there's a high-risk scenario, and certainly in the case of Camille Runke, which the minister referenced in his opening comments, that was clearly identified as a high-risk scenario. Will there be dedicated resources to ensure that those cases are being followed up on actively?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member may be aware that law enforcement must have the tools available, both in the general units and, of course, specialized units, to do their work, and we're going to make sure that they, in fact, have a full tool chest, and if there's any further needs from them, we will identify that and we'll develop the new training regime in concert with them over the next short while.

In terms of the enforcement of the firearms provisions, again, the legislation prohibits possession of—in the current firearms and possession, on a go-forward basis, and as well, the Chief Firearms Officer can deal with the licensing regime. But if a person operates outside of the laws, whether a protection order or the Firearms Act, that is an offence under law.

Mr. Goertzen: Could the minister just put on the record in terms of the proclamation portions of this legislation, is it his expectation that it would be proclaimed as soon as it passes the Legislature?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the act comes into force on proclamation, and it would be our hope, our expressed hope, that the legislation would certainly pass by the February session, our sittings, and if sooner, then fine, but we'll look for the co-operation of the honourable member in achieving that result. And in the meantime, we are developing the training materials both for the JPs and for police so that we can have an early proclamation. I don't want to see a

delay of much time at all between the passage of the bill and proclamation.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I would ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) what the estimated cost of the provisions of this bill would be.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that outside of this bill there are always costs, and, indeed, the prosecution of breaches of protection orders is an important responsibility of Manitoba Justice, and that will continue. GPS monitoring obviously does have a cost, and it's not even the monitors so much as the—it's the actual monitoring by—whether it's probation or police officials. The other changes in the legislation are largely within budget. It is an expansion and a strengthening of the existing regime, but if there are any costs that become unforeseen, we will attend to those.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I wonder if the minister could explain how the changes in legislation would have made a difference in the circumstances of Selena Keeper.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that Selena Keeper applied for a protection order and was not granted one, and this legislation lowers the threshold that one has to meet in order to get a protection order, and so we'll move from the need to show the requirement for immediate or imminent protection to the need to show that there are serious or urgent circumstances.

And all the advice that we have rallied have—has concluded that that will increase the likelihood of protection orders being granted. Currently, the majority of protection orders are not granted. They are dismissed and, indeed, Mr. Speaker, our analysis over the last two years showed that there were 1,237 *ex part* protection orders granted but 1,753 dismissed. That's a dismissal rate of 59 per cent, and we think, as I said yesterday, we have to open wider the doors of justice for women and children living in fear.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I wonder if the minister has done any sort of estimate of those 1,753 protection orders which were dismissed, what proportion of those would now be put in place under this new legislation?

Mr. Mackintosh: I rely on experts, Mr. Speaker, like, for example, Jane Ursel and those that represent the women's shelter community, and what they are saying very clearly is that many of these protection

orders are being dismissed because a woman is in a shelter or the guy is in a jail, and that has been a bar. And with the new legislation, those are specifically prohibited as reasons not to grant an order, so even on that alone, let alone the threshold, we'll see an increased number of orders granted.

Mr. Speaker: Time for questions on this matter have elapsed.

Is there any debate?

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put some comments on the record regarding Bill 11 and the increased support and protection for those that are victims of domestic violence.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, as the years go by and we see, I mean, legislation and strong legislation has been in place in this province, and we do know that most of the legislation that we debate and pass in this House is legislation that are amendments to legislation to make it even stronger and to hopefully to make that legislation better. And I'm hopeful that we will see some positive results as the result of strengthening this legislation.

* (15:20)

And I have had some opportunity in my 30 years in this House to be a part of decision making and a part of consultation with women and women's organizations throughout the province, but I do want to pay special tribute to a colleague and a mentor of mine, Gerrie Hammond. And I think many in this House would remember the name if they didn't have the opportunity to serve with her in this Legislature, but would remember her. And I know that her name continues to be talked about, and she continues to be recognized through the Women of Distinction awards where the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation—I guess it's Liquor & Lotteries now, Mr. Speaker—does present a Women of Distinction award, a Gerrie Hammond award to a young woman who—a woman of promise. And I know that her legacy and the work that she has done for women throughout this province does continue throughout that award.

But, Mr. Speaker, she led a team of four people around the province and they undertook what we called then the Women's Initiative. It was something that Gary Filmon had asked her to do, and she did it with great vigour and was passionate about supporting women throughout the province. And, as a result of real consultation and listening to women,

there were many, many changes that were made in the early '90s—late '80s and early '90s.

And one of the most significant ones that did—was undertaken, it didn't really get accomplished until the mid-'90s, but that was changing the welfare system in the province of Manitoba. First—originally, it was done in rural Manitoba and then moved into the city, but, previously, municipalities had responsibility for what they called the employable caseload on welfare, and the Province had responsibility for the unemployable caseload. So those would be people with disabilities, or people that couldn't work.

And, Mr. Speaker, part of the so-called employable caseload would have been women out in rural Manitoba. Women that maybe had left the household because of an exposure to domestic violence, and they needed to move away and start a life on their own, and municipalities had different rules and regulations right throughout the province. There was no standard form of support for these women, and some women were not granted the kind of assistance or support that they needed to look after themselves and to look after their family as a result of a traumatic experience.

And so what happened was we moved to a one-tier system of welfare, social assistance, as it's called now in the province, and we had standard rates across the province and there were special consideration given to women with children. And I think that was a major step in the right direction. I know many would debate, you know, whether the social assistance rates are high enough or there is enough support for people, but, nonetheless, I think it was a move to standardize things and to make things right for women that may have left—and maybe have left a very uncomfortable—and fled from a vulnerable situation.

Mr. Speaker, that was one thing that happened as a result of the Women's Initiative. Another thing we found when we travelled the province—when Gerrie travelled the province with her team, found that the shelter system for women was very inconsistent across the province. There wasn't any standard; there wasn't any specific training; there wasn't any funding model for shelters by the Province that would allow communities to support women that needed to move out of a violent family situation. And those women, I guess I would say, were able to come forward and to speak to the Women's Initiative and indicate what the issues were and where the problems—and what the problems were that they encountered.

So, Mr. Speaker, recommendations came back from the Women's Initiative and, as a result of that, there was a funding formula that was put in place and shelter funding was stabilized and safety measures for women were put in place and standards were established. And that was the beginning of a shelter system across the province that could be there to meet the needs of women that needed that kind of support.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that was absent in the early '80s and '90s was second stage housing, because the shelter system was a crisis system where people—where women and their children who needed to leave an abusive situation came to shelter and got the supports that they needed to try to begin a new life on their own. And, I mean, there are many decisions that needed to be made. In some instances women did go back into an unhealthy situation. Sometimes they were family situations that, I guess, could be resolved and could be worked out, but many of the women and children had to make a new life on their own.

And, Mr. Speaker, sometimes there wasn't a place. If they didn't have a family connection to support them, they were at a bit of a loss on where to go and what to do. So we introduced second stage housing. It was sort of a step down from that crisis shelter when they were supported and mentored and helped to make the decisions that they needed to make to move on with their lives. Then they had almost like a step-down unit or a second stage housing where they could go and begin to live a little bit more of a normal life, and we see many successful second stage housing projects across the province as a result today.

And, you know, those were just the beginnings and the start of those kinds of supports, and they continue on today, and I know that they've grown and I know that they've expanded to try to meet the needs—the ever-increasing needs of families, and we know today that we're seeing far too many—continue to see far too many instances of domestic violence across our province. And, Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable and we do need to look at better ways of trying to support our women in our province when they need that kind of support and help.

We also, at that time, introduced a zero-tolerance policy for domestic violence and, Mr. Speaker, I do know that still today there are times when law enforcement is called or police are called because there has been a reported case of domestic violence.

And there are times when women don't press charges because they really don't know what the consequences of that will be, because it is a major disruption to a family when there is a case of domestic violence and there are children involved. And sometimes to upset the apple cart or to destroy the family unit, even though it is an unhealthy family unit, sometimes there are those that maybe believe it will never happen again or, for whatever reason, decide not to press charges.

But, when charges are laid, when charges are pressed, Mr. Speaker, and there is a need for protection orders, I think it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we put the proper legislation in place and have the proper ability to get those restraining orders to protect women, and I'm looking forward to any discussion that may have—happen at committee level and for those that come forward that have some expertise in this area to provide information to us on whether we're doing the right things or going far enough or if whether there are other things that could or should be done.

*(15:30)

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, that happened when we were in government back in the '90s, and I know that members on the opposite side of the House like to talk about the '90s just being really awful days, dark days. But there are many positive things that did happen, and one of the things—and I know that the minister mentioned Jane Ursel, who is an expert and who I regard very highly, was there and advising us when we were in government too. And I have nothing but the utmost respect for the work that she does and for the understanding that she has around domestic violence issues.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that we did do was establish the Winnipeg Family Violence Court which was specifically dedicated to dealing with issues of family violence, making the process faster and having personnel who are trained to deal with family issues.

And, Mr. Speaker, that sped up the process, and I haven't heard recently how it is working and it would be interesting—it probably was a question we could have asked the minister in our question and answer period. But it became a model in Canada and other provinces followed our lead in that respect.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of some of the things that were done in the '90s that advanced the support for women and especially those that were the victims

of domestic violence. And I was proud to be part of a government that did implement those things. And, you know, I always say not every government does everything right or everything wrong; there were a lot of right things that were done. And, you know, there are a lot of right things that this government has continued to do and has continued to strengthen as the years have gone by.

There isn't anyone here sitting in this Legislature that would condone or accept domestic violence as anything that should happen in our province. But, unfortunately, we are seeing statistics that show that Manitoba, in some instances, does lead in some of the areas of domestic violence, and what we need to do is ensure that every day we are vigilant in trying to put in place the kinds of things that might be needed to ensure that the women and the children get the kinds of support that they need.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about domestic violence we often talk about the man and the woman, the husband and the wife or the partners, and don't often consider what happens to children when they are the victims. And I say they are victims, very often, because households are often—what can I say—it's dysfunctional when there are instances of domestic violence. And children do see that and they know what is going on, and they are, when—and very often, it's the woman and her children that have to leave the situation and move to shelter in a crisis, and that's hard for kids. It's hard for them to be uprooted from their neighbourhood, from their friends, from their school and from all of the things that they are accustomed to.

And, Mr. Speaker, we do have to think—for the sake of the children—we have to think about what family violence does to them, and I know that those that work within the shelter system and second-stage housing and within our school system too, do have the training and the understanding and the knowledge to work with and to counsel children. So it's not just an adult issue; there is an issue that does impact and affect the children within our communities pretty dramatically.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I welcome the legislation. I look forward to it going to committee and hearing whether there are any other recommendations or suggestions that might make this legislation stronger. I think we're always looking to try to ensure that we can protect victims of violence, and when we talk victims, we talk those that are actually violated plus the families that they

have that surround them. And it is definitely, Mr. Speaker, a family issue and an issue that we all need to take very seriously, and we all need to think about every day in making our legislation as strong as it can be to protect those that are in the vulnerable situation when they are faced with issues of domestic violence.

And, with that, I'll say thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to comment briefly on Bill 11, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act. First of all, I want to put very clearly that I'm very concerned about the incidents of domestic violence in Manitoba, and the need to decrease domestic violence both broadly and in specific instances where we have such as the case of Selena Keeper and Camille Runke.

I think in moving forward on this legislation there are, as well as the desire, which is the right desire to decrease domestic violence, there needs to be some careful look at this legislation from the point of view of issues of individual rights. There have already been concerns about putting tracking collars or GPS systems on someone without even them appearing in court. That, you know, there are some things which are important, and we need to make sure that the appropriate framework for human rights are there and are followed.

There are some potential concerns about cost. If we're going to move from 1,200 protection orders being granted to a system where we have double that, 2,500 protection orders, what does that mean? We need to think about that in terms of the court system that, in terms of the cost if we're going to be putting GPS monitors on a lot more people and so on. You know, if in fact that makes a huge difference in terms of decreasing domestic violence, then that's one thing, but if we impose a big burden and an increased burden in terms of protection orders and ramifications of those, then, without having any decrease in domestic violence, then, you know, that's another thing.

And I note that the bill, in spite of the fact that the minister has talked about wanting to base what he does on evidence, that there's no provision in this bill for, you know, ongoing scientific research which would lay the basis as we move forward for the evidence to undertake new activities or not undertake them. And so that is one part of the bill which certainly is lacking here if that's the minister's intent,

and maybe the minister will bring in some amendment.

But I think that because of the strong words of the minister in terms of wanting evidence, we would have expected that there would be some attention to ensuring that there was the underlying scientific research so that we knew moving forward what actually works and what doesn't.

* (15:40)

When the minister of, current Minister of Justice was the minister of Family Services, he brought in an approach which resulted in many, many, many more children being brought into care and, you know, doesn't appear to have changed the safety of the children in care all that much. In fact, it's caused a lot of trauma to many families. And, you know, it has been, was without the approach to prevent and approach to support families, and so that has caused, because it was a very reactive approach, appears to have been responsible for some real concerns to the point where we now have about 10 times as many kids in care as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden.

You know, we're out of line because we reacted one way, apprehending lots and lots of kids because we were scared they might be in danger in their biological home, but we forgot to consider that they may be in danger in their foster homes, sometimes, too. And we forgot to look at the trauma that's associated with taking a child out of their family. And we forgot to consider putting the major resources at that juncture and the major change in approach that would have supported families in a way that we didn't need to apprehend kids, in a way that is safe.

It has now been well shown—in fact, it was known at the time that the current Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) was the minister of Family Services—that there was an approach in Perth, Australia, in Western Australia, which was called the Signs of Safety, which enabled many more children to stay with their family but used a model which actually enhanced safety and enhanced the ability of the children.

So I think we need to make sure that we are not responding in a way that could cause other ramifications, and we want to make sure that what we do actually has an impact to decrease domestic violence, which I think is a result which all of us want.

It's interesting that the minister now in this bill has a very strong commitment to firearms control, whereas for 16 years, he was adamantly opposed to any form of firearms control. And I think that the— you know, the minister obviously has been, you know, converted in his view in terms of certain areas of firearms control, but, you know, it shows that the, you know, minister has been going back and forth. And what we want is a circumstance where we're able to reduce domestic violence. I believe that the bills which are also here and before this House— Bill 215, which would enhance the activities within the primary and secondary education system to provide education to reduce domestic violence, and that the measure that's been introduced by the current Minister of Education, which would provide for effort at post-secondary education levels, would be very valuable in this respect.

And not to say that there's not some very potentially important and useful new tools within this measure, but I think that with a broad approach and with care in how we manage this particular bill, then we need to be listening at committee stage very carefully to what is being said and what will work and what won't and what are the ramifications.

If we have, for example, moved from 1,200 protection orders up to 2,500 protection orders, one of the things that I have experienced is a number of circumstances where protection orders have actually made it much more complicated for two parents to be having joint custody, to be looking after kids where there's families which are separated. We need to be thinking about the children and how we manage the life and the well-being of the children with respect to the parents.

And, you know, it is all very well if we had a judicial system where there was perfect understanding of what the family situation was, and you could make ideal decisions. But family law is frequently not so, you know, clear-cut in terms of being able to understand exactly what the dynamics is. And sometimes, the—whether it's the woman or the man who's involved in domestic circumstances, the one who is the, you know, abuser or the problem or the, you know, the more dominating one, sometimes can be a smooth talker. And, you know, he can get into situations where the person who is in a—the other person can be in a much more difficult situation. In fact, there is some work which suggests that in the system in the United States, and I understand to some extent here, that where you have a custody dispute, for example, that where there is a

concern on parent A that parent B is being abusive and that the child may be at risk or the children may be at risk, then child and family services, I understand, does not investigate that, except under very extraordinary circumstances because they consider this part of a, you know, separation or divorce or domestic dispute, and that they won't interfere and that all too often, it appears from the literature, and, as I say, particularly in the United States, that the child actually is given into the custody of the parent who is the more domineering or persuasive, a better talker and abuser. And we have to be aware of these kinds of circumstances and make sure that the family situation—the domestic situation that we're talking about, what exactly is happening, and that's not always easy to determine.

So I give the government what I would see is general support for this endeavour to reduce domestic violence but, at the same time, I am want to look and listen very carefully at people who will present during a committee stage and to hear the pluses and minuses of the clauses in this bill and the impacts that those clauses will have because I think that we need to be careful and thoughtful and effective and cost-effective in how we proceed. We want to build a better society where there is less domestic violence, where there—people like Camille Runke and Selena Keeper can be protected but—and protected well. But, at the same time, we want a society where children are supported and where families can be helped to work out a situation, if that is possible, and continue to work together to look after the children and to look after the children and raise those children well.

So there are, as I said, some positive elements in this bill and my inclination is yes, let's proceed, but I think we need to proceed with care and having a very careful look at this legislation before it goes through. And I welcome it going to committee stage so we can have that careful look.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I want to put a few words on the record regarding this bill. We've certainly indicated to government that we're willing to move to committee a bill every day that we are sitting. We've asked them to determine that by prioritizing the bills that they call, and so they prioritized this bill and we agree with that.

And I look forward to this going to committee, passing the second reading here today, Mr. Speaker. This is a decision by the government and I think it's a

good one because I think we'll learn a lot at committee. And I also expect that when it reaches committee there'll be some difficult presentations. It's difficult to listen to but probably more difficult to provide, because I think we'll hear stories of family members and those who've been impacted by domestic violence.

* (15:50)

I had the opportunity recently in the last week to meet with a family member of Camille Runke, Mr. Speaker, and for me it was informative, but, of course, it was difficult to hear the story and to wonder what changes could've been made to have saved her life. And I look forward to this bill with the hope that it would make the changes that would maybe have prevented that situation, but, as importantly, to prevent future situations that would've ended in the same result.

There are aspects of this bill that I think are moving in the right direction. While the bill doesn't specifically speak about GPS monitoring, electronic monitoring, it is something that was part of the announcement by the minister yesterday, Mr. Speaker. Now, we've had lots of discussions about electronic monitoring in this Chamber for a number of different offenders and over a number of different years. Certainly, it's important, first of all, for members of the Chamber and members of the public to know that there are different kinds of electronic monitoring, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) is correct when he says that the technology is ever changing, but that is true for all technology, of course. It is always changing, and if we're waiting for technology to stop changing or to finally hit a certain peak where we think it's at its apex, we'll be waiting forever because technology will be changing for as long as that there are human beings on this Earth.

But there are two different kinds, at least, of monitoring in the—available. There is what some might call passive monitoring, which indicates where an offender who is wearing an ankle bracelet, an electronic monitoring device, isn't; it tells them where they aren't. So, for example, perhaps an order says that a person has to be within 150 metres of a certain place, perhaps their home. The electronic monitoring device will signal to who's ever on the other end of the monitoring that a person has left that radius, has gone beyond that 150 metres, but it doesn't tell them where they are. It just tells them where they're not; they're not within the 150 metres

as they're supposed to be, so they've breached that particular part of their order. But it doesn't actually track somebody and doesn't allow police or other law enforcement to be able to find where that individual actually is.

Then there is GPS monitoring, more active participation, and I'm not sure if the minister was referring to this or not—I was a little bit uncertain—where it actually tells you where the person who's wearing the electronic monitoring device, where they actually are, Mr. Speaker. And so, obviously, in the case of domestic violence, I think that is the kind of technology that would be most important because many individuals under protection orders, they're not told that they have to be in their home. It's not like they're under house arrest necessarily, but they can't be within a certain distance of the individual who has the protection order to protect them. So GPS monitoring, monitoring that says where the individual actually is, is important because when they are within the radius of an individual, it would then provide that alert.

Now, the minister is talking about technology where it would actually alert the person with the protection order that the person that is wearing the electronic monitoring is near them, is within that radius that they're supposed to be. I've certainly heard of that technology, and I think it's important that we look at it. But I'm always concerned that we're going to delay things to the point that we're just waiting for that perfect solution, and I've heard members in the past say that the perfect shouldn't be—or the—that we simply can't wait for something to be perfect, Mr. Speaker, that we can't—sometimes we have to take something that is better than what we have and not necessarily wait for it to be the perfect solution. That's the case in terms of electronic monitoring. I mean, I remember—I can't remember which Attorney General it was. It may have been the member for Minto (Mr. Swan). It might've even been the current Attorney General in his previous stay as Attorney General. We were talking about electronic monitoring—it wasn't the current Minister of Education; I don't think we had enough time to get into that, but it may have been the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) in his first iteration as the Attorney General. We talked about electronic monitoring, and he indicated that it, you know, the department didn't want to do it because the batteries weren't good enough and that the batteries would die in the winter here in Manitoba. Well, I mean, there was lots of places where batteries are being used and

they're being used in cold weather environments and they're being used well. But that was sort of the delay at that time.

Eventually, prior to the '07 election, I believe it was, the government, on the eve of the election, announced that they would be moving to electronic monitoring for auto thieves, specifically for those offenders. I'm not sure why there wasn't at that time a consideration for other offenders. And that was a pilot project and a very tepid sort of project that went forward and has continued to sort of be not much more than it was at the pilot stage, Mr. Speaker, and certainly using the same technology that it was in 2007.

In 2011, the NDP talk about expanding the program. That's something that we'd asked for, not only to domestic violence but the consideration of high-risk sex offenders as well, Mr. Speaker, and to use more advanced technology at the time. Now, not much was responded to in terms of the government until the election, and then they said, yes, they wanted to look at expanding the technology. Fast forward now four years to today, to 2015, and we find out, both through Estimates and through the member's comments today—the minister's comments today that only eight times has an order been provided for domestic violence on GPS monitoring.

Today, in his response to his questions—and I thank him for answering the questions; I think it's a useful process at second reading—he indicated that he's not really sure when—of two different things: he's not sure when GPS monitoring will be applied for domestic violence cases, and he's not sure what technology is going to be used. He says he's hopeful for spring, which, of course, coincides with the provincial election and probably will be after the election, but he's not sure what kind of technology it will be, and he's not sure when it's actually going to be in place.

Well, this is now four years after the government committed—after the NDP committed to expanding the project. So, four years later—now, nobody knows—and I don't want—you know, sometimes people take words out of context or they take words out of their meaning. I don't want to suggest for a minute, Mr. Speaker, that electronic monitoring would have changed the outcome in Camille Runke's situation or in other tragic situations. I don't know that; nobody in this Chamber knows that, whether or not it would have changed the outcome, so that's not my suggestion.

But my suggestion is that, were you going to make an effort to at least improve the likelihood of a good outcome, that you have to be serious about making the effort and not just simply making the announcement, and that's what we've seen with the NDP: 2007, they indicate they're finally going to go to electronic monitoring but only to car thieves; 2011, they say that they're going to expand electronic monitoring, but four years later there's only eight orders that have been brought forward to domestic violence. And now they say, no, now we really are serious. We're going to move forward with better technology, but we got to see what technology that is and, you know, probably by spring, it'll probably be in place.

And you get a little suspicious because there is a—there's a common theme here, Mr. Speaker, and follow me what this common theme is. Up until 2007, the NDP were very reluctant to use electronic monitoring of any kind. Part of the excuse was batteries. And then, the 2007 election came, and a short period of time before that, they announced that they're going to move towards it. Up until 2011, the NDP didn't want to expand the use of electronic monitoring, except an election came, and a couple months before, they said they were going to expand it. Now we're a few months before the election, and they say they're going to be using electronic monitoring—a new form—in the case of domestic violence.

Now I'm not an overly suspicious guy, Mr. Speaker, but when you have three different times when it falls on the eve of the election, and then after the election you see very little has changed, you wonder. You wonder, you know, where is this actually leading to?

So I'm hopeful that this particular time that the minister is serious, that he's seriously going to move forward more quickly on this, that we're going to get the right kind of technology more quickly and that it's actually going to be in place in time that it's going to make a difference.

We're going to do our part on this side. I committed to the government that if they call this bill—or any other bill, I suppose—first, that we'll move a bill to committee, and tomorrow, whatever bill they call first, we'll move it to committee. And so this is the bill that they decided to call first, and we'll fulfill our commitment and we'll pass this bill on to committee today.

But they have to fulfill their commitment as well. I mean, you can't just simply say that this is going to be a priority and then not make it a priority. And we need to see, whatever committee the member has established four years after they made the promise to make an expansion, that it's got to move quickly, the technology's got to be in place, that the funding's got to be in place, because we don't even know where the funding's going to come from.

The government hasn't even committed to bringing a budget in the spring, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't in the last budget. It wasn't under the Justice budget. In fact, I asked the member—the Minister of Justice, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh)—I asked him in Estimates whether or not there was going to be an expansion of electronic monitoring, and he wouldn't commit to it. It wasn't within the budget. Well, if it's not within the current budget, and they're not committed to bringing in a budget in the spring, nobody really knows where the money's coming from.

* (16:00)

And the one thing I've always said and I'll continue to say: electronic monitoring, while it has its place—and it's not a silver bullet in terms of trying to reduce any particular crime—it's not cheap either. It's not cheap either. I mean, there is a cost to it. I understand that. There's a budgetary cost. So we don't even know where the budgetary funds are going to come from, Mr. Speaker, and so we hope that the government will fulfill a commitment to not only this particular project but ensuring that there is a budget share means for this to go forward.

On the issue generally of protection orders, I think the changing of the standard is something that has probably needed to be looked at for some time. The minister of Justice back in 2002 made a commitment to try to move forward, Mr. Speaker, and try to change how protection orders were being used and try to make them more effective. Here we are 13 years later and we're having the same discussion. Now, I recognize that things change and sometimes circumstances and dynamics change and we learn more as we go on in a particular system, but it's a little concerning that it's taken this long to get to this point.

On the issue of the restriction of ownership of guns or possession of guns, I mean, it was asked during the question period what particular enforcement there's going to be around that. The minister indicated that, as we're aware, that once the

order is placed, law enforcement will go and retrieve guns from individuals who have a protection order now against them. But, of course, the question becomes about reacquisition of weapons. How do we ensure that individuals who've had their guns seized don't become possessed of guns again, Mr. Speaker, if they're a high risk?

And it brings me to the issue of high-risk domestic violence cases. And, in speaking with one of the family members of Camille Runke, they had done some of their own research and some of their own investigation, and they pointed to different places within the United States in particular because there was just more research done there about having high-risk domestic violence units, Mr. Speaker, where you had particular units of law enforcement who were dedicated to ensuring that those who were identified as high-risk domestic violence offenders were—following up regularly with individuals who had proven to be a high risk, who were breaching their orders over and over and over again.

And that was the case with Camille Runke, Mr. Speaker. It was an individual who—Camille did everything right in terms of the system. She got a protection order; she reported it when there were breaches. But law enforcement weren't able to do an awful lot with it.

Now, this particular legislation, hopefully, on the electronic monitoring side, you know, could be used, and, certainly, there'd be value there. But I think there is also value in having individuals who are specifically dedicated to ensuring that high-risk domestic violence offenders are, in fact, being tracked, not unlike the system for high-risk auto thieves.

Now, contrary to the myth and lore that the members often spread about here in the Legislature, we not only were supportive of the effort on the high-risk auto thieves, we were, for many months, calling on the government to have that kind of enforcement because we understood that it was a relatively small group of individuals who were causing the majority of car thieves.

Now, technology, of course, changes things, and it's changed things as they are now, Mr. Speaker, but the enforcement side of it in terms of auto thieves was very important and something we called for for a long time. And I think it's very successful, the fact that there was a dedicated unit of individuals who were there to aggressively go after those who were

the highest risk for auto thieves and who were—proved themselves to be repeat offenders.

The same sort of approach when it comes to domestic violence. I mean, there is probably a relatively small group of people—we certainly hope so, Mr. Speaker—who would fall into that high-risk domestic violence offenders, and to have those who are dedicated to ensure that they are not, in fact, acquiring arms after they've disposed of the arms because they were seized by police once there was a protection order. I think that that's important. We've not heard that.

So my hope is that we're going to hear a little bit more about this strategy at committee, not only from the minister but from the public because it's difficult sometimes for us as legislators who've not had the experience, gratefully not had the experience, Mr. Speaker, of being in that type of a situation, to understand fully what the different needs are for those who are facing domestic violence, for the women who are facing domestic violence. We don't know what all of those needs are. So I'm hopeful that at committee—and I don't know when the bill will go to committee; we'll pass it today to committee, but that'll be up to the government to decide when they want to call the committee—I'm hopeful that we'll hear people who are going to come to that committee and who are going to give their experiences, as difficult as they might be, to inform us about the things that work well in the legislation or that look good in the legislation and to inform us about things that could make the legislation better, because that will be the true value of that committee.

That will be the thing that will be very, very important for us to hear from individuals who are coming to the committee, regardless of what their experience has been. Maybe there will be some people who are from law enforcement. Maybe there will be some people who are involved with counselling for those who have been involved with domestic violence. There might be people from the different social agencies who have different ideas, and, of course, there will be some, I'm sure, who've been victims of domestic violence who will want to come forward and give their experience, and we welcome that and we hope that the people feel that that's a safe place for them to come and give those comments at committee.

So I want to say that I have some hope that this bill will improve things. I don't think that it's going to magically eliminate domestic violence, and that's a

responsibility that all of us as a society have to take on. I understand that, and the legislation can only go so and so far. But I am concerned that a lot of these measures take so long to get to this point and that it takes a tragic incident or a few tragic incidents for us to get to this point.

I don't think the issue of electronic monitoring should have waited this long when it comes to domestic violence. This is something we've been calling for for years, Mr. Speaker. There's been experience in Florida with this. In fact, almost every state has experience with electronic monitoring in these scenarios. There was for quite a long time in Alberta, I think, a relatively successful program when it comes to electronic monitoring for domestic violence. So the technology is changing, but it's not new. The technology has actually been around for quite a long time. It's improved, obviously, as technology always does, but it's not as though this is new.

So why it took so long to get to this point and why it took some tragedies to spark it, I think, is disappointing, because it is a debate that we've had in this Legislature and in committee, in Estimates, for a number of different years, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sorry that it's taken this long. And I am concerned that it's going to take significantly longer, and that I hope that this isn't just simply a reaction to try to assure the public that things are happening but then things move slowly.

So we will do our part on this side to move this legislation through to committee so that we can have the input from the public. I hope that the government won't wait long to call the committee. Certainly I'm prepared to be involved in this committee sooner than later, Mr. Speaker, but also, of course, we want to ensure that people who want to present are aware of it and know that the committee is coming as well.

So we—I think all of us, you know, want to remember the two ladies who were killed as a result of domestic violence, the ones that were the most prominent in the media in the last couple of months. It's difficult to know what impact that will have on their families. It's something, I know, that will last a long time and potentially last generations in terms of the impact that it has on their families.

And to the extent that this bill can make things better for others in the future, hopefully it will also be a remembrance to them that something did happen as a result of those tragedies and hopefully it's something that can be looked at as being an

advancement and improvement from what we have now, Mr. Speaker.

So I will conclude my comments there. We look forward to the bill moving on to committee and to hearing the different presenters when it goes forward, Mr. Speaker, and we know and we expect that there'll be some great input from different Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this matter?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 11, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act.

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

* (16:10)

House Business

Hon. James Allum (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next sitting Tuesday morning will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). The title of the resolution is Protecting Strong Public Health Care.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 31(8) that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next sitting Tuesday morning will be the one brought forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge, and the title of the resolution is Protecting Strong Public Health Care, for the information of the House.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call debate and second readings of Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools). And we were in a question period for the bill at that time. Are there any questions related to this bill?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, just to ask the minister a quick question in—

or a couple questions in regards to Bill 7, the public schools amendment act (protecting child care spaces in Manitoba). I'd like to ask him: How many licensed child-care spaces are there in Manitoba?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Of course, that's not necessarily part of the legislation that we're talking about, but I can tell him that there are 33,000 funded spaces and over 900 licensed facilities in Manitoba.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the minister for his answer.

How many schools in Manitoba have licensed child-care spaces as we speak, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Allum: One of the things that we can proudly say on this side of the House is that we do, in fact, build child-care facilities at schools in Manitoba. It's something that our government has taken very seriously over the years, and we'll continue to do that, and this legislation is designed to protect those spaces and to ensure that there's important collaboration and co-operation among the partners when it comes to any thought to reducing the number of spaces or perhaps removing it, and the bill sets in place the rules of engagement when it comes to those kinds of circumstances.

I can tell the member that at present there are 307 child-care facilities in schools in Manitoba right now.

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks to the minister for the answer.

Within the province we are looking at, within the bill, 47.5, dash 2 or subsection 2, in the formula, when they're speaking about the amount of space required for child-care space, can you put on the record exactly what type of square footage they are talking about in that formula, please?

Mr. Allum: Of course, the bill, as the member points out, in 47.5(2) does set out a formula: A is the—and it's a—it's not exactly complex, but—so the square footage would remain to be determined under the nature of that formula.

The important point is that the bill sets the protected child-care spaces in schools as what it existed as of June 2014 or any higher number of those spaces that may exist any year after 2014, those spaces as prescribed in the child—Community Child Care Standards Act, Mr. Speaker. So the point of that is to simply suggest that the existing spaces will be protected, as they should be. But, of course, what the bill contemplates is a discussion,

collaboration, co-operation among partners in order to ensure that (a) that those spaces get protected, but if there is any kind of reduction, that there's an agreement among all parties concerned.

Mr. Ewasko: But specifically in 47.5(2), it does say that B—in B, which is an A multiplied by B in the formula, B is the—for the number of child-care spaces under A, the amount of physical space necessary for child-care centre be licensed under The Community Child Care Standards Act.

So exactly what physical space, size of physical space are—is he referencing to in that child-care act?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the question put by the member and, of course, he just read out what the formula is in the bill. And so it's relayed under The Community Child Care Standards Act. There is a provision in there that sets out the necessary space requirements. But this is a—the—a matter that will be, once the bill is passed and becomes law, be determined through the formula. I invite the member at that point, when it comes to a specific instance, to look at the various circumstances surrounding that instance, then we'll know what the space usage is. But, as he's quite clearly read himself in 47.5(2), there's a formula in place for this piece of legislation, and I think it's a very sound provision, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ewasko: I know that the minister—it's sounding as if he doesn't know, but if he's saying that he does know, then I'd like him to give an example of how that formula would be used in the province and exactly what is he talking about as far as a physical amount of square footage per child for a child-care space within the school.

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, 47.5(2) sets out: A school board must ensure that space within a school available for use by a licensed child-care centre equals or exceeds the amount determined in accordance with the following formula: $A \times B$. In this formula, A is the greater number of (a) the number of licensed child care—child spaces in the school on June 1st, 2014, or (b) the highest number of licensed child spaces in the school on June 1st in any year after 2014; and B is for the number of child-care spaces under A, the amount of physical space necessary for the child-care centre to be licensed under The Community Child Care Standards Act.

I think that's pretty clear and transparent.

Mr. Ewasko: It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the minister's having a tough time with his own formula,

with own—with his own bill, considering I know that the previous Education minister, the MLA for Gimli, who's now gone—and this minister now has to take upon the bill that was created by the previous minister, and maybe he doesn't exactly know that answer. But, that being said, I mean, okay, fine; he doesn't know that answer to that question.

So we'll get to the minimum: 47.6(2) Minimum notice period: "The period set out in a notice must not be less than the prescribed period."

Can he explain that section, please?

Mr. Allum: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can, and I—you know, I listen to the member opposite ask questions, and, of course, the bill set out very clearly what the space requirements would be under a given formula. If he doesn't like the answer, then he—then that's his prerogative. It disappoints me, when we're trying to have a debate over the substance of the bill, for the member to constantly suggest things that simply aren't true. We're trying to get to the bottom, and I think he wants to have a good dialogue and discussion on it.

But, under the sections that he set out, the minister may, by regulation, prescribe the period of notice required to be given by a school board to a child-care licensee.

Mr. Ewasko: And it's unfortunate that the minister is taking the line of questioning the way he is, but the fact is is that the formula itself, yes, it's outlined like that, but it doesn't necessarily state the square footage per child. And that's basically what I've asked is what is an acceptable square footage per child. I'm not sure if the minister has taken the time to actually read the bill. I'm sure he has. I'll take his word that he has read the bill.

But, that being said, I'm just specifically asking if the minister knows what would be a recommended square footage facility for how many kids. So, if there's, for an example—as I asked for an example—10 kids in a daycare, what's the square footage? What's some of the regulations and stipulations around that, please?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, those—I believe those kind of provisions are set out in the child care act that guides how we do this kind of thing. Of course, what we're talking about today is about child-care centres in schools, protecting those spaces for parents to ensure that they have access to the kind of child care that they require.

* (16:20)

The member opposite, of course, and his party have a different view of child care. I think that's quite clear. It's pretty clear to me that the member wants to privatize child care. His friend from Portage la Prairie has made that very clear. The minister—his leader, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) has made that very clear. What we're trying to talk about today is the very important provisions under this act that protect child-care spaces for children in school if there should be a reduction in space size, if they should move, if the number of spaces are reduced, then there are provisions in this act which ensure that there is co-operation, collaboration between all parties involved. That's the substance of the act. That's what we want to be discussing. If the member wants to talk about his own agenda to privatize daycare, then he should just say so.

Mr. Ewasko: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate the minister's going down this path. But we will continue talking about the child-care spaces within schools.

So question to the minister, is the daycare spaces that are being talked about in this bill, are they going to be open and available to, for 12 months of the year, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Allum: Typically, Mr. Speaker, child-care spaces are available to parents year round. There are probably—are circumstances where things happen that that's not available, but the typical circumstances, of course, is parents need child-care provisions year round, provisions for child care year round. In some cases, that doesn't happen, I suppose.

But in this case what we want to be doing is making sure that there are child-care centres in schools. His party doesn't support that; he's made that very clear. Every time we put these kinds of resolutions forward, this kind of legislation forward, they vote against it, which is unfortunate because leaves parents in the lurch. And what they've suggested instead is that we should just simply privatize child care, which is an elite child-care world view of child care. It suggests that only the wealthy should have provision for that.

Our commitment in Throne Speech was to create 12,000 spaces and a universally accessible child care for all Manitobans. That's what we're working on. In this legislation that we've put forward to the House, it is designed to secure those spaces, but to ensure that if for some circumstance the spaces need to

reduced, if they need to be moved, if there's some other circumstance that works, there's co-operation and collaboration between all parties concerned.

Mr. Ewasko: It's absolutely too bad that the Minister of Education, who is in charge of seeing the well-being of our children's learning is taking this opportunity to put false accusations on the record, especially when we are having just a debate about this bill, which is protecting the child-care spaces and basically turning this into more of an attack than anything else, Mr. Speaker. And I don't believe that I've said anything that is in the attacking format; I'm just asking some questions.

When the minister said that this bill is ensuring that there's going to be collaboration at the various, with the various stakeholders when it comes to child-care spaces, is he saying that school divisions, schools, parents have not been having those conversations previous to this?

Mr. Allum: Well I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that on occasion there has been some circumstance in which it hasn't been clear to what the rules of engagement might be, and that's understandable. And that's why we're putting in place this particular piece of legislation, I hope, with the support of the member, I think that's unlikely because his friend from Portage la Prairie has made it clear that they're going to privatize child care. If he wants to get away from that particular position, then he should go out into the hallway and tell everybody that, that he's in disagreement with the member from Portage la Prairie. But, if he's afraid to admit or concede that particular point, I'm sorry for that.

But the bill intends to clarify the rules of engagement around a very sensitive matter. But it's pretty clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that the member really, in his objective to privatize child care, doesn't want any rules of engagement in place at all.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, it's upsetting to me. It's upsetting that we are, the minister is now attacking. I thought that they, you know, were stewards of good behaviour and that, and obviously we see another prime example of the minister threatening me to go into the hallway, which is upsetting. It's sort of, you know, don't get me wrong, it's not surprising that the minister would be calling this out, and I think a lot of the points that he's put on the record are absolutely nonsense and false. It's too bad that the minister is stooping to that level and cannot take a grown-up's role in talking about the bill.

So he mentioned earlier how many schools have daycares already. How many has he seen where the school board has wanted to move the child-care centre between schools?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, the member, I'm sorry to say, wants to suggest that there isn't a difference of opinion about child care and the provision of child care in this House between our side of the House—this government—and what the opposition stands for. And I regret that he used the word threaten. I can't understand what the context of the utilization of that word.

I suggested that if he's in disagreement with his friend from Portage la Prairie who, on June 5th, clearly made it clear to the Winnipeg Free Press that he was in favour of a system of private child care, I simply suggested that he go out into the hallway and suggest that to the member.

So I don't understand—[interjection] I can hear the member from Portage la Prairie objecting vigorously to his own words. I'm sorry that he disagrees with his friend from Lac du Bonnet. What we intend to do on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is protect child care schools in—child care in schools. It's what we've been doing; it's what we have been doing, and it's what we'll continue to do—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The minister's time on this question has elapsed. And time for the questions on this bill have elapsed as well.

Is there any debate on this matter?

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up today and put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

And I know that the Minister of Education has had the opportunity to put a few words on the record in second reading, and he chose not to because I guess they have really nothing good to say. And I know that the minister's still fairly upset in regards to the fact that he's inherited—he's inherited an education system, unfortunately—and not to put the blame on any teachers or administration or superintendents or senior admin—it's absolutely the blame of this minister and his government and the—and his predecessors, the leadership in the Department of Education, the ministers of Education, that have taken us from the top three in the country

to absolutely bottom of the barrel in this great country of ours.

Now, in regards to some of the comments that the minister has put on, I would just like to repeat that, again, I'm not sure what else I should take from his threatening for me to, you know, basically step outside into the hallway. I don't quite understand what other way. Maybe he should take an antibullying course, you know, work on some of that social emotional behaviour issues that it seems that he's exhibiting here today, as well, Mr. Speaker, and it's absolutely too bad that he's gone down this road.

Under this legislation, community-elected school boards are subject to a ministerial veto, reducing their autonomy over the spaces they are elected to manage. The minister himself said that this bill will encourage—will encourage—and strongly suggest that that collaboration happens.

So the minister is basically saying that that's not happening, that elected officials at the school board level, senior admin, administration within schools who are charged with the well-being of our kids, well-being of our kids' learning, do not have the capacity. So the Minister of Education is saying that these people—these elected officials, senior admin, people who've gone for many years within the education system, do not have the mental capacity to have those great, collaborative conversations with their peers within their community leaders, within their community, to see what exactly is the best for their communities.

* (16:30)

Even more concerning, this legislation neglects the needs and the inputs of parents and communities, giving government and school boards exclusive authority over child-care spaces in schools. So it doesn't even matter, Mr. Speaker. You know, as we've seen in the past, people come to committee here at the Legislature and they have come and they've given their opinions to this government and, you know, maybe not with this minister but to other ministers, and their stories, their opinions have fallen on deaf ears. And it's really too bad that under this leadership of—by this minister and his government that that continues to be common practice here in the Manitoba Legislature.

But, again, we're talking about hope, and hope to all Manitobans that come April two thousand and—April 19th, 2016, there will be a change in government here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, with more than 300 child-care centres in Manitoba schools providing more than 13,000 spaces, this legislation gives the minister power over the lives of countless Manitobans.

What is the wait-list? What is the wait-list right now, Mr. Speaker, and why is there a wait-list? There's a wait-list, as the minister said so himself, in his own words: Hard-working Manitobans need child-care spaces. Well, hard-working Manitobans, because a lot of them, those people that are maybe having a tough go making ends meet, they need to get out, in some cases, be working two, three jobs, both partners within the household possibly going out and working not only their full-time jobs but additional work as well to make ends meet. And so they need to put their kids into daycare.

Why is that? Well, it's because this NDP government, in the last election and over the last 16 years, have not only doubled our debt—just in the last six years, doubled our debt—but they've gone and they've broken promises. Each and every one of those members in the—on the government's side plus 20 other candidates went door to door in the last election promising—promising—hard-working Manitobans—we're not talking absolutely filthy rich Manitobans, we're talking all Manitobans—all Manitobans—door to door, saying that they will promise not to raise the PST.

And I know I hear the member from Brandon East, which yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I talked about how when he was the minister of Education, he did a commission. He commissioned a report on class-size composition and class size—composition and class size. The present minister for Education, he didn't care what the member from Brandon East had said or did back in 2002 or whatever else. He said, you know what, good on you. Good on you for commissioning that. Good on you.

And the member from Brandon East, he's questioning right now if that's exactly what was said, and he's more than happy to go into Hansard and take a read that the work on the commission, that those hard-working people back then had actually commissioned the report and then found that, indeed, yesterday's bill that we had sent on to committee—I know the member from Steinbach had mentioned today how he as Opposition House Leader has basically made that commitment, that he's given his word, that the bills presented by the NDP government, the government, as they're presented, we will pass one per day going over to committee.

So I know that the government of the day had thought about possibly bringing Bill 7 first up for debate today, Mr. Speaker. But they brought up another bill, which—hey, the government decides which is their priorities. That's not us to say which is their priorities. I know that we've heard in the Throne Speech they've got 57 new promises or priorities totalling the \$6 billion.

So, as the Minister of Education's putting on the record today how—he's saying that this bill will not be passed or something, I don't even know where he's getting that from, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely up to him and his government. They've ragged the puck for I don't know how many months. I don't even know when the first time this bill was brought forward, Bill 7. But it was brought forward by the then—Mr. Bjornson who was the Education minister back in the day. And they've ragged the puck on bringing this legislation forward.

And so, as every bill, we have the opportunity to put a few words on the record and debate. And it's too bad that this Minister of Education, who, again, is trying to get a pat on the back for apparently trying to say that he's standing up for those hard-working Manitobans, those Manitobans that, you know, are possibly, you know, of—in that demographic that needs to use food banks, which, again, the percentage of people who need to use food banks have increased dramatically.

And he's also the minister who's in charge of Advanced Learning, the minister who's in charge of post-secondary institutions. Fifty per cent—53 per cent of people attending—students attending post-secondary institutions, 53 per cent more of those people are having to use food banks. It's under this minister's watch; it's under his government's watch: 16 years of failed policies. And where are we at? Sixteen years to come up with legislation like this?

And then he has the audacity to stand up and chastise, and the member from Brandon East has the audacity to sit in the chair and scream in anger across the way at members from Portage la Prairie for a few things that he mentioned in regards to additional child-care spaces, whether it's private or it's also in the schools. I've got many friends that send their kids to child care within schools and within private as well, many friends who teach in those institutions as well. And I know the member from Brandon East is busy chirping from his chair, Mr. Speaker, and he'll have the opportunity to stand up. I'm not saying

anything derogatory, you know, as has happened in the past from the member, and you'd think that we would have learned from some news information just a couple weeks ago, but, you know, sometimes hard lessons are learned, and it's going to take a while. And I think Manitobans are going to speak up quite loudly come April.

Now, the bill adds to the load of schools that are already strapped for resources, as it repurposes some of their space for a service that is outside of their primary mandate to educate school-age children. We've seen in recent years how enrolment trends can impact schools in communities with limited spaces. The debacle involving École La Vérendrye and Earl Grey School is still ongoing. This is under their watch, Mr. Speaker.

And I know the minister—you know, maybe he is going to get up and speak. I don't know. It's his bill. He chose not to get up and speak to second reading. That's his choice. I know that probably the outgoing member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan)—and when I say outgoing, it's not a—that's not a threat or anything, going out into the hallway, as the Minister of Education would like to say—that's just that she has decided to not seek re-election. So I just want to put on the record of how clear I'm being on the words that I'm using because I know that the Minister of Education feels that it's appropriate within this Legislature to threaten people, so that's too bad considering he's in charge of the—of our education. And the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) is busy talking from his chair, which is unfortunate, because he's using unparliamentary language. But because it's not on the record, I'm not even going to repeat it. But it's too bad that he's saying that as well.

I would hope that under these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about child-care spaces, when we're talking about educating our youth, that they would start to maybe take the high road for a change as opposed to what they've been doing. And I know that they're busy, and I know they're upset. They're very upset because they know that they were—again, of 57 candidates who went in the last election, and they backed their leader—in the last election, 2011 election, they backed their leader, the then-Premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger).

* (16:40)

I know that, you know, they were upset when they had to go door knocking and they had to promise people face to face when they opened up the

doors, saying that they weren't going to raise the PST. Five hundred million dollars a year, half a billion dollars is brought in. That's broken promises, broken promises by raising that PST and expanding it on many of those services.

And we're going to be seeing, Mr. Speaker, that was a 14 per cent increase from 7 to 8. Some of that money could be used by these hard-working Manitoba families and to balance off some of those costs for child care, and to put those choices back into the families.

You know, we've often spoke on how that money would often, would be better spent on the kitchen table in families' homes so that families can actually around sit around the kitchen table and discuss where they're going to use some of those funds, Mr. Speaker, whether it would be for extracurricular activities for their kids, whether it would be to put some food on the table as opposed to going to the food banks. Would it be, maybe, you know, a possible family trip within Manitoba even? You know, out my way in the Lac du Bonnet constituency, there's many opportunities and great things to see for Manitoba families all within, you know, a few hours of a drive, many things to see. Maybe some of those people would want to put some of those dollars that this NDP government has put into general revenue and blown out the door.

They, but they feel, you know, I can't speak for the government side, but I mean they're, it's seemingly to me they feel that hard-working Manitoba's money—Manitobans' monies are better spent at their Cabinet table. And it's too bad that that is the government of the day, that they basically—you could tell they're tired and they're upset, and they're upset because they see the end. They see that light at the end of the tunnel and they're walking towards it, Mr. Speaker.

They also caution the healthy development and well-being of children should always come first. Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives support policies that work to add child-care spaces and protect children themselves. Child-care services and supports should be convenient, and parents and communities should have a range of quality care options. Parents and families should have the tools to make informed decisions as they choose the type of care that best suits their needs, Mr. Speaker.

We need more available child-care spaces in Manitoba. I don't think anyone in this House, whether it's on the government side or in the

opposition side, can argue that that's a fact: we need more child-care spaces. It is the essential resource for parents and a proven way to increase opportunities for young people. Mandating that what is built today must remain tomorrow might dissuade schools and not-for-profits from opening new essential child-care spaces as they may not be able to alter that space to meet new needs and demands in the future.

We've seen this NDP government as far as being stuck in a way that, instead of listening to experts, listening to professionals in the field, they always feel that their way is, there's no other way but their way, and it's upsetting because it's, as we've seen earlier today just, even just during my brief minutes putting some words on the record, Mr. Speaker, they're angry. And they're angry because they see that they're absolutely done and they've got no other avenue but to try to instill fear into Manitobans.

And I don't know how some of the members across the way can go home and look at their neighbours and look at them face-to-face, eye-to-eye, and absolutely tell the untruths that this government has told in the past, Mr. Speaker, and continue it. Last election, no new taxes; that was a nonsensical idea, that's what the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had stated and then six months after that they expanded the PST, a year after that they increased the PST by 14 per cent.

The Minister of Education, I'd like him to stand up, maybe put a few words on the record in regards to the second reading of Bill 7, Mr. Speaker, and put on the record: Is he or is he not going to raise the PST to 9? Because that's sure as heck what's going to happen.

Manitobans are not going to be fooled again. That's exactly what they're going to do, and what could happen again, Mr. Speaker, with those additional funds that they're going to claw back, they're going to claw from hard-working Manitoba families? Those families could take those dollars and put it into child-care opportunities. Whether it would be in the school systems where some child-care spaces are; whether it would be a not-for-profit; would it be a private—it would be their choice, and that's what we are about, the Progressive Conservative Party. We're about giving Manitobans choice.

We continue to see Manitobans are continuing to pay more and getting less under this NDP government. The results are devastating because the NDP have been unsuccessful at reducing child

poverty, at keeping children healthy, in preventing youth from participating in criminal activities, in providing them with the best quality education, and improving essential services for youth and children that would set them up for better outcomes for life, Mr. Speaker.

Mismanagement and overcrowding of schools under this NDP government has become so bad that parent groups are fighting over school spaces, Mr. Speaker, many examples, right here in the city of Winnipeg.

This bill will make it even more difficult for schools with overcrowding issues to manage their spaces. Under this NDP government our high school graduation rate is perpetually one of the worst in the country. This year Manitoba scored last of all provinces in math, in reading, in science, in the latest Pan-Canadian Assessment, and also scored among the lowest in the country on the OECD program for international student assessment this year, which is better known as PISA, Mr. Speaker.

Now the members opposite, they always stand and they crow and they say that you're going to— you know, you're going to have standardized tests and all that type of thing. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It would be nice to know that there's some standards, and unfortunately, with this government, we know that there is no standards. There is no standards, the students of this great province of ours, the children of this great province of ours, under this government, there's no standards. All it is is the NDP view is make more money, give the NDP more money. They've proven that time and time again with taking on—with taking on the vote tax and basically they voted to take that.

On this side of the House we chose that the Progressive Conservative Party do not take the vote tax because we feel that choice is very important for Manitobans. By the NDP taking the vote tax, they've basically clawed money from Manitobans right into their own coffers and they can spend it on various things. The latest things that they're deciding to spend their money on, which is Manitobans' hard-earned money, basically, is attack ads, and as we've seen again, the Minister for Education, and I'm sure his 192-plus communicators will have a briefing with him afterwards saying that he needs to tone it down a little bit because he's coming across threatening, Mr. Speaker, and it's too bad because he is—he is supposed to be a leader in the province and he's supposed to be the—you know, as the Education

Minister in charge of our well-being of kids, and he should be—he should be proving this and showing this by leading by example.

And I think today was a great example, and I know the member from Brandon East as well, the member from St. Norbert, they all decided to go on the attack. This is a good example, and you know what happens when, you know, certain animals are backed into a corner? They right away go on attack and they don't feel that they can have those collaborative discussions. They need to just lash out with their anger, Mr. Speaker.

Now, as I've mentioned already in regards to our various scores, I've said how our students within the province have gone from a leader in the country in regards to math, science, and literacy, but we've gone right to last, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, people say well, you know, Wayne, we can't necessarily do any worse.

*(16:50)

Well, yes, you can, Mr. Speaker. You can get further away from ninth, and under this NDP government they have no plan for bringing us up from the basement in PISA scores. Keep in mind PISA scores, the PISA test, is just a tool. It's just like a hammer. If you use it incorrectly it can hurt you.

Now, under this government—under this government—they've got no plans to help teachers. They have no plans to help students, Mr. Speaker. They feel that it's their obligation, their given right as the government to take that hard-earned money off the kitchen table, spend it at the Cabinet table and make sure that people don't have choices, make sure that people who are elected to make these decisions in whether they need to change the look of the child-care spaces within schools, within school divisions, within communities, they've taken that away from those people and they've put it right in the government—right in the minister's department, as he's done so on other occasions. It's very interesting that the minister talks about collaboration, but his actions are not showing collaboration. Matter of fact, it's typical NDP government way to bring, to make sure that the government has a say on various things and has that veto power; it has to cross the minister's desk. It's really too bad that the member, the Minister for Education, is taking that avenue.

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party has consistently called for action by this NDP government on the most pressing issues that impact

our children and youth. We believe in a brighter future for our children. We understand that all youth in all parts of Manitoba, no matter where they live or their race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation or culture must be given equal opportunities for the best quality education in early years and later.

Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives are focused on ensuring our students score better on national and international tests, and we want all of our youth to know there are meaningful opportunities right here in this great province of ours, Mr. Speaker. We want to see more children graduating from high school and able to find the supports they need to be able to do so. As a province that leads the country in Aboriginal population, the PC caucus recognizes we as a province will not be successful unless young Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people can both find success and achieve their potential. That is why we have committed to work in partnership with the federal government to ensure that Canada makes the necessary funding investments to provide educational resources to First Nations communities at an equivalent level to those enjoyed by non-Aboriginal communities.

This is the difference between us on this side of the House and the members of the government. They don't believe in collaborating. They only believe in inviting people who are necessarily their close buddies, their friends, to the table to have those discussions. This Minister of Education and his predecessors burned the bridges with the past federal government, and now all of a sudden there's a new federal government and it's a Kumbaya moment. All of a sudden they're good buddies. But it's interesting if you really listen to some of their answers from across the House. One day they're friends, and they want to build relationships with the federal Liberals, and other days they're slapping the federal Liberals. And it's just interesting, Mr. Speaker, because I don't believe that people could actually talk out of both sides of their mouth like sometimes that this—these government officials do, and it's disheartening because these are supposed to be leaders within the province.

But, again, there's hope, there's hope for the province, and that by after the next provincial election, April 19th, 2016, we will be seeing a lot of the initiatives that—and policies that the PC party is bringing forward will be implemented and brought forward. It is also why we've committed to partner with the City of Winnipeg, local governments, community groups and First Nations and Metis

leaders to expand economic and social opportunities so that, yes, we can provide those sustainable child-care spaces that we so desperately need in this province.

Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives are looking out for our children and youth and for the public servants who are so critical in educating and shaping the minds of our children and youth. Our front-line teachers face more challenges today in our school systems than they ever have before. The tasks teachers have are as important to our future as they ever were. That is why the PCs are committed to creating a confident work environment for all front-line workers, including our teachers.

We in the Progressive Conservative caucus have pledged to protect the front-line services Manitoba families count on and guarantee no front-line civil servants will lose their jobs under a Progressive Conservative government. The PC caucus recognizes how essential child care is to our province's success.

Early learning experiences promote future educational and emotional well-being for children, and parents rely on child care to assist them as they contribute to the workforce and our economy, Mr. Speaker.

But this bill gives the minister too much power over essential child-care services that communities should be able to make ultimate decisions about based on their unique needs. Bill 7 leaves out community and parental input regarding decisions about their child-care needs, where their child-care spaces are located and how those child-care spaces continue. School boards, communities and parents are best suited to make decisions about child care and educational spaces and shouldn't need the minister's permission to make the best use of their spaces, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 7. I am looking forward to seeing Bill 7 proceed on to committee, Mr. Speaker, but that will be up to the Minister of Education and his government to—you know, they ragged the puck for many, many months now to bring this legislation forward to be debated on, so, again, I look forward to seeing this bill proceed to committee and hear what the public has to say in regards to child-care spaces in our schools. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, (Mr. Friesen).

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): —and put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 7, protecting child-care spaces in schools. I'll follow my colleague for Lac Du Bonnet.

And, Mr. Speaker, I was glad to have the opportunity, because yesterday, when we were debating a different bill, I didn't have a chance to stand up and speak on behalf of some stakeholder groups including the Garden Valley School Division and Western School Division in respect of these bills. And as the Minister of Education knows, we have a school in our area now that houses a child-care centre in it and it's Northland Childcare Centre. Now you have to be careful because the school is Northlands Parkway Collegiate, the road is Northlands Parkway, but the child-care centre is Northland Childcare Centre.

And so, I can report to the House that I've had an opportunity to meet with the executive director there, with the staff members. And, of course, we know that when we go into a child-care centre, you can't just roam around, even as an elected official, because there's, of course, protocols, important protocols that are in place for—even as a parent, if I had a child in that centre, I would be a—you know, I would have questions if I saw people wandering through the school without—or through the child-care centre without the proper, you know, credentials or the proper supervision. So that's a good precaution to have in place.

But I did want to say in the time allotted to me, these are important issues to bring, because I represent an area with a growing population. I've shared in this House before, Morden and Winkler

boast some of the highest growth rates in the province of Manitoba when it comes to population growth over five years. I can say that population of Morden grew by an estimated 18 per cent; I believe that Winkler was close to that as well. The RM of Stanley grew at a rate of 30 per cent over the last five years, and the same growth is expected.

So these changes that the minister brings in a bill like this are important to a community like mine, and we are constantly trying to impress upon the minister that we need to have a nuanced approach: an approach that will respect the fact that communities grow at different rates. And this was made very real to the community in the advocacy that was done in the lead-up to the building of the new high school in Winkler, whereby it took years and years to get the attention of the minister of Education, the predecessor of this minister. And it was finally an aerial view by an airplane that was—overview shot of 30, 40 huts in the back of the high school that succeeded in getting the attention of the media and eventually the attention of the minister, and, eventually, with a lot of advocacy and hard work in the local community, the work to build that new school.

So, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Morden-Winkler will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

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