

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	Ind.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	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	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 17, 2014

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 54—The Labour Relations Amendment Act
(Time Lines for Labour Board Decisions
and Hearings)**

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that Bill 54, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Time Lines for Labour Board Decisions and Hearings); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail (délais relatifs aux décisions et aux audiences de la Commission du travail), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 54, The Labour Relations Amendment Act. The purpose of this bill is to help ensure that decisions in hearings of the Manitoba Labour Board are undertaken in a timely manner.

We've heard from stakeholders that in occasional circumstances wait times for hearings and/or decisions of the board have not come quickly enough and that a party's right under labour legislation can be negatively affected as a consequence. While we recognize that some cases before the board can be quite complex and that board time frames are often dependent on specific—the specifics of a case, we also want to make sure there is an expectation that matters before the board are dealt with in an expeditious manner. This bill is about ensuring that such an expectation is set out in law. Thank you.

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

**Bill 53—The Fisheries and Wildlife
Amendment Act (Restitution)**

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I move, seconded by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Swan), that Bill 53, The Fisheries and Wildlife Amendment Act (Restitution); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pêche

et la Loi sur la conservation de la faune (dédommagement), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba families deserve great hunting and fishing opportunities, and our economy deserves no less, and we have to keep it that way. So this bill proposes that poachers pay the real price.

It's the purpose of this bill to recover the value of fish and wild animals that have been taken illegally and to provide a greater deterrent to would-be offenders. The restitution funds will be directed to the new Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund that will support conservation efforts for Manitoba fish and wildlife populations.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

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

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

(2) In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

(3) The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by J. Sutherland, L. Gray, G. Penner and many other fine Manitobans.

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

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Effects on Manitoba Economy

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of R. Froese, S. Johansson, D. Senkiw and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Reversal and Referendum Rights

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act is a law that guarantees Manitobans the right to vote in a referendum to either approve or reject increases to the PST and other taxes.

(2) Despite the fact that the right to vote is enshrined in this legislation, the provincial government hiked the PST to 8 per cent as of July 1st, 2013.

(3) The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has asked the courts to rule on whether or not the provincial government broke the law by failing to address the referendum requirement before imposing the PST tax increase on Manitoba families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the PST increase.

To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to vote in a referendum on increases to the PST.

This petition is signed by W. Jefferies, B. Billings, A. Asham and many other fine Manitobans.

Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by R. Watson, T. Reade, E. Smith and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Reversal and Referendum Rights

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act is a law that guarantees Manitobans the right to vote in a referendum to either approve or reject increases to the PST and other taxes.

* (13:40)

Despite the fact that the right to vote is enshrined in this legislation, the provincial government hiked the PST to 8 per cent as of July 1st, 2013.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has asked the courts to rule on whether or not the government broke the law by failing to address the referendum requirement before imposing the PST increase on Manitoban families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the PST increase.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to vote in a referendum on increases to the PST.

And this petition is signed by V. Pugh, H. Bowles, B. Bowles and many more fine Manitobans.

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act is a law that guarantees Manitobans the right to vote in a referendum to either approve or reject increases to the PST and other taxes.

(2) Despite the fact that the right to vote is enshrined in this legislation, the provincial government hiked the PST to 8 per cent as of July 1st, 2013.

(3) The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has asked the courts to rule on whether or not the government broke the law failing to address the referendum requirement before imposing the PST tax increase on Manitoban families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to vote in a referendum on increases to the PST.

This petition is signed by S. Wiebe, M. Brink, J. Poetker and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today students from Elwick school led by Erin Risbey and Joel Lessard, and also Trudy Schroeder and Tanya Derksen from the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. And they are all the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

STARS Helicopter Service Cost of Service

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Auditor General was harsh in her condemnation of the government's purchasing of a shiny new red used helicopter just 11 days before the publication ban for the last election, a rushed announcement, certainly.

And this has, of course, resulted in Manitoba taxpayers paying a multiple of the cost for that service that our neighbours in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia are paying. An example of an impulse purchase, I think, and stupid shopping, really.

So I have to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today: Is this how the Premier would spend his own money?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition calls an impulse purchase we call front-line health care.

The opposition may not recognize how important this service has been to Manitobans, but people on this side of the House do. And many, many families across Manitoba, particularly in rural Manitoba, know that there are times when you can't drive an ambulance down a road. There are times where you can't land a jet, and the only thing that can get to somebody is a helicopter ambulance.

And I'm glad to know that we are working with Dr. Postl under the Clinical Oversight Panel to get full service back up. We do have it for emergency scene service right now, but I want to see it go back to full service to provide its full scope of practice right across this province.

Contract Tendering Process

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Manitoba government employees' union doesn't agree with the minister's assessment. It says that they took millions of dollars away from front-line care through their stupid shopping, Mr. Speaker. And, in fact, the Auditor General, of course, echoes and emphasizes that comment and reinforces it in her analysis. The minister seems to want to ignore that.

Now, Manitobans are forced to stretch their dollars, and they do. They have a great reputation for being smart shoppers. This government shrinks a dollar when it rushes to make a politically expedient

announcement just prior to the last election without testing the market.

Now, the Minister of Jobs, of course, newly appointed, has created zero jobs in her entire life, and there were zero Manitoba bidders on this job. But Manitoba aviation companies, according to the Aviation Council, were ready to participate in the tendering process if the government had just shopped smart.

Now, the government likes to talk about creating jobs. How many jobs did they uncreate by not tendering this contract?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, helicopter ambulance service is front-line health care. We saw in 2009, we saw in 2011, during the floods, that there were times when nobody could get there except the STARS helicopter, and they were able, in 2011, to take 50 people who were in some very serious medical conditions, to get them from areas we would not have been able to reach them.

When we looked at continuing this life-saving service, we knew that if we put it to contract there was no commercial provider in Manitoba able to provide that same level of service at that time. We had some preliminary discussions with people outside, but they were not able to provide service immediately to rural Manitoba. We knew how important this service is. We know the opposition doesn't agree with us. But this is the path we chose.

Former Immigration Minister's Actions Chronology of Events

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): What a ludicrous argument, Mr. Speaker. STARS had been contracted for two years prior. There was no emergency, and the Auditor General said so in her own report. And how do you protect front-line services? Surely not by spending \$100 million too much for an election-ready announcement. Surely not. That's how you jeopardize front-line services, by frivolously throwing money at an election ad, and that's what this was, nothing more.

Now, the NDP Cabinet's manipulation of the civil service continues, and we asked the question, was there a minister who manipulated the civil service in organizing a partisan rally? And the answer, through the freedom of information act, from the government was no evidence existed. Yet days later the Ombudsman asked the same question and the answer was different.

And that's the manipulation of the freedom of information act. For a government that doesn't answer questions, it's vitally important that the freedom of information act is an honourably thing—honourably run thing.

So I've asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger) before, and he says he thinks he remembers that he noticed on a season, but I want to know what day he became aware that one of his Cabinet colleagues had misled this House.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Another day, another day the opposition leader attacks public servants.

And, Mr. Speaker, on this issue we agree that there was an email that was not provided in initial FIPPA response. That is accepted. That's agreed upon. When that was located in the course of the Ombudsman's investigation, that was certainly provided. The deputy minister's been very clear that the email should've been included in that 2012 response. That email was inadvertently missed in the original search, and the deputy minister also made it clear this was an error made at the department level without any political considerations.

I recognize that the member opposite does not like public servants. We know he doesn't respect public servants. I would ask in this case that he would listen to what the deputy minister has said, Mr. Speaker.

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

Infrastructure Budget Spending Record

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): That's pretty laughable, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't go home at Christmas if I'd fired public servants, as the government alleges; half my family are civil servants. The issue here is whether we defend the integrity of civil servants or do as the government is doing and hide behind civil servants. That's what this government is doing.

Now, the reality is, of course, that this government has misled this House on many occasions in the past and seems to want to continue to.

So we asked the Premier the other day why his government underspent in only one department over the last four years, and that being infrastructure, Mr.

Speaker, to the tune of \$1.9 billion of underspending. And the Premier said, well, we were 28 per cent under budget because of the weather. The weather, that was his excuse.

Well, Saskatchewan, in that same time period, hit their budgeted amount almost exactly, 1 per cent off the mark, Mr. Speaker, not 28 per cent.

So I have to ask the Premier today, and I'd like him to stand and answer, for a change, this question: Does he not believe that Saskatchewan has weather?

* (13:50)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): You know, Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition has some difficulty with recognizing the impacts of weather. When he was the EMO minister in the 1990s, he actually quit just before the major flood. He quit provincial politics just before the crest hit in the '97 flood so he could pursue his federal ambitions.

Mr. Speaker, if he didn't know that there was a major flood coming as a former EMO minister in 1997, I don't think he can lecture anybody about weather in this province, especially about floods. Because we've experienced real floods, and unlike the Leader of the Opposition, when the going gets tough, this government gets going to work for Manitobans. We don't quit.

Selkirk Hospital Tendering Process

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Better work on a better response, Mr. Speaker. Roy Romanow, Eddie Schreyer, we got Judy Wasylycia-Leis, for heaven's sakes, Bill Blaikie; a lot of people have served Manitobans both federally and provincially, a lot of good and honourable people.

The fact is it's the oldest NDP tactic in the books, the oldest one: deflect. They can't defend their record, so they simply deflect.

Now, speaking of deflection, this government ran on a promise in Selkirk riding—it was in the 2007 election—promised to build a hospital, didn't build it. But before the 2011 election, they thought, well, let's show the people we're serious, so they put piles in the ground, just piles. The people of Selkirk call it Stonehenge, Mr. Speaker. They still sit there.

Now, this government doesn't even shop most of the time, but even when they do, they screw it up, Mr. Speaker. And the fact of the matter is, here, their mishandling of the Selkirk hospital tendering project has resulted in lawsuits, delays and deferrals.

Will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) verify that, after all this mess, that the actual cost of the Selkirk hospital, because of the confusion of this government, is \$30 million higher than it was if they had tendered the project fairly in the first place?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Well, I can confirm that we are going to build the Selkirk hospital, that we're renovating hospitals, that we're building ERs, that we're building hospitals and personal-care homes all around this province, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to keep doing that.

And I can also tell the Leader of the Opposition that we're not going to freeze health capital like they did when they were in office.

Accountability Government Record

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Sorry, I was assuming wrongly that there was some content to the response, Mr. Speaker. I do apologize.

Dodging accountability's what this government's about: you know, hiding behind civil servants; asking—we're asking them questions about freedom of information questions, they refuse to answer; unkept infrastructure promises, they won't provide us with lists of information around delayed projects; vote tax, they won't even admit they're taking it, for heaven's sakes; PST, they mislead, they defer, they deny.

They actually believe, Mr. Speaker—and we know this and Manitobans do—that Manitobans' money is better taken off the kitchen table and put on their Cabinet table, but that should not extend to information. And they believe the information is best hidden at the Cabinet table and not shared with Manitobans.

So I'd like them to admit, and I know already, that the record is one of shame and embarrassment, because if they could defend it, they would, but they don't. They simply lash out, speak about the '90s, make excuses, hide behind civil servants and waste money that Manitobans work very hard for.

I'd like them to commit today to turning over a new leaf and committing themselves to a new decade

in the future, if they would, of accountability. We will if we're in charge—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Well, you know, I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's optimism in our chances, but we only take this job four years at a time, actually.

But what I would say for him on the issue of accountability and freedom of information, we know that in our time in government we have taken huge steps forward in making more and more information publicly available without even having to go through a freedom of information request.

We see online wait-lists in health-care areas. That same information, when we were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, and we sent in a freedom of information request, you know what the answer was back from the opposition who was government at the—in those days? No such records exist. Either they didn't collect wait-list information because they didn't care about it, or they didn't want to share it.

We have done more to put—

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

Immigration Agreement Resolution Ombudsman's Investigation

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will be the second anniversary of an email that went out, directed by the NDP, inviting civil servants to come to the Legislature to hear a political debate. Time flies when you're involved in a cover-up, I guess.

But we do know, Mr. Speaker, that since then this Premier has gone back and forth about what he knew and when he knew it. Since then the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) was kicked out of Cabinet and then ultimately kicked out of caucus and put right under the bus. But the Ombudsman has now launched another investigation, the second investigation in two years.

Instead of having to dodge, instead of having to weave, why won't this government just support the opposition motion this afternoon so we can get to the bottom of this terrible sordid mess, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for Steinbach for pointing out once again it has been two

years since the federal government, without notice to the provinces and territories, decided that they were going to take apart the very successful integration and settlement services program that was doing such a great job in Manitoba.

On this side of the House we believe that immigration is very, very important to the present and the future of the province of Manitoba. It was very, very disappointing to people on this side of the House and to every Manitoban that, instead of standing with us and trying to preserve immigration and celebrating diversity in this province, that the opposition members sat on their hands, muzzled—muzzled—by their overlords in Ottawa, and would not lift a finger to preserve immigration in the province of Manitoba.

Maybe the member for Steinbach can explain that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: They've spent two years in a cover-up since that debate, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure he's very proud of that debate.

We know that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) isn't big on investigations. He didn't want an investigation into Crocus when he collapsed that fund and many people lost their retirement savings. He didn't, of course, want an investigation when he falsified his election returns and then destroyed the evidence when that happened.

But, you know, I'm optimistic. I'm an optimist and I'm hopeful that there might be some members in the NDP caucus—I know they didn't all approve of them throwing the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) under the bus—I'm hopeful that some of them might actually want to support this motion this afternoon.

Will the government be whipping this vote and forcing all of their members to vote against the resolution with the threat that they're going to join the member for Riel under the bus if they don't, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Swan: I can assure this House that I and every other member of this NDP caucus will continue to support immigration and continue to build this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe the facts are well understood. It is no surprise that we learned of the decision—of the unilateral decision of the federal government to impact settlement services, that we believed that it was important that Manitobans understand what was being done. And we made the

decision to make sure members of the community were able to come down to the Legislature to hear what we thought was an important debate, which we frankly thought was going to be a unanimous voice of this Legislature to stand up for immigration.

We know because of the influence—I presume, the influence being presented by the federal Conservative party, these Conservative MLAs were muzzled. They were—

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

Mr. Goertzen: So in response to a federal decision, the provincial government decided to immediately gerrymander the civil service. That was their response, Mr. Speaker, to that decision.

Yesterday the Ombudsman decided that he would launch a second investigation into a missing email. Now, the Ombudsman's a pretty busy guy and they've got a busy office. They're busy dealing with issues around backed-up whistle-blower complaints that are being launched against this government. They're dealing with the recommendations that come after a child's death. We don't—we appreciate the fact that the Ombudsman has decided to do an investigation and try to restore some integrity to the FIPPA process.

But maybe they don't have to do it. Maybe this government can just support the motion this afternoon.

If they don't have enough concern for their own integrity, if they don't have concern for their caucus integrity, at least have concern about the integrity of this Legislature and independent officers. Support the resolution and don't back up the Ombudsman's offices.

Mr. Swan: Well, we could spend a long time talking about respect for civil servants and respect for independent officers of this House.

And I will remind members opposite that Progressive Conservative members have complained publicly about the office of Elections Manitoba. They have complained publicly about the Ombudsman office. They have complained publicly about the Auditor General's office. They have chosen to politicize non-political decisions and reports which are made by those independent officers when it suited their own narrow, shallow political purposes.

* (14:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, if we talk about respect for civil servants, what do we say about the Leader of the Opposition who said he would have indiscriminate, across-the-board cuts to cut hundreds of civil servants doing their great work across the province? And, indeed, it was the Leader of the Opposition who said there would be a hiring chill—

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

CFS Case Concern Request for Information

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Yesterday we brought to the attention of this House the tragic death of little Matias de Antonio. The minister's response was that the Children's Advocate will investigate the death and report back to the government and the various child and family services agencies.

Mr. Speaker, where is the family in all this? When will they be provided with some answers?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I know that all members of this House agree that the death of a child is a tragedy, and I send my condolences to the family.

I understand that the family wants and needs answers—we all do—that the grief is harder because there are no answers at this time.

I've asked that the department of child—or the Department of Family Services reach out to the family and have a conversation about what happened and what we know and to share the information as we proceed with the investigation.

Mr. Wishart: I do hope the minister does take some action.

I know all in the Chamber want to extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of Matias de Antonio for their loss. I know they were hopeful for a better life here in Canada for Matias, and now he is gone.

Can the minister not show some compassion and make sure this family gets some answers they need of what went on while under the care of Child and Family Services and this minister?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we want the answers.

When a child dies in the care of Family Services, our No. 1 priority is to find out what happened, why

did the tragedy happen, and as we go through the process of investigation, making sure that we include the family in the knowledge that we have in an attempt to help them with their grief.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, with us in the gallery today is the mother of Matias de Antonio and her extended family. They came here at their time of grief because they need answers.

Can the minister not show some leadership and provide this family with an answer as to why little Matias died? Can the minister not give this family some help to provide answers to end their uncertainty?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As a parent, I know the loss of a child is the greatest loss that we can experience.

We also want to have the answers of what happened, and we want to make sure that as we get those answers, that we share it with the family and that we provide them with the support that they feel is necessary to make sure that we can give them the support they need as they move on with their journey. This is most difficult and not knowing makes the grief even harder.

I will offer to meet with the family after question period if they'd like and share the information that we have. It's extremely limited, but we are wanting to make sure that we are providing the information to the family to support them.

CFS Case Concern Familial Rights

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Yesterday in question period the minister said, and I quote, I'm not able to disclose the facts of this case to protect the family and the child. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a little too late to protect the child.

Where in The Child and Family Services Act does it say that parents and family of a child that has died in care have no right to know what happened?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we all want to know. The family wants to know, needs to know. We need to know as the Department of Family Services and the agencies and the authorities which serve Manitobans. Manitobans want to know.

There is an investigation that is in process, and as we uncover information we will share it with the family. We will continue to have open dialogue with them and support them through their grief.

Protection of Case Files

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'd like to ask the minister to ensure the House today that the files in this case have been seized and are protected so they don't go missing and all of the information is available throughout the process of investigation.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: There are standards and protocols that need to be followed when there is the tragedy of a death of a child that is in the care of Family Services. I trust the professionals in which we represent us that they will follow that protocol.

They will make sure that the information is available for the Children's Advocate as well as for the chief medical officer when that information is requested.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That answer isn't good enough. The files disappeared from Phoenix Sinclair's case and the standards were in place at that time.

Can the minister assure this House that she has directed that those files be protected so that all of the information is there? We need her assurance that she knows that that has happened.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, I have confidence with the people that I work with in the Province of Manitoba through the Department of Family Services, that they are professionals, that they will ensure that the information is made available throughout the investigation and also that the information is shared with the Chief Medical Examiner as well as the Children's Advocate, as well as sharing that information with the family as they have requested.

AMR Planning & Consulting Contract Metis and First Nations Consultations

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): The Minister of Family Services recently offered a contract to AMR Planning & Consulting.

The contract was awarded without consultation with Metis and First Nations leaders.

Is the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) comfortable with that lack of consultation?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, as acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, I want to say that, certainly, it's nice to actually get a question on northern and Aboriginal issues.

It's unfortunate the member perhaps doesn't understand, Mr. Speaker, that we do consult regularly with First Nations and Metis leaders on many levels, constitutional and other levels.

I want to indicate that, certainly, in terms of the function of the Department of Family Services, they obviously have an important mandate to follow through with. And I would certainly hope, Mr. Speaker, that the member wouldn't suggest that we should somehow be taking important contracts that deal with important issues and departments and somehow make that a part of the kind of discussions we have on a regular basis, the political discussions, because these are not political discussions.

We do consult and we're proud of the working relationship we have with our First Nations and Metis people in this province, and we continue to work to develop that. But, again, I think the member is perhaps confusing the fact that we do consult—

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

Mr. Briese: First Nations and Metis leadership say they have lost faith in the Minister of Family Services. They call her leadership autocratic.

The minister bypassed the leadership council under The Child and Family Services Amendment Act when she awarded the contract to AMR Planning & Consulting.

Does the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs have faith in the ability of the minister of Family Services to handle these files?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): When we received the Hughes inquiry report that spoke about the tragic murder of Phoenix Sinclair, we were presented with 62 recommendations, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-one of those recommendations were already in progress or completed. The other 31 needed more due diligence.

Mr. Speaker, there needed to be an opportunity to speak with Manitobans, to have a conversation with stakeholders and with families around how these recommendations could be implemented, and gathering support and building bridges so we can walk together as we implement all 62.

Mr. Briese: Even though the minister refused to release the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry report for almost two months, the contract to AMR Planning & Consulting for \$350,000 was awarded without being tendered.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson): Is this just another case of the NDP government not following their own tendering guidelines, or are their actions only shaped by who makes financial contributions to the NDP coffers?

*(14:10)

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Certainly, we take the recommendations of the Auditor General seriously with regards to tendering of contracts. We will take actions to fulfill those recommendations to make sure that that tendering is done.

But I will say to the member, when it comes to consulting with Aboriginal people on the matter of child welfare, his is a party that when we came to office, we found the shrink wrap still on the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report. So we'll take no lectures from them on how to work with Aboriginal peoples.

Student Loan Debt Provincial Totals

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): When I talk to post-secondary education students, the biggest issue they raise is their concern about the high level of student debt.

In Estimates, I asked the Minister of Education to provide the total student debt, including the debt to provincial and federal governments and the debt to other lenders outside the provincial and federal student loan program. The Minister of Education could not provide this number, indicating that the government has no clue about the full extent of student debt in our province.

Since the minister was not able to answer my question, I ask the Deputy Premier: What is the current total amount of Manitoba student debt, including both that from student loans and debt to other lenders?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I thank the member for his interest in post-secondary education in the province of Manitoba.

As he well knows, students get an incredible good deal here in Manitoba. We have among the lowest tuition rates for universities and colleges in Canada. We continue to fund universities and colleges at the highest rate among the provinces in Canada. We have a tuition rebate program that

provides support at the end of degrees, and at the end of the day, those students are going to be prepared to get a good job and stay here and live in Manitoba.

Post-Secondary Education Grant and Scholarship Funding

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The minister still couldn't answer the question.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of money in the provincial budget for post-secondary education student bursaries, grants and scholarships was \$38.7 million in 2008-2009. This year, as this document I table shows, the amount has dropped by \$18 million. It should not be surprising that slashing student financial aid by \$18 million increases student debt.

Mr. Speaker, when will the government—this NDP government—when will this NDP government address this multimillion-dollar shortfall in funding of grants, bursaries and scholarships to post-secondary education students here in Manitoba?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Again, I thank the member for his interest in post-secondary education.

He should know that we've provided \$240 million worth of grants and bursaries since we were first elected. That provides direct support to students in order to make sure that they are successful students, that they go on and get a good job, live here in Manitoba.

But more than that, Mr. Speaker, as I just said, when getting a student loan, students in Manitoba only need to pay prime on their student loan. We've reduced interest rates on student loans because we care about students.

We want our post-secondary system to be a quality system, to be accessible and, certainly, to be affordable.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister hasn't explained why he slashed, by \$18 million, the funding for student loans.

Mr. Speaker, the Province gets more than \$1.7 billion of unconditional funding from the federal government through transfers—equalization transfers. This is funding that this government could prioritize to help students, but it doesn't. As a result, students take a back seat in this province and get their funding for student aid cut, and their debts, as a result, rise.

When will the NDP government start prioritizing students and improve funding of bursaries, grants and scholarships to help reduce student debt and make post-secondary education more affordable?

Mr. Allum: Again, I thank the member for his interest in post-secondary education.

It really is surprising that he should get on his high horse, though. He was a key decision maker tasked with leading a full review of the government's science and technology policy. And following his review, the Liberal government of the day in the 1990s, the federal Liberal government, made the largest education and research funding cuts this country has ever seen.

Mr. Speaker, if the member from River Heights really wants to stand shoulder to shoulder with students, then he ought to have voted for the budget, but he voted against it.

New Gymnasium Funding South End Winnipeg Schools

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Manitoba is the best province to raise a family in.

During the '90s, when the opposition had their hands at the helm, we saw 30,000 people leave, families, Mr. Speaker, and children.

Right now Manitoba is growing and the south end of Winnipeg is growing. We're seeing more children than ever in the south end of Winnipeg. And we are also investing in making sure that they have healthy lifestyles in state-of-the-art facilities.

The Minister of Education was down in my neck of the woods this morning with an announcement, and I would like him to inform the House on this wonderful announcement investing in Manitoba's children.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I thank the member for St. Norbert for his question.

Today I was pleased to be joined by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross) to announce the construction of two new gym projects in the south of Winnipeg. École Saint-Avila and Fort Richmond Collegiate will soon have new facilities—gym facilities so their students can stay active and learn healthy habits for life.

Mr. Speaker, not only do these healthy facilities improve the lives of students, but it helps them to

become better learners and they become assets to neighbourhoods and communities.

On this side of the House we invest in schools. We invest in school—students. We build gyms. We build science labs. We build schools. We're there with students.

The members opposite would abandon that agenda and would leave students high—

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

CFS Case Concern Protection of Case Files

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): My question is very direct to the Minister of Family Services.

Has she ordered her department to seize all the files and documents related to this case so that nothing goes missing?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): As I stated earlier to the member opposite, I have trust in the professionals that have been hired to work within the Family Services Department. I trust that they will follow protocol as well as—protocol when it comes to the tragedy of a child.

I am confident that when they are approached for information for the investigation that they will open the files. They will share it honestly and openly.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister may trust those in the system, and that is okay.

I'm asking the minister whether she will verify that all of the files and documents are being protected.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As I've said previously—I think it's four questions now—that, yes, I believe and trust that the professionals that are hired within the system, they will act professionally, that they will follow standards and protocols that are in place, and they will ensure that the files and the records are kept and shared as we go forth in the investigation.

Mrs. Mitchelson: My question, again, is very direct.

Yes or no, will the minister take responsibility if any of the files or documents go missing?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As I've said previously, I have confidence within the professionals that work within the system of Family Services. I trust that they will follow the protocols and standards that are in place and that they will share their files and their

information with the investigators as we proceed to understand this horrible tragedy.

Former Immigration Minister's Actions Government Knowledge of Events

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): We hear a lot about integrity in this House, and the government has the responsibility to maintain this integrity.

* (14:20)

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his ministers have the responsibility to be truthful and transparent. That didn't happen in the case of the former minister of Immigration. The Premier still isn't clear on when exactly he knew what happened and has yet to come clean to this House and Manitobans what his role was in respect to the minister's directing a civil servant to organize a political rally.

When will the Premier come clean about what he knew and when he knew it?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As I hope the member is aware—maybe he's not—in April of 2012, Mr. Speaker, the federal government made a unilateral decision to dramatically impact settlement services across Manitoba.

This was a matter of great concern for New Democrat members of the Legislature. I guess it wasn't a concern for Conservative members of this Legislature and I do truly say that that's a shame. It's been set out very clearly that Cabinet and caucus on the New Democrats' side were very concerned about this and we did want to invite Manitobans down to the Legislature to hear what elected officials in Manitoba had to say.

The member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) has acknowledged that, without any direction, she decided that she would use departmental staff. She has apologized for misleading this House; she did so at the earliest opportunity in this Legislature. And—

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

Apology Request

Mr. Smook: When we asked for emails through FIPPA, the department kept them secret. The emails were only made public when the Ombudsman got involved. It took the Ombudsman to find an email the government could not find.

The Premier and other members—ministers sat on this information and did nothing about it until the report became public. He blamed the former minister. He blamed the department.

Why did the Premier not apologize for misleading this House and take action at the first possibility?

Mr. Swan: Well, Mr. Speaker, here's Don Quixote looking for the windmill.

It's very, very obvious that the deputy minister of the department has been very clear that the email should have been included in the 2012 response. This was inadvertently missed. It's disappointing that members of the opposition continue their attack on public servants in the Province of Manitoba. That is what this is; it's a further attack on the deputy minister who's given his answer.

This was an error made within the department. And, indeed, the email was located when the Ombudsman was investigating. The email was provided to the Ombudsman and formed part of the Ombudsman's report. That is the story.

I appreciate members of the opposition would like to spin stories. They'd like to write a fiction novel. That is the story that happened. It's unfortunate they believe it necessary to attack civil servants in continuing their shallow—

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

Mr. Smook: The Premier and his ministers allowed a civil servant to take the blame for something that was simply not his fault. He allowed the minister to remain in Cabinet long after he knew the whole story.

The Premier will take credit when something goes right, but when it comes time to take the blame, he's nowhere to be found. He blamed the civil servant. He blamed the former minister. He blamed everyone else.

When will the Premier apologize for misleading this House and misleading Manitobans?

Mr. Swan: Maybe never in Manitoba's history has an opposition party spent so much time trying to run away from things they do, things they say, things they don't do and things they don't say.

And it is very obvious that the Progressive Conservative Party recognizes they are completely on the wrong side of this issue. We stand with

immigration. We stand with new Manitobans as we continue to build this province. The members opposite clearly do not. That is their own choice.

I know every time the Leader of the Opposition goes on a radio show or has a press conference, they spend the rest of the week trying to get out from under what he has said. We know that's the way they have to operate. We know that's the way they'll continue to operate.

We stand with building this province. They don't.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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

Child-Welfare System

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Today I would like to draw attention to some of the problems in the child-welfare system. In the past, we have heard case after case of children in care being victimized, not only by family situations, but by the system as well.

Children have been sent back to families that were unprepared to care for them, families that were without the supports that they needed in place, whether they be the basics of life: shelter, food, and heat, or help with addictions and mental health issues.

But there are also situations where children are taken from families who are making every attempt to provide a good life for their children. Often these are single parent families who are not receiving enough supports from the system.

The situation of little Mathias has only driven this home. Here is a family that came to Canada for a better life for themselves and their children, but the system has failed them. Instead of supporting this family as they brought a new life into the world, instead the new family member has been taken. They do not feel they have ever received an adequate explanation from Child and Family Services as to why baby Mathias was taken from them and do not have an adequate explanation as to his death.

Mr. Speaker, where are the rights of the family in this system? I would urge the minister and the staff of CFS to make every effort to resolve this problem and communicate with this family to end their uncertainty.

Sistema Winnipeg and Elwick Community School

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, this April is Music Month, which makes it a perfect time to recognize an incredible partnership taking place between the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and Elwick school.

In 2011, these partners joined together to offer Manitoba's first ever Sistema music program. Sistema students, teachers and members of the WSO have joined us in the gallery today.

The Sistema program provides free, but intensive music instruction to students at Elwick school. Students in the program spend three hours after school each day working with their school instructors and WSO musicians to build a strong foundation in music.

Sistema has a rich history. Antonio Abreu founded the program in Venezuela to help turn around the lives of underprivileged children. Today, more than 400,000 students participate in the program worldwide and Winnipeg is home to one of only four Sistema programs in Canada.

Sistema promotes the collective practice of music through symphony orchestras. It is designed to help young people achieve their full potential and become an agent for social change in their community.

I had the pleasure of watching these students perform with the WSO during the Raiders of the Lost Art musical event. The event incorporated dance, art, song, poetry, theatre and the wave into one exciting symphony production that I believe will inspire our children to be involved in the arts for the rest of their lives. More than 15,000 Manitoba students experienced this series of performances, and I am so proud of the Elwick students who showcased their talents.

Mr. Speaker, the success of Sistema is undeniable. When you meet these students, you feel their passion for music and the confidence they have gained through this experience.

Sistema is about more than creating great music. It is about creating a brighter future for our young people. I ask all the members of the House to join me in thanking Executive Director Trudy Schroeder, the WSO and their sponsors, the teachers, and, of course, the students, who make this program possible. Thank you.

Gaming Expansion in Manitoba

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I was against it before I was for it. That seems to be the mantra of today's NDP. I remember how NDP MLAs of the '90s stood in this Legislature weaving tales of children home alone and hungry because their parents are out gambling. Yesterday's NDP argued that VLTs were, quote, the crack cocaine of gaming, and preyed on, quote, weak and vulnerable citizens.

One would think that after spending a decade opposing gambling, Mr. Speaker, we would see a seismic reduction since taking office.

So what did today's NDP do to address this, quote, false economy, and stop the, quote, damage to Manitoba as a result of gambling? Through a series of successive regulatory and legislative changes, they have brought in the largest gaming expansion this province has seen.

They have expanded the hours of VLTs, turning them on two hours earlier every day. They have allowed VLTs to be played on Sundays, Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Christmas. They have replaced all VLTs twice. They have opened two First Nation-run casinos with a third and fourth in the works. They have opened a new mini casino in downtown Winnipeg. They've introduced online gaming and lifted a 20-year moratorium on VLTs with plans to introduce 500 more. Finally, they're funding a study, Mr. Speaker, because apparently young people don't play lottery tickets like they once did and they need to find out why and how to correct that.

* (14:30)

Why the change of—why the change, Mr. Speaker? As is often the case, money talks, and we have a government intent on believing it can spend its way to prosperity.

Was it that long ago that the MLA for Thompson stood in this Legislature lamenting about how not a day went by in his community that someone didn't come up to him and talk about the financial and personal woes and consequences gambling took on their family? This minister would rise day in and day out and share that story.

Last month this minister said, and I quote, I fully support casino development in the Thompson region. A strange about-face, but what has changed? The member is now in government and finds himself desperate for cash.

La Barriere Crossings Science Fair

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Learning to love science is something that happens to many people when they participate in their school science fairs. It starts off with an idea that sparks the student's curiosity and ends with the completed project and hopefully an answer to their hypothesis.

After weeks of research, experimenting and working on science projects, it's easy to see how science is at work in our everyday lives. Science projects make hands-on learning easy. They can show us how electricity works or how plants grow. These science fair projects leave a lasting impression on us because they show us why—the whys and hows of how the world works around us.

Last week I was privileged to be a guest judge at La Barriere Crossings School's science fair. I spent the morning talking with students who had put boundless energy and creativity into their science projects. There were dozens of fantastic projects on such wide variety of topics.

Thank you to all those teachers and parents who helped those students develop the correct methods to find answers to their hypotheses. Your dedication means that these students now have the tools they need to develop a lifelong love of science.

Congratulations to all the students at La Barriere Crossings who participated in the science fair. Whether on the subject of crickets, radios, renewable energy or the life cycle of a star, your fascinating projects showed us that—the creativity and passion that science inspires. Science fairs like this remind us all to never stop learning.

Mr. Speaker, to close, I ask to leave—I ask leave to include the names of the winning students so they appear in Hansard. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to include the list of names that the honourable member has mentioned? *[Agreed]*

La Barriere Crossings science fair winners: Grade 5: Ethan Hoepfner, bronze; Atlantes Banning, silver; Simran Chakal, gold. Grade 6: Emily Kleinsasser and Olivia Furtney, bronze; Kelvin Nguyen, silver; Jonah Dandeneau, gold. Grade 7: Alec Beyak and Jacob Labelle, bronze; Brie Villeneuve-Armstrong and Rorie Hillis, silver; Eddy Vargulich and Dawson Proskurnik, gold. Grade 8: McKayla Boehm and Shaylynn Hiebert, bronze; Ore Skinwunmi, silver; Deanna Kleinsasser, gold.

Pharmacy Awareness Month

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are a vital part of Manitoba's health-care system. They serve Manitobans in both rural and urban community pharmacies and hospitals throughout the province. They play an important part of our communities and community life.

As accessible and trusted health-care professionals, they can play an important role in delivering health-care services to Manitoba families. This past month marked Pharmacy Awareness Month to honour these men and women.

Pharmacists are medication experts and often a key point of contact within the health-care system. These professionals help patients with preventative and chronic disease management and overall health advice. They can also provide up-to-date advice making healthy lifestyle changes and staying well.

With more than 25,000 types of medication available in Canada, a pharmacist's knowledge and expertise in managing drug therapy is essential to all Manitobans. That is why every March we recognize and support pharmacists' essential role in the health-care delivery with a proclamation from the Minister of Health.

In Manitoba, we have recently expanded pharmacists' scope of practice with the new Pharmaceutical Act. For example, pharmacists who get extra training will be able to issue prescriptions for minor illnesses. Pharmacists will also be able to administer vaccines such as the flu shot to people age seven and up. This legislation allows pharmacists to use their drug therapy expertise to benefit all Manitoba families.

I have an incredibly dedicated group of pharmacists that serve the people of Concordia and go above and beyond every day in our community.

Mr. Speaker, Pharmacy Awareness Month allows members of the community to learn more about the key role of pharmacists and the role they play in the health-care system. We celebrate their outstanding contributions to the health of Manitobans and the expanding role they will be able to play in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Speaker: And, I believe, as was previously agreed and announced, we'll move to the Opposition Day motion, sponsored by the honourable member for Steinbach.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that a Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed to investigate the conduct of the First Minister and the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) with respect to the issuing of invitations to provincial civil servants and immigration service providers to attend a political debate in this House on April 19th, 2012, concerning immigration settlement services; and that this committee be comprised equally of government and opposition members, have the power to call witnesses including the First Minister, members of Executive Council and the government caucus, as well as political staff, civil servants, and be able to receive testimony of witnesses under oath.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Steinbach, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo, that a Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

The resolution is in order.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I take no pleasure in bringing forward this opposition motion this afternoon. Opposition Day motions are an effective and, I think, an important part of the tools that an opposition has in our parliamentary system, but it's actually quite a sad thing that we've had to bring forward this particular motion.

Now, it's been two years, two years tomorrow, is the anniversary, actually, of the email that went out, signed by the deputy minister of Immigration, asking civil servants to come to this House to hear a political debate on immigration, Mr. Speaker.

Following that, of course, we had a number of questions about who authorized that email, and the

government was clear in saying that it wasn't them, that it was the deputy minister, not unlike the comments from the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) today, who was deflecting everything to the deputy minister in response to the missing freedom of information—very similar kind of comments.

We learned, of course, later on, over the course of a couple of years, that, in fact, it wasn't the deputy minister who sent out that email on his own accord, that, in fact, it was the then-minister of Immigration who directed it. And, since then there's been many other questions, questions about when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) knew that the then-minister of Immigration actually directed that email to go out, questions about his senior staff. The member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), the now independent member who occupies a position under the bus these days, Mr. Speaker, made it clear that she got that direction from senior staff in the Premier's office right by the Premier.

We learned later on, only about a couple of weeks ago, that there was a missing email, that, in fact, the smoking-gun email which indicated that the minister was aware of the invitation and was involved in its direction at the time in 2012, was aware of that that there was an email that indicated that. In fact, we filed a freedom of information request back in 2012 asking for the information of any sort of communication, electronic, that had been sent during the lead-up to that debate, and we received a package of information, but what we didn't know at that time in 2012 was that the email that directly implicated the minister, in terms of sending out the invitation, was missing. We only found that out two years later, just a couple of weeks ago, that that email wasn't provided in 2012. And not only was it not provided in 2012, it wasn't disclosed for 18 months after the government became aware that the email wasn't disclosed. It was covered up for more than 18 months.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I bring that up specifically, and I appreciate that the Ombudsman notified me yesterday that he would be undertaking an investigation into that missing email. He's got a lot of work to do, and I wish there was other ways we could get this information without asking the Ombudsman to do the investigation, but there isn't because the government simply won't come clean with it. But I bring that up because it speaks to the fact that there are still issues two years later around this situation that we don't know the answers to. It's

two years after the fact, we have the Ombudsman doing an investigation into a missing email.

Now, what else do we not know about this situation? Well, we know what we don't know, in terms of the Premier not giving us the information about when he actually found out that the minister of Immigration gave direction. We understand that his senior staff was involved; that comes from the member for Riel, but we don't know to what extent. The Premier has said that, in some ways, he took action against the member for Riel by not including her in Cabinet and removing her from Cabinet in the fall of last year, I believe, that he removed her partially because of his understanding and knowledge of her involvement in this issue. And yet, when it comes to why he decided to wait for so long to make it public that this is what happened, he said he didn't want to interfere with the investigation.

* (14:40)

So, on the one hand, he took action based on the knowledge that he knew, not waiting for the investigation by the Ombudsman to be completed, but, on the other hand, he wouldn't come forward and tell the public about the information that he did know and tell this House because he wanted the investigation to be completed. Those are just some of the contradictions that still—and the unknown information that still exists on this file and on this situation, Mr. Speaker, where the civil service was gerrymandered and used by this NDP government.

And it's not a small point to make mention that a deputy minister—a deputy minister—had his reputation hung out to dry for several months, Mr. Speaker, more than a year until this—in fact, more—almost two years—that his reputation was besmirched for that time while this government didn't want to come clean in terms of the fact that the former member—or the former minister of Immigration had given the direction on that email.

So there's much that we haven't learned, there's much that we don't know. We have the questions about certain things we don't know but there are other things that likely exist that we haven't been able to discover because we haven't been able to ask individuals in a forum where they give answers.

Now, as much as I like the forum of question period, Mr. Speaker, and I enjoy the back and forth of question period, the fact is it's not a great way to get answers, particularly under this particular government. Trying to actually get an answer to a

question is almost impossible. And so having a special committee where you have an equal balance between the opposition and the government and the ability to call people under oath, which isn't actually an unusual sort of thing in our parliamentary system—it might be unusual in Manitoba, but it's not unusual in the general Westminster model of democracy, that sort of ability—we could actually get some answers because people would be compelled to answer.

I've come to the conclusion that we could ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) or the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) or any member of the government for the next two years leading up to the election, we could ask him the question over and over about what they knew but they're never going to answer. They simply feel that they're better off to not answer the question.

Now, I'm hopeful—I'm hopeful—that there might be some members opposite—I certainly know that there were members, more than a handful, who didn't agree with the expulsion of the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) from that caucus, who objected to the expulsion and putting her under the bus, Mr. Speaker. I'm hopeful that some of those members might want to stand up on behalf of their former colleague, might want to speak to that issue. They're not shy to speak off the record to others in the community, but they certainly have been shy so far to put it on the record. But this is an opportunity for them to stand up, for them to say that they're not happy with how this transpired, for them to say that they believe, in fact, that they know that the Premier was involved in the direction of this email and that he decided not to come clean with that information for almost two years. It would also save the Ombudsman the—I think, in some ways, the task of having to go through a full investigation on the email because we could bring forward people from the department and ask that and we can bring forward the ministers and ask what they knew, under oath.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know that this is something that the government doesn't want to do, that they're committed to a strategy of not allowing true information to flow on this.

Now, I do think this is important, Mr. Speaker, and I understand that there are some elements of this that might not capture the public's attention with great lust all the time, but I do think this is important because it speaks to our democracy, it speaks to this Legislature and it speaks to the civil service and how they should be respected and treated in the province of Manitoba. I do know in talking with senior civil

servants that they are very concerned about how this played out and the fact that a deputy minister had their reputation hung out there. We certainly saw within the Auditor General's report that there are many concerns in the civil service, that people feel they're going to be acted out upon if they bring forward issues in response to this government. So this special committee, while it's unusual in Manitoba, it would be something that I think is important, it would be something that would be helpful.

Now, I understand and I know the Attorney General will stand up and he's going to try to recreate the debate that happened here two years ago, although I'd suspect—in fact, I know—if they could go back in time, they wouldn't do it again, Mr. Speaker, for all the pain and heartache that it's caused. But I know he's going to try to recreate that debate and say that they had to bring it forward.

I want him to know I had an opportunity to meet with a series of immigration service providers just a few days ago at a convention of them in Steinbach. And I had a chance to talk to the local one in Steinbach and I asked him how things were going on the immigration file, particularly since there's been the changeover. And he said he actually hasn't noticed any difference, in fact, in some ways, things are actually better than they were before. So I'm glad that they decided that they wanted to have this debate, Mr. Speaker, two years ago, and I'm glad that things are better, in fact, in many ways, I'm told in terms of how the system is running in terms of our immigration services.

But I'm very troubled, very troubled by what's happened in the two years in between about how this government has manipulated the civil servants, how they've tried to cover up information, how they've discredited the freedom of information program which doesn't just benefit us as opposition but benefits Manitobans which the media rely on as well, Mr. Speaker, and I think brings transparency to our entire governmental system. Those things are very troubling and we need to have this kind of committee, this special committee, to get those kinds of answers in terms of not only why did it happen, because it's not just about finding out why something happened. It's also about trying to find ways to ensure it doesn't happen again, and those things aren't going to happen unless we can actually have an airing of the facts in this case where members opposite and others have to come forward and bring what they know under oath.

Thank you very much. I look forward to this passing.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am happy to take some time talking about how important immigration is to the province of Manitoba because that is very important. That is the platform for the debate this afternoon.

We know that people from all over the world recognize that Manitoba is a great place to live, great place to work, a great place to play and a great place to raise families, and that's why thousands of newcomers from all over the world are choosing to settle in Manitoba every year.

And our highly successful immigration program, which has been tweaked and improved over the years, has contributed to the diversity of our province by attracting newcomers, well, from many countries, from the Philippines, from India, China, Germany, Russia, Paraguay, Nigeria and, indeed, every corner of our planet. And there's an article that I usually send out to friends or even people, politicians I may meet from other parts of the world, and it's an article from the New York Times which has talked about the parka-clad diversity here in the province of Manitoba. They describe it as a blue-collar town that gripes about the cold in Punjabi and Tagalog, which is a pretty good description of what we've got going here in Manitoba.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, maybe we don't agree on a lot of things in this House, but I would hope we can all agree that we're proud to live in a diverse province where people from all corners of the planet can live together, celebrate our different cultures and work together to build a good life for our families and a strong future for our children. I've many friends, many neighbours, many colleagues, many people that I'm proud to represent in the West End of Winnipeg who've built their life here in Manitoba.

Our government is focused on having a strong immigration program that brings newcomers to Manitoba and doesn't just leave them be, that helps them, that helps them to get a strong start and succeed in their new home, and there's no question how successful Manitoba's immigration program has been. Since 1999, when we formed government, over 140,000 new immigrants have come to Manitoba, a fourfold increase in our immigration level since 1999. That year, 3,725 newcomers came to Manitoba. In 2012 that number had risen again, fourfold, to 13,312.

Mr. Speaker, over 30,000 newcomers have immigrated outside of the Perimeter to rural Manitoba contributing to the economic development of over 130 communities across our province, and nearly 30,000 immigrants have come to Manitoba over the last two years alone. Two thousand and twelve saw one of the highest levels of immigration recorded since they started keeping the statistics back in 1946, and it's Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program that is the leader, accounting for over 70 per cent of all immigration to Manitoba. The number of immigrants coming to Manitoba through the PNP program has increased from just 500 in 1999 to over 5,000 in 2012. In 1999 that Provincial Nominee Program accounted for 11 per cent of total provincial landings. By 2012 that program now accounted for 72 per cent of total landings.

And there's no question immigration has been a key driver of economic growth and job creation. It's been one of the things that has helped Manitoba get through tougher times that have been experienced in other parts of the country and other parts of North America, and it shouldn't matter where you are in the political spectrum. It shouldn't matter if you're a businessperson, if you're a labourer, if you're an academic, I think everybody should understand just how important immigration is to this province.

And, you know, we've sure come a long way since the Leader of the Opposition was in Gary Filmon's Cabinet and people were leaving this province in record numbers.

And, you know, you can look at the Leader of the Opposition's record when he was in government. Of course, the Winnipeg Free Press recently spoke about the no-growth '90s, and in those years Manitoba saw a net loss of migration, on average more than 2,500 people a year left our province each year for a net loss of over 28,000 people during the Filmon years.

* (14:50)

And, you know, the Leader of the Opposition refuses—steadfastly refuses to even acknowledge the success of our immigration program and discounts the contribution to our province of thousands of immigrants. And, you know, when there were statistics from StatsCan showing a growing Manitoba population due to immigration, well, what did the Leader of the Opposition do? He sent out a press release claiming that the province has shrunk. And, in fact, Manitoba's population grew to over 1.2 million people that year, an increase of

nearly 15,000 as a result of our successful immigration program.

And, in effect, the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to use stats his own way, has told Manitobans over and over again that when he counts people arriving and leaving the province of Manitoba, if you're from outside of Canada, you don't count, and that is shameful. And that is very disappointing for every Manitoban.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know it was a big shock, in the spring of 2012, when the federal government unilaterally told Manitoba and other provinces that they were going to change the way that settlement services were delivered across Canada. The federal government decided to try to fix a system that was not broken and was, indeed, providing tremendous success. *[interjection]* Well, you know, the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese), for his grumbling from his seat, I'll hear from him later. He knows full well that Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program has been the most successful of its kind in the country.

And maybe that was the problem. Maybe the member for Agassiz's federal counterparts were jealous of the success here in Manitoba. Maybe they decided that they were going to try and take something away from Manitoba, and maybe that's why when there were four members of the Progressive Conservative—or the Conservative federal caucus glowering at everybody, that's why he sat on his hands and didn't participate in the debate and didn't stand up for immigration in the province of Manitoba.

You know, when this occurred, we thought it was very important to have a debate in this Legislature. And I can't express how disappointed I was and, frankly, how disappointed many members of my caucus were that we didn't speak with one voice. The resolution that was put forward was intended to send a strong, unified voice on behalf of the people of Manitoba to the federal government, and, unfortunately, the opposition would not let that happen.

And to have that supported, there is no debate. It is not up for debate that members of the government side contacted people and invited them to come down to the Legislature for the debate. We wanted to communicate with people to make them understand what was at stake, and as every member of this Legislature who was here that day appreciated, hundreds of people came down to their building—to

their legislative building to express their concern with the unilateral decision made by the federal government.

I know that I spent time inviting people to come down, and I expect that many members of the government caucus also decided to use their own time, their own resources, to make sure that people came down. Now, the intention, of course, was that MLAs would take that on. Their offices—their constituency offices could be a part of that to get people down here.

Unfortunately, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) decided that she would have her deputy minister take the steps to send out the invitations from her. She has admitted that that did occur. The Ombudsman has investigated and has concerns. And we accept that. We accept that there are concerns raised when a Cabinet member chooses to have a deputy minister become involved with something which, fairly, can be seen as political.

Of course, there was co-operation with the Ombudsman's investigation. We've respected the Ombudsman's report and that's why we'll be moving ahead to ensure that there is clarity in situations of that type.

What is also not disputed is that the member for Riel did mislead this House. She says it was inadvertent. There's no evidence to suggest otherwise, but she admitted that she misled the House. To her credit, she's apologized to the people of Manitoba and, indeed, she stood in this House the first day that we returned in March, she stood in her place and made, I think, an appropriate apology and confirmed to this House that she had misled the House, that there was no intention on her part to do so, but, indeed, that had happened.

And certainly we believe that this was a very, very important debate for Manitobans to have. Again, we would have hoped that the opposition would have supported us, but that did not happen. And, to this point, the Ombudsman has investigated and reported on the events. Again, it was revealed the former minister had directed staff in her department to invite members and, again, there has been a correction by the former minister and an apology by the former minister. But right to the end, even today, we have the opposition who have never been able to expand the story any further than that.

There was a complete explanation by the member for Riel. There was an explanation by the

deputy minister currently in the department that the email the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) speaks about was inadvertently not included in the answer to the FIPPA. That was a mistake. It is ultimately up to departments and ultimately ministers to make sure that information is provided. It was located, provided to the Ombudsman as part of that Ombudsman's investigation and, of course, has now been provided to the opposition as part of the FIPPA.

So I know that we will hear conjecture; we will hear speculation; what you will not hear are any facts from members opposite that are any different than what the Premier (Mr. Selinger), what myself or other members and, indeed, what the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) has put on the record. So, Mr. Speaker, I will look forward to hearing what other members have to say and I thank you for the opportunity this afternoon. Thank you.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak to the opposition day motion presented by the member from Steinbach. And I listened intently to the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Swan) response to that and I looked for some indication he was speaking to the same thing. I did see some of the same words used like, to. I heard, the, a few times, immigration services, on, a, things, but I didn't hear him speaking to the intent of the motion which was to clear up the facts. And it's the facts that we're looking for. It is, indeed, the facts and those are the things that are missing, that we have—seem to have several facts. And we've had several explanations over the last two years. And it's very important when you're dealing with something of this nature that you deal with it quickly because soon enough those facts tend to blur, they tend to disappear, documents tend to vanish and perhaps head to the shredding truck as we've seen in the past circumstances with this government.

So it's very important that something of this nature, a special committee of this House be called to deal with this particular issue because we do know that already memories are blurred and there are different perceptions out there of what actually occurred during that period of time. Indeed, the Minister of Justice has just indicated and admitted that he invited guests to come that day and so perhaps we were asking the wrong person as well, or we should have asked him also: Did he use civil servants to forward that invitation as well and was that appropriate? But, again, we were asking the questions of other people that were involved in the

case and we got several different responses from there.

Indeed, I was in Brandon listening to the former minister speak to people in Brandon and recent immigrants and their families about this particular type of thing, that she was worried that was happening, where the federal government would be able to run this better than the Province, which, indeed, they've proven that they have and I believe we have people that were critical of it at the time, have even written letters to say, you know, we were worried that this was going to change and wouldn't be a good—wouldn't be as good but in fact it is better, even better than they would have hoped. And the program runs and continues to run very well to bring immigrants to Manitoba.

But I did—was at the meeting where the former minister was speaking and she looked around the room and she said, there's no media here, is there? And then proceeded to scare all of those immigrants by saying that she was concerned as a Canadian if she went and left Canada on a holiday, she was worried that the federal government might take away her passport. Now what kind of a message is that to say to recent immigrants and citizens, that a Canadian citizen would try to blame the federal government and create fear in that immigrant population that that federal government would take away a passport from a Canadian citizen or a landed immigrant. Indeed, very disturbing to see that type of fear expressed by that minister and the type of fear that I saw reflected in the eyes of those people in Brandon. That was not what I expected from a minister of the Crown, indeed. I expected the truth and that's, indeed, what we're trying to get to with this motion. The truth, the facts, those are the things we need to find out for Manitobans: Who knew what, when?

* (15:00)

You know, when this started to unfold, Mr. Speaker, it triggered a few memories for me. And I am a student of history and I do recall watching Watergate unfold and how that happened through a series of accidents, that things were discovered and mistakes were made and several explanations—I believe that the President's secretary mistakenly erased several minutes of tape, just like some of these emails were mistakenly missed. And more explanations go by and we hear different versions of, well, yes, we knew it was there but we didn't really think you meant to ask for that one and we found it

after and we maybe didn't think it was what you really needed to see. So we thought we'd wait until you asked again and then we'll give it to you.

So do we need to—what?—submit a new request, a similar request every few months to see if more documents are able to be released by this government? Or perhaps we should do what the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has asked here, and call the special committee, so that we can indeed ask the appropriate people under oath what they knew and when they knew it, who they told and who else knew, because we know that some of these emails went to several ministers on the other side of the House, so they would have seen them, presumably.

I know we all get a lot of emails, Mr. Speaker, and it's apparent from my communications with some others on the other side of the House that they don't always read their emails, but perhaps they would've read this one. At least they received it, and they would have known the history on that regard, and we were—when we were asking questions in the House, they should have known what those answers were. But they were not forthcoming to this side of the House and we've had to dig deeper and use other methods and waste, I would say in this regard, two years because memories fade, and I think it's very important that we start to look at the real details of this whole situation before people forget altogether or before documents disappear altogether.

Now, emails, Mr. Speaker, are difficult to erase. They—it can be done but, likely, if you erase it on your computer, it might also exist on the server or another server somewhere else, so that's not a good way to go about hiding information. But documents that go between departments, they can disappear and we know that this government has a history of making those documents disappear.

We expressed concerns here in this House today about documents relating for a—to a very discouraging and disappointing case here, the death of a child. We want to make sure that those documents will be available should there be further inquiries, and I'm sure there will be further inquiries in that case, Mr. Speaker.

So, in this case, we need to get the bottom—to the bottom of this issue before all the documents have vanished and disappeared and surprisingly won't be found anymore. It's very critical I think, Mr. Speaker, that this issue goes to the integrity of this House. Manitobans expect that their elected officials have

integrity and have honesty. I expected that and I was disappointed, very disappointed when I saw the minister attack the federal government, not just here but also in Brandon a couple of years ago. The former minister attacked the federal government for things that were not true, because people expect that the ministers would be telling them the truth. And I'm disappointed to see that that does not always happen because then they have a suspicion of all elected officials. And those are things that we want to make sure that we can tell Manitobans, that we are telling them the truth, the whole truth, that we're not going to lead them on down a garden path, that they have an expectation that these people have their best interests at heart—but then not so much.

Here we see a government that likes to blame others for their failures. We see a government that likes to blame the federal government. They like to blame the '90s. I'm wondering—I know they blame the federal government but they haven't blamed the federal government for the actions of this former minister just yet. Maybe that's coming, and it's kind of implied by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) that it was the federal government that drove her to these excesses. But, you know, it's very difficult to watch, Mr. Speaker.

So I would encourage the government to read the motion and to put it into place so that they can show Manitobans that they have integrity, that they can prove to Manitobans they have integrity, because if you're not interested in showing Manitobans the truth of this situation, then Manitobans are suspicious that you're hiding something. If you've got nothing to hide, put the special committee in place and let it—let it follow its due course. If you have something to hide, then I imagine we're going to see the government defeat this motion. And that would be most disappointing for Manitobans.

I'm sure there are many others that have opinions on this, and I would encourage the government to support it and put the proper process in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): As expected, of course, we don't have much integrity or credibility across the way. It kind of looks like members on the government side of the House are going to be muzzled on this Opposition Day motion and they're not going to be allowed to stand up and speak. And that's—you know, it's unfortunate that they would all sit like trained seals, and I guess the whip is on and they will be instructed not to vote

with their conscience or not to vote the way they really feel, but they're going to vote along with a government that has shown, Mr. Speaker, especially over the last few years, that they have absolutely no integrity, a government that will lie and say anything. They'll lie before an election about tax increases, saying that there will be no tax increases, and then right after that election raise taxes.

We have a government and a minister that proved once again that they're not above the law. They don't have to act, Mr. Speaker, the way they expect other Manitobans to act, to obey the law. We have a minister of the Crown that could stand in this House and say one thing when she knew full well that it was wrong, that she wasn't telling the truth to the Legislature or to Manitobans to very direct questions that were asked of her time and time again, questions that were asked in this House, questions that were asked in committee. And the answers weren't straightforward and weren't forthcoming. They blamed a senior civil servant for actions that they took, political actions that she took, that she directed her deputy minister to contact groups and organizations and tell them to take the day off to come to the Legislature and listen to a government motion that was put forward around the immigration program.

And we found that over the last couple of years that program has continued to thrive and grow and new immigrants are coming to Manitoba. The services and the supports are still there for new immigrants. That has not changed, and, in many instances, I've heard that organizations are moving forward and they're finding that it's much easier to access some of the supports and services that should be there and could be there for new immigrants. So it was a red herring, it was a political stand that the government didn't need to take, Mr. Speaker, but they chose to go that route and they chose to hang a senior civil servant out to dry.

*(15:10)

Now, there are a lot of unanswered questions still around what happened that day. Mr. Speaker, if a senior civil servant, as they said, acted on his own, who was responsible for booking the committee room for all of those people that came to the Legislature that day? Was it the civil service that acted on their own and that senior civil servant that booked the committee room? Or was it political staff in the minister's office or in the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) secretariat that booked that room?

Who got the passes for those individuals to come and sit in the gallery? Was it the civil service that the government says was responsible or was it political staff from the minister's office, from the Premier's secretariat? Those questions have not been answered. I don't know if those questions have been asked, Mr. Speaker, but they're questions that legitimately need to be asked. How deep does this deception go by this government and how low can they stoop to try to move away from the issue at hand, and that is the issue that a minister of the Crown stood in her place in this Legislature, sat in the committee room and misled this Chamber. That's a very serious offence.

And we know that when she stood up and finally remembered what she had done and confessed and implicated the Premier and his staff in just last December, it was, Mr. Speaker, when she stood up and did that, she was kicked out of the NDP caucus. Now we know that not everyone in the government caucus supported that decision. There were some members of the caucus that supported the former minister and there were some members of the caucus that supported the Premier, but ultimately we know there was division over there and we know that there wasn't unanimity around what happened that day.

But do you think that any of those that supported the former member from Riel, who thought that she should remain in caucus, do you think any of them will stand with us today and vote for this resolution? I think not, Mr. Speaker, because I think the whip is on. I think they have been told in no uncertain terms that they will toe the party line and that they will obey what the Premier has to say. *[interjection]* Well, you know, the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) sits in her seat and continues to talk, I hope, I just hope she will stand on her feet this afternoon and show some courage, put her thoughts on the record, put her comments on the record. But I don't believe that her party will allow that. I believe she's been muzzled, she's been told to sit in her seat and listen.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that there's an arrogant mentality that permeates the government's side of the House. They've been in power for 14, almost 15 years now and they believe that they have the divine right to govern and they can do anything and they can say anything and get away with it. Well, I think that Manitobans realize and recognize that we have a government that's become quite arrogant, become out of touch, and a government that will lie and say anything. There isn't anything that can believe—be believed.

How can we believe the Premier (Mr. Selinger) when he stands up and says anything, when he has deceived and lied to Manitobans in the past? *[interjection]* And, yes, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that comment. I know that I crossed the line. I meant to say the government and I referred to the Premier and I withdraw that comment.

Again, I say that we have a resolution, an opposition resolution, here today that I think all members of this Legislature should have the courage to stand up and support. Why would they not want to get to the bottom of what happened? Why would they not want to hear under oath if they've got nothing to hide? Why would they not want to hear witnesses called before a committee of this Legislature to be able to tell the truth, to be able to defend what the government says happened or deny what the government says happened? And if they have nothing to hide they should not fear the committee process.

We've put—and my colleague, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has introduced this Opposition Day motion. I know that there will be many more that will stand in their place to speak. I wish there were some on the government side of the House that would have the courage to stand and speak and defend obviously what's indefensible or they would stand in their position.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that witnesses should have the freedom to come before a committee under oath and to indicate what actually happened on that day, and I would encourage members on the government side of the House to stand with us, to support this motion, and to ensure that Manitobans—tax-paying Manitobans, hard-working Manitobans—get the truth as to what happened. And again I say if there's no fear of anything by this government, they should be supportive of a resolution that would clear the air and ensure that the truth comes out. If there's nothing to hide, if there's nothing to cover up, this is a resolution that should be supported by all members of this Legislature, and I would encourage members on the government side to stand up and speak to the resolution and vote with us later today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I would like to thank the member from Steinbach for bringing forward this motion. This motion is one that is important to the integrity of this House. Mr. Speaker, since I've become an MLA, I have heard you, the Speaker of this House, give warnings about the use

of unparliamentary language, as we are honourable members.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Well, that is what this motion is all about. It's all about honour and integrity. My uncle once told me if a person wouldn't lie, nobody would call them a liar. The member from Steinbach is asking for a special committee of the Legislative Assembly to be appointed to investigate the conduct that the First Minister and the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), with respect to the issuing of invitations to the provincial civil servants and immigration service providers, to attend a political debate in this House on April 19th, 2012, concerning immigration settlement services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to get to the bottom of this cover-up. Since April of 2012, the First Minister has put contradictory statements on the record in regards to this matter. He has refused to give clear answers as to when he knew the member for Riel misled the House.

The First Minister has refused to disclose his role in this cover-up. If the First Minister won't tell Manitobans the truth, we need to have an inquiry to get the truth. After all, it was the First Minister that, before the election of 2011, promised no tax increases. Read my lips: No new taxes. In the last three budgets of broken promises, we've had a lot of new tax increases.

The First Minister stated that it would be the death of settlement services when the federal government took it over. Well, that was nothing than—more than fearmongering. The First Minister and the member for Riel said that Manitoba's successful immigration model would be destroyed. This rhetoric was proven wrong. Our settlement services is doing better than ever, but neither the First Minister nor the member from—for Riel have apologized for misleading Manitobans about what would happen to settlement services.

A respected Winnipeg immigration lawyer wrote an article in the Winnipeg Free Press with a headline suggesting that the member for Riel was doubly wrong, first in misleading the House, and second in misleading immigrants about the changes to settlement services.

* (15:20)

There are all kinds of inconsistencies in both the First Minister's accounts of what has happened, and

the member from Riel's answers to what had happened, in regards to the rally at the Legislature in April of 2012. Their statements contradict each other. During an interview, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) stated that she was very disappointed in the First Minister and that the strategy was to deliberately cut me out of the process of response in order to protect him. On February 3rd, in a Free Press interview she said, throughout this whole exercise I have worked with senior political staff bringing information as it came to me. She also said, I was not acting alone; I was acting under the direction of senior political staff. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the First Minister and the member from Riel cannot both be telling the truth. Manitobans deserve to know the truth about what really happened.

To add more to this cover-up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a FIPPA was filed in 2012 asking for electronic correspondence pertaining to the April 19th, 2012, resolution debate—for all emails, all emails were not provided because when, in 2014, another freedom of information request for the same information—we were given a package which included clear evidence that the minister of Immigration directed the sending of the invitations. This sure looks like a cover-up to me.

All the information that has been brought forward to date points to a cover-up, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is reason we are asking for an inquiry. If we cannot be one hundred per cent confident in the access-to-information process, an inquiry is our last resort. Manitobans deserve the truth; they need to know what the truth is. This inquiry is to stop the politicizing of civil servants. We cannot have a situation where non-partisan civil servants are subject to manipulation and pressure from politicians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be great if this motion was not needed, but unfortunately the First Minister hasn't been honest; he has tried to cover up the truth.

I would ask all members opposite, support this motion, because I am sure that they all feel that the truth is necessary. I don't think that they all feel that they can just go around and not tell the truth. In order to achieve the truth, we need to have this inquiry and get all the information out so Manitobans can make a decision on what happened.

I would ask them all to vote for this motion in order to bring the truth out. Or do they not want the

truth, do they not care about the truth, or is the truth something that's not necessary for them? I don't know. I would ask them to vote for this motion.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to talk to this resolution. As a liberal Liberal member here, I support immigration in Manitoba. Immigration has given us tremendous, tremendous benefits, both in terms of economically, in terms of the people who have come here, in the terms of the connections that we now have with people around the world, in terms of the breadth of knowledge and understanding and interest in activities from Folklorama to economic missions, just a tremendous number of opportunities which result to us as Manitobans from the number of people who have come here to Manitoba as immigrants.

I put that in context because I think it's important to say that. And I think it's also important to say that I have supported services for new immigrants to help them adjust to their life in Canada. I have been concerned and raised issues from time to time about those services not being appropriately given or adequate and so on, but nevertheless they are very, very important and there's many people who work very hard in Manitoba to make sure that immigrants have some support here, and those individuals should be thanked and should be supported.

And as a Liberal, I support the provincial management of immigration programs. And, having said that, I want to make it clear that I do not support any government using civil servants to organize political rallies. I do not support a government minister writing an email to—I think it was not just one email or it was one email that went to more than 500, oh, the Ombudsman says at least 500 emails were sent from the department office to various ethnic organizations, settlement agencies, business and industry groups and language groups. An unknown number were distributed further by those original recipients. This was not just a single email to a single organization. This was a very, very broad and widespread email distributed to more than—well, 500 emails. This was not a small thing. This was a very large concerted effort.

And, as the Ombudsman talks about, you know, there was a political context here. The Ombudsman uses those words: There was a political context. And the Ombudsman describes that political context in terms of the division between what was happening with the provincial and the federal government,

and, of course, one government federally being Conservative and one government provincially being NDP. And into that political context, there were federal Conservative MPs who are here. And, of course, there were provincial NDP MLAs, as well as provincial Conservative MLAs and a provincial Liberal MLA. But it was a clearly, without question, a rally that was designed to be political and to build political support for the view of one side of this issue versus another. And if the members of the NDP, if they claim, right, thought that there was unanimity, well, clearly, they would have only had to know something about the Conservative Party and the Conservatives here to know that that wasn't the case. This government was either extremely, extremely naive, which I don't believe; I think that they were very manipulative in planning and that they organized this rally.

And the issue here, you know, is not just that the rally occurred, but that the way that gallery passes were orchestrated. Now, the Ombudsman couldn't find the civil servant who was involved with organizing gallery passes, but clearly, under the circumstances, and we've had some discussions already, that there needs to be a far better and more equitable way than happened on that particular day, when gallery passes were organized in such a partisan way by the government.

And so the government had organized gallery passes in a partisan way. The government, unless they were naive beyond belief, knew that this was a very political context. Even the Ombudsman says it was a political context and that it was a political rally. Now, notwithstanding my support for the Province keeping immigration services, what this government did in politicizing the civil service was terrible.

* (15:30)

And so the question here, really, that we are left with, given the facts of the Ombudsman report, given the things that we already know, is the extent to which the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his office have engaged in a cover-up. One of the critical emails was withheld for months and months, I think it's close to two years. The Premier knew, clearly long before he said anything publicly, about the role of the minister and his government in organizing and in directing the civil service to send out invitations to what they knew was a partisan political rally, so I think it's pretty clear that this matter warrants some further investigation.

It would've been one thing had the Premier, you know, apologized for what happened and apologized for not informing people early enough and had, you know, been clear, in terms of some of the facts of the case, about when he knew and exactly what his staff had done in discussing this at the time or ahead of time and what was said to other members of the NDP party in the caucus about their efforts to reach out to civil servants or use civil servants to reach out to people in the—who were providing immigration services and so on. So I think there's no doubt that an investigation here is warranted, and I would hope that, you know, the members all over this House would support that investigation. I mean, needs to be done so that the air can be cleared and we can move on from here. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Indeed, a pleasure to rise today to speak to the resolution brought forward in terms of the Opposition Day motion.

It really is, certainly, an interesting time in the Legislature here in Manitoba. In, certainly, my almost 10 years here now, it's interesting to see how things develop over the course of time. And certainly we see a lot of the ministers and certainly the First Minister taking some latitude with the truth, and this motion really speaks to the integrity of government or the lack thereof in terms of integrity of the government.

And clearly what we're doing here is we're simply asking to get to the bottom of this particular situation—whatever term you want to use in terms of this particular goings-on with the previous minister of Immigration and certainly the First Minister and the lack of integrity and certainly the lack of people's memories. They—we've got this selective lack of memory when it comes to this particular situation, and it certainly is troubling from our perspective. And I think many Manitobans would be troubled by that lack of memory and, certainly, lack of integrity. Clearly, all we're asking for today in this particular motion is that a special committee of the Assembly be appointed to investigate the conduct of the First Minister and the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick). And I think it's important that we have the opportunity, and this committee has the opportunity, to call witnesses and, certainly, hopefully, those witnesses would clarify who knew what in this fiasco and when they knew it. Manitobans certainly deserve transparency, they deserve accountability from their government and, certainly, they should seek honesty from their government as well.

I would hope the members opposite would certainly consider how they're going to vote on this motion. This would go a long way in terms of clearing up any issues that they may have. I'm sure a lot of the members over there would like to hear the real story and hear who knew what when, when this whole thing has unfolded over the course of the last two years.

And I'm sure if we went back in history—it's two years ago—I'm sure it's something that the current government would not have brought forward as a resolution to the Chamber to debate. Clearly, the federal government was taking issue with how the government of Manitoba were handling the settlement services, and clearly the government recognized there was an issue in terms of how the NDP were managing that particular service. And we've seen NDP mismanagement here in Manitoba on several fronts over the last number of years and clearly the federal government recognized that there was a better job could be done for settlement services and certainly a better job could be done for the immigrants coming to Manitoba.

In fact, we've heard some very good things. Some things have changed and we've heard very positive comments as of late as a result of those changes. So, clearly, there was a need for some changes to the system, and we're hearing good things and favourable comments as a result of those changes.

It certainly appears that we've got a cover-up in process here. You know, we've got documents gone missing and then the Ombudsman finds documents and provides to the public. It certainly appears that there is a cover-up, in terms of what they—the government's trying to hide here. And certainly, with the loss of memory, both in the First Minister's case and the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), we'd like to get to the bottom and actually see what the facts of the matter are, instead of people second-guessing what transpired over the course of time.

Now, this situation, in my mind, resembles a lot what happened a number of years ago in Manitoba and, in fact, the First Minister was deeply involved in that situation. Back then he was the minister of Finance, and I'm bringing you back in history a few years, that's when I first came to the Legislature and the whole idea of the Crocus fiasco was just starting to unravel. And ultimately the Auditor General brought forward a report on the Crocus Investment Fund, and we know what happened with the Crocus

Investment Fund, but to this day we're still not sure who knew what when. Even with the Auditor General's report, we didn't get all the details of that, and clearly the First Minister was quite involved in that, as the minister of Finance at the time.

So that whole situation really resembles a lot of what has transpired with this particular process over the last two years, and I think Manitobans would—they would love to know really what happened back in the Crocus fiasco. Who knew what, where, when? What did the minister of Finance know at the time? When did the Premier know at the time that that particular fund was on its last legs? And that's something that Manitobans would like to know. We certainly, as legislators, would like to know.

And we would like to know what happened in this particular case, as it unfolded over the last two years. Who knew what, when? And when did the cover-up start? And who was involved in the cover-up? How many ministers were involved in that cover-up? And that's pretty basic transparency, I think, to Manitobans, and that's what the NDP, you know, they claim to be transparent, they claim to be accountable but, at the end of the day, they're still hiding behind the facts. And, if they really were going to be accountable and transparent, they would vote in favour of moving this resolution forward.

We also know the government has really—is really hiding behind civil servants and it's very unfortunate that they would do that. We think the government should be there to protect the civil service, to make sure that the civil service has the ability to do their jobs. And that's certainly something that I think Manitobans would ask for. We certainly ask for it, and the civil servants should expect that a government would be there to protect their interests as well, and not hide behind what they're trying to do.

We've also seen it's—whatever the question of the day is, it's never the NDP's fault. They're never—own up to anything that goes wrong and it's very unfortunate. There's always somebody else's fault. Whether it's the federal government's fault, whether it's the government in the 1990s, whether it's their fault, it's always somebody else's fault. We even heard today that, you know, we didn't get our budget spent on infrastructure because we had some bad weather. Well, other provinces have been able to hit their budgeted targets and had the same weather as we do, in fact, right next door in Saskatchewan. So it's easy to blame somebody else. But when things go

sideways, we would hope that the government would stand up and say, you know, we—we're responsible here, we're the government, we were elected to be responsible and take responsibility when things go wrong. But, unfortunately, they're not doing that, and that's why we've had to resort to bring this particular resolution forward.

* (15:40)

Now we know how the NDP operate and we know what happened last election. We know what's going to happen next election. It's going to be a campaign of fear, and we're hearing that campaign of fear every day here in question period. The campaign of fear has begun because they are going back to the 1990s and saying that everything went sideways in the 1990s. They're still recovering 15 years later. Accusations of everything under the sun coming forward that we are going to do if we get elected in the next election.

And I don't even have to talk about Manitoba Hydro and some of the accusations that they're throwing out there, saying that we're going to run out of power by the year 2020, well, when the experts are telling us it's probably 2030 or maybe even 2038.

So we know the campaign of fear has started; it's started on just about every front imaginable. And I guess at the end of the day it will be up to Manitobans to decide who they believe, at the end of the day. And we're just providing the opportunity for the NDP to come clean on this one particular issue, and it's a serious issue regarding integrity of the First Minister and other ministers in this particular situation.

So we're asking the government to come clean. Let's get a committee of the Legislature. Let's call some witnesses. Let's get to the bottom of this so that we know the facts, so that Manitobans know the facts, and then we can move ahead and put this behind us and move ahead and let's talk about integrity down the road. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): It's my pleasure to rise today and to put some words on the record with respect to this action that we are calling for, and, indeed, as my colleague just indicated, it's unfortunate that we have to actually resort to this kind of action. We did not need to be in this position. Indeed, it is the NDP government that has led to this. We feel compelled at this point to take action and to call for this because the government has not been forthcoming. They have missed every opportunity

with which they have been presented to come clean. They could have made this issue go away. They could have acted with integrity, but instead they chose a path of deceit. They chose a path of cover-up. They chose a path of concealing what actually had taken place and, indeed, what we see is that, as a result, it has been a twisted and contorted path of trying to remember what has been said and it's led to some very uncomfortable moments in this Legislature for members of this government.

It has made—led to some very uncomfortable moments for the First Minister. It's led to some very uncomfortable moments when they've been facing media and having to give an answer, and I—indeed, day after day, as our Leader of the Opposition party questioned this First Minister and to hear the rationale change, day by day, and to hear when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said he knew, he first learned that the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) had sent an email through a civil servant, inviting people to the Legislature for clearly what was a political rally. And the reports offered by this First Minister, the explanations are varying: at one point in time claiming that summer was the first time he became aware of the—his minister's actions; at other times, claiming it was early as spring that he suspected that that minister would have something to answer for; and in other places, with other media sources, indicating it was the fall. Indeed, he basically pointed to every season apart from one in which he first became known. And, at the outset, we all know, and I know, that my colleagues have established well how it was that at the outset this action should never have been undertaken.

We know that there have been many words put on the record in this Legislature about the fact that at no point in time, ever, should a civil servant have been tasked with such a task as which—what was presented in this situation. It was clearly unfortunate; it was clearly a breach of what would have been considered to be the function of a civil service—servant in their capacity; to be tasked with this would have been enormously difficult. It would have been enormously a stretch, and I can only imagine that in this case, this deputy minister, must have been very uncomfortable with the task handed to him by this—by his political master. Should have never happened. And the best—the next best thing would have been if the minister had stood the next day, if the minister had offered an apology and, indeed, in so many cases, and in so many contexts, what we have seen is that this government has become arrogant and

self-serving after time, and perhaps this just happens after being in power for 14 years. But where apologies should have been offered, no apology was forthcoming, and instead they dig and they dig and they dig deeper in order avoid transparency.

It seems that in this case, though, so long as the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), the former minister, chose not to remember, there were no ramifications to her actions, there were no penalties, there was no form of discipline. It was only when the former minister began to remember what she had done, in instructing a civil servant to send that email for a political rally, that was the point at—in time that all of a sudden, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had a problem with his minister's actions. That has—that is tremendously difficult for us to accept. It is difficult for Manitobans to accept. It should not have been done in any case.

But we are concerned, as we have said, day after day after day, not only for the issues of integrity, which are clear here, on the part of the First Minister, on the part of his senior ministers of Cabinet, on the part of the former minister for Immigration, but we are concerned that, in this case, the reputation of a civil servant was allowed to be tarnished for such a long period of time. Clearly, there was a point in time, we would assert, very early on in this process, where the Premier knew. And, at that point in time, he could have dispelled any myth that the deputy minister acted alone—did this on his own—it was his own doing.

The fact that that was not undertaken, the fact that the integrity of that deputy minister continued to be questioned for six months, and then a year, and then almost 18 months before the release of the Ombudsman's report, should be deeply concerning for every civil servant in this process, that the government would hide behind the civil servants, that they would duck for cover behind exactly those individuals who make this their life's work, who do this work many times in this place. They will not be recognized. Many days go by where they are not recognized for the hard work they do behind the scenes.

I know that in the Estimates process, in the concurrence process, we do try to take the time to recognize the hard-working civil service throughout government. But, in cases like this, I can only imagine the ripple of fear that that sends through the entire civil service. And for them now to realize that the minister—the First Minister, the Premier of this

province—was in possession of the facts in this case long before he spoke about it publicly. At one point, he said, well, the reason I didn't speak is I didn't want to jeopardize the Ombudsman's report. At one point in time, another member of this House, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) had said, I'm sure that what the minister for Immigration was doing, is, that minister didn't want to jeopardize the Ombudsman's report. All of these explanations were wanting. All of them were insufficient to explain what actually went on. And, in all of them, it does not provide any vindication for the civil servant in this case. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a huge problem.

We know how this story has unfolded. I know that you know it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know that at the point in time when the minister—when the member for Riel stood up and challenged the version of the facts that the First Minister was putting on the record, that was the point in time when there was sanction. That was the point in time in which there was discipline. That was the point in time when there was a cutting off and a severance, and she was made to go sit at another place in the wilderness in this Chamber. And, that is very, very disappointing.

* (15:50)

Here's what I'd like to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the root of this issue—at the root of this issue—was the NDP government's charge that the federal government's changes to the program were going to completely annihilate the success of our MPNP program. And I submit to you that it is anything but that case. I say this because in the months that have followed, and in the almost two years now that have followed, I have had the opportunity, as have my colleagues, to go back into those Settlement Services offices, into these agencies and groups who are delivering these services front lines. And, when we asked them the question, what is the quality of the work you can now perform, they say it is unchanged. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, if more time were afforded me, I would speak at length about the fact that even in my communities of Morden and Winkler, they continue to say they have a new boss, but the programs and the quality of the programs that they deliver on behalf of immigrants in the community are strong, as strong as ever. And that has been the report from community.

So, again, it is a legacy of fearmongering on the part of this government. It is a legacy of throwing the federal government under the bus and, indeed, now it occurs that the First Minister is only too happy and

only too eager to throw his own ministers under the bus. And I would submit that any minister or backbencher on that side should be afraid. They should be very afraid because they could be next.

And, in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there are others who want to speak on this motion. We arrive at this point, unfortunately, because of the inaction of this government, their failure to stand up, their failure to set the record straight, their failure to act in integrity. That's why we're here. That's why we're calling for this action and we call on this government to support this.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the MLA for Steinbach for bringing up this motion forward regarding this motion, and I just want to let you know that during this whole time in 2012, when this all happened I was in private business myself, and what we find that a lot of similarities between business and private sector is that, you know, when you're a true leader, you're going to have to take responsibilities and provide trust and take all into responsibilities of anything that happens with your fellow employees, or if it comes to your ministers or to your—the civil servants, you have to take responsibility, and I believe that the integrity that's very important to this day and age is that shows a true leader.

In this case, with our First Minister, in this case demonstrated that he did not come forward to take responsibility when it came for the deception that this NDP government had done and to putting a civil servant in the—under the bus was very—wasn't very good practice when it comes to a true leadership, and I just believe that it's disgusting that this has had to happen to this civil servant.

In my case, I would never put an employee into—under the bus. I always took full responsibility for anything that ever happened in our organization, and I feel the residents of Manitoba deserve more than the truth when it came to the integrity of this government.

I believe that it's important—that the important thing in this day and age is the immigration that comes to our province for jobs and for growth in our economy, and then to actually demonstrate a deception to—against the integrity of this government.

I really do believe that we should be more responsible, and this government has to come forward and, of course, with the emails and the control that this government—the leader had with

his own minister, basically, again, coming into this government. I really feel embarrassed that we actually—we're all painted maybe with the same brush. We need integrity. We want to show the public that we are here to serve the residents of Manitoba and we want to continue going forward and I believe that we should not put people into that situation, especially when it comes to employees of the government. And I think, again, to be a true leader you have to demonstrate to the public that this is so important that we take full responsibilities.

And I'd like to make this motion that we go forward on this and, hopefully, the other side of the Chamber here will actually be in favour of what we want to put forward here today.

And I think it's so important to show the public that we're here to serve them and to show that there's a truth and true leadership when it comes to the truth and then we create the trust when we actually tell the truth to the public.

And it really disappoints me that we have to be here today to even discuss this matter and, actually, this cover-up that the NDP has done. This government is very arrogant. That's what I find since I came into office here. I feel that they believe that nothing is immune for—to them. I still believe that we still have to have integrity when we're leaders. And, again, I would like to support this resolution and to go forward and to have a vote. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, will please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, will please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Deputy Speaker, recorded vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The question before the House is the motion brought forward by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Does the House wish to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Yes? Okay. The motion reads as follows: That a special committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed to investigate the conduct of the First Minister and the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) with respect to the issuing of invitations to provincial civil servants and immigration service providers to attend a political debate in this House on April 19th, 2012, concerning immigration settlement services; and that this committee be comprised equally of government and opposition members, have the power to call witnesses, including the First Minister, members of Executive Council and the government caucus, as well as political staff, civil

servants, and be able to receive testimony of witnesses under oath.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Martin, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Blady, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Struthers, Swan, Wiebe, Wight.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 19, Nays 28.

Mr. Speaker: The motion is accordingly defeated.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Would you canvass the House to see if there's agreement to call it 5 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

This House is adjourned, stands adjourned until Tuesday, April 22nd, at 10 a.m.

Happy Easter to everyone.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 17, 2014

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