

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

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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 3, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bill Jost

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, Wildwood Park is a vibrant, picturesque community in Fort Garry. At the heart of this incredible neighbourhood is the Wildwood Park Community Centre, which, like every other community centre in Winnipeg, serves as the locus of community building by offering sports, cultural and recreation services to local residents. It's no secret that community centres depend largely on volunteers who generously give their time to ensure that the centre continues to thrive and serve the community.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I am exceedingly pleased to pay tribute to one of the—those volunteers who has selflessly given his time, energy and probably a little piece of his soul to the Wildwood community centre over many, many years. On November 14th, the General Council of Winnipeg Community Centres honoured Mr. Bill Jost, long-time president of the Winnipeg community centre, with the Above & Beyond award for his years of dedication to the centre. The council praised Bill as a hard-working and long-standing volunteer worthy of special recognition.

Throughout his many years as a volunteer at Wildwood, Bill has certainly taken on the everyday jobs of snow removal, cleaning up after hockey games and practices and putting up new boards for the rink. He also acted as president of the community centre for 11 years, a responsibility he excelled at because of his good sense of humour and patience. During his time as president, Bill perfected the art of the grant application, resulting in many community centre improvements. Under Bill's watch, Wildwood was able to install new windows, new rink lights, new washrooms and new floors.

Bill's dedication to our community started a long time before he got credit for it. Bill drew his inspiration from his father Fred, who flooded ice for hockey rinks, built a toboggan slide and did all kinds of maintenance work for Wildwood in the 1960s. When Bill moved his own family back into the area, he promptly got together with others to start a Jackrabbits hockey program at the centre. There's clearly a tradition of helping out in Bill's family because his daughter, Delaney, volunteered as a goalie in between playing for her own team.

Wildwood Park Community Centre is blessed with generous, active and creative people like Bill Jost. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bill for all his tremendous efforts and to all the volunteers who make this place thrive.

Thank you so much.

Long-Term-Care Beds

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, far, far too many Manitobans are forced to live out their final years in communities that are far from their home and far from their families because of the shortage of personal-care-home beds in Manitoba, which can only be described as a crisis. This is also true in the city of Steinbach where, in the third largest city in Manitoba, many people are forced to leave their home at the end of their time.

Like other members of this Assembly, I've heard the heartbreaking stories of residents who are separated from their family, separated from their friends and separated from their community because there is no room for them closer to home in their elderly years.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome to the Assembly Jane Penner, Len Penner and Brenda Ward, who not only heard these heartbreaking stories but decided to give those stories a voice. Led by Jane, they began reaching out to local leaders and residents. In fact, the rural municipality of Ste. Anne, which is located in the constituency of Dawson Trail, passed a resolution in support of more long-term-care beds in the Steinbach region. The RM of Hanover, representing three different constituencies, passed a similar resolution, as did the City of Steinbach. I will table for the House copies of those municipal resolutions at the conclusion of my statement.

But, Mr. Speaker, Jane went a little bit further. Together with others she began to engage residents from the southeast and beyond with a petition. And she gathered 50 signatures and then 100 and then 1,000 and then 2,000. And today I would like to table for the House three and a half thousand Manitoba signatures, asking for more personal-care-home beds in Steinbach to serve the southeast.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba needs a government that has a long-term and dedicated plan for new personal-care-home beds. Our seniors and their families deserve nothing less.

Thank you, Jane, for your team—and your team for giving a voice to these thousands of Manitobans. Your energy and your passion is appreciated.

Firefighters and Paramedics

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, my wife will not be here today if it were not for that outstanding response of Winnipeg's firefighter paramedics and paramedics. They are ordinary people like you and me, but they do extraordinary things.

At 2 a.m. on January the 3rd, after my wife had settled in for the night, my wife started to have all the symptoms of a heart attack. It was clear she needed emergency medical attention and she needed it fast. Thanks to the amazing response time and training of our firefighter paramedics and paramedics, Mr. Speaker, my wife is still here. The co-ordination, teamwork and professionalism of those brave front-line workers was incredible. It has reminded me once again that we must keep investing in vital services that all Manitobans rely on.

Our dedicated emergency first responders risk their lives to save others and endure some of the greatest occupational stress imaginable. I'm proud our NDP team passed legislation that helps people who experience traumatic events in the workplace heal and return to work.

Today, we have members of both the Paramedic Association of Manitoba and the Winnipeg fire department in the gallery.

Friends, without my wife, I would not be where I am today. And so, from the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank you and all of the brave men and women who fight fires and save lives in Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

Fred Neil

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today in the Chamber to speak out on behalf of Fred Neil who is the dairy farmer that lost over 180 dairy cattle, resulting in a over \$1-million financial loss in the 2011 flood.

Mr. Speaker, in May 2011, Mr. Neil and his family were informed of a mandatory evacuation by this NDP government due to the rising Souris River. Instead of building a ring dike between his barn and the river which would save the farm, Neils were forced to move all their 340 cows to another farm in the area until the flood waters subsided. This government missed forecasting the Souris River levels and the Neils should have been able to remain at their farm.

To date, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Neil has received less than 10 per cent of his total financial loss from DFA. As many as 15 of his cattle—dairy cattle died due to stress of the move. Another 180 dairy cattle died from a virus that was acquired at one of the farms where they were relocated.

Mr. Speaker, people like Mr. Fred Neil are the backbone of this province economy. His operation has created jobs and has paid into the provincial income tax for many years. And now, Mr. Neil's bank has been pressuring him to either—to repay back the debt due to the financial loss, or sell the family farm.

Mr. Speaker, not only—not one of these members opposite will understand what Mr. Neil is going through. Very few of the NDP members have ever ran a business or even taken a risk to create a business, let alone go through a natural disaster which has been taking away their livelihood.

Hopefully karma will catch up to this Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his NDP caucus on April 19th.

Thank you.

* (13:40)

Pam Jansen

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is so important for schools to provide a safe space for students to share their experience and practise critical thinking. River East Transcona School Division's community programming co-ordinator for youth, Pam Jansen, has been creating programs that build students'

confidence, critical thinking and self-esteem for the past eight years.

During her time in River East Transcona School Division, Pam has initiated a number of programs across the schools in the division including girls' clubs which brings girls together to build confidence, to learn about empowerment and the issues faced by women and girls. A few years ago, the girls' club selected Plan Canada's Because I am a Girl campaign both to fundraise and to study the rights of girls and women worldwide.

I recently had the privilege of sitting in on one of Pam's goddess retreats. These are daylong workshops for girls from grades 6 to 12 can discuss the concerns of young women and girls. Topics include body image, self-esteem and social justice issues. The retreat I attended was called Love Your Selfie and was themed around how girls and women are portrayed in the media. The girls had a lively discussion about modern beauty standards and engaged in group activities about media awareness. Not only did the students offer insightful comments and observations, they were keen to share their own personal experiences. I heard incredibly positive and inclusive conversations between the students.

The goddess retreats are just one of many innovative programs Pam has developed for River East Transcona School Division. A self-esteem campaign called the Craftastics encourage girls to create a superhero alter ego that helped others. Her VolunTeen programs encourage students to start volunteering early on and make connections.

Her hard work and dedication are to be commended. In 2014 Pam was nominated for the YMCA Women of Distinction Award. Through her work she has become an authority on making schools more inclusive and supportive to students. In her work to connect students to role models, Pam herself has become a superb role model in the community.

As Pam moves on to new pursuits, she has left a legacy of innovation and creativity in River East Transcona School Division.

Along with all members, I extend a heartfelt thank you for your exceptional work with young people.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And just prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members

to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Louise Maciejkow. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

And also in the public gallery we have Bill and Rose-Ann Jost and their daughter Delaney, and Cindy Miller, the president of the Wildwood community club, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum).

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

And also in the public gallery this afternoon we have Travis Boehr. Some of you may remember Travis; he was one of our pages here in the year 2008-2009. Of course, Travis has moved on from the Assembly and he is currently engaged in the agricultural industry in his hometown of Grunthal, Manitoba.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases Apology Request

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Apologies can be good for the soul. They involve sincerity and completeness, and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had launched an apology initiative last week, and I commend him for doing so. Now, the Premier's so-called apology, however, involved quite a bit more self-congratulations than contrition.

So, given the fact that the Premier is wanting to do this apology thing, I would want to encourage him to do it properly and well.

Would the Premier stand in his place today and apologize for the fact that just prior to the last election he had committed to Manitobans he wouldn't raise any of their taxes for five years, and then he imposed the largest tax hike on Manitobans that they'd ever seen just in the few months thereafter? Would the Premier like to apologize to Manitobans for their hurt he caused them when he broke his promise just prior to the last election?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I, as a member of this government and this House, have long advocated that when errors and mistakes are made, you ought to apologize. That's been the procedure in this Chamber. In fact, we've even passed in this Legislature an Apology Act.

In fact, we did something when we became Department of Health where we started to indicate when mistakes were made in the health-care sector. We opened them up. We didn't hide them. We didn't move patients from hospital to hospital so that the media wouldn't find out that a patient died, as happened during my tenure when I was in opposition. We didn't do that. We opened it up so everyone knew.

Apologies are important; apologies done sincerely are important.

I would be the first to ask, and I'll apologize any time I make a mistake, but I do not recall in my entire time in this Legislature the Leader of the Opposition, despite making many errors and statements that are totally inaccurate, not once apologizing in this Chamber. Never in my life have I seen that member apologize in this Chamber even though I have seen him say things and do things that I surely would have apologized for.

Mr. Pallister: I encourage the member to apologize at any time he feels is appropriate.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also noticed that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) did not apologize when I asked him if he would in respect of his broken promises. I noticed the government is resentful and fearful, and pushes back at every opportunity. But if they are sincere in this desire for attrition and forgiveness, then they should apologize when they do things they promised they would not. And in the case of this tax hike, they promised they would not hike the taxes. The Premier and his colleagues who ran for office in the last campaign all went to the doors, they all knocked on Manitobans' homes, looked people in the eye and said, we will not raise your taxes, and then they did.

And, Mr. Speaker, we now know that this government was looking at raising the taxes just before the election. They were looking at raising the PST not just to 8 but to 9 per cent. Now, when a government promises hard-working Manitobans no new taxes, you would hope they would deliver, but they did not.

Would the Premier stand in his place and apologize for breaking the trust of Manitobans by taxing their workplace benefits after the last election when he promised he would not?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about sincerity. Let's talk about honesty, and I'll talk to the entire Chamber.

There's a conference going in British Columbia that has all of the premiers of the country and the Prime Minister there, Mr. Speaker, and our so-sincere Leader of the Opposition has the gall to stand up and demand something from the Premier of Manitoba, knowing full well that right now our Premier is fighting for the environment, fighting for First Nations, fighting for financial parity, fighting for an inclusive Canada where we can work together—and he stands up when he knows he can't do that.

That is so the heights of the arrogance and the pomposity and the phoniness of the Leader of the Opposition. How phony can he be?

Mr. Speaker: I'm sure the honourable Minister of Mineral Resources knows, as all members of the Assembly do, that—the rules that we have with respect to parliamentary and unparliamentary language.

And while the words that were chosen by the honourable minister were directed at another member of the Assembly, which I think is inappropriate, I'm going to ask the honourable Minister of Mineral Resources to please apologize to the House for the use of the words that he chose.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation whatsoever for apologizing for using those words in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable minister for that and I hope other members will be guided by the parliamentary language that—the rules that we have in place here.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, to continue.

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the gracious apology of the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and accept it.

Now, I would say I also, Mr. Speaker, I'll go further than that and say I understand that he is angry and I understand that he is frustrated, and I understand also that he is afraid. I understand all

those things. But he needs to understand, and his colleagues must understand as well, that this anger and frustration they feel is a fraction of the anger and the frustration and the fear that Manitobans feel.

No sincere apologies today from the NDP government, just a PR campaign pretending to apologize. But even if they did—even if they did—apologize, who would actually believe them, because these days the NDP caucus doesn't even believe one another?

* (13:50)

And when they promised—they went to the doors and they promised people they wouldn't raise their taxes. And they took, on average since that promise was made, \$5,000 out of every Manitoban's pocket in just broken-promise additional taxes: on their benefits, on their home insurance and on their PST, \$5,000 of broken promises.

Would the Premier (Mr. Selinger) or some designate on that side of the House please stand and apologize to Manitobans who are angry, frustrated and afraid, for taking \$5,000—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid for the nurses of this province. I'm afraid for the teachers of this province. I'm afraid for the senior citizens of the province. I'm afraid for people of—in the home-care system people of this province. I'm afraid for daycare workers in this province. I'm afraid for low-income workers in this province. I'm afraid for indigenous peoples in the province.

I am very, very afraid if we let that extreme member, that extreme right-wing member, who quit his party and ran federally, who ran for the Reform Party leadership, who then flipped over to the Conservative Party, wasn't put in the Conservative Party candidate, then quit, then came here, and that by acclamation in a secret meeting became leader. I'm very afraid that he may be—heaven help us if that man becomes leader and Premier of this province. I am very afraid if that man has even the hope of becoming Premier of this province.

Spring Budget 2016 Delivery Promise

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is afraid because he knows that

Manitobans just don't believe anything they say anymore.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister said in September there will be a budget next spring, definitely. When people go to the polls, they will know our plan. He even went out and held budget consultation meetings with the public. Now, that's fine, but there's no budget. He doesn't want Manitobans to know that the result of the NDP's overzealous spending pledges is undoubtedly higher taxes for Manitobans.

Will the Premier and will the NDP apologize to Manitobans for not delivering a budget?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I—the member talked about a budget consultation process. I want to thank the hundreds of Manitobans who attended those. I want to thank the literally thousands of Manitobans who participated in the telephone town hall event with myself and the Premier, as well as the hundreds of Manitobans who responded to us, to our request for their input into the plan that we will be delivering to this House next week.

I'll contrast that to, Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite did their budget consultation meetings. They did them behind closed doors. The public wasn't invited. In fact, the Finance minister didn't even attend. I'll take our approach over theirs any day.

Fiscal Targets

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, he told people they were consulting on a budget and then he didn't bring a budget. That's a breach of trust, again.

Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the NDP said they had a plan to return to balance in 2014. In 2012, they said they were on track. Well, they broke their word. They set a new target for 2016, and the Finance Minister broke that promise, too. He called his own forecast an arbitrary target that he would not meet.

Mr. Speaker, what's the result now? The deficit is up 30 per cent and spending is up \$139 million over the budget. It's clear that this NDP is not focused on what matters most to Manitobans. They're focused on themselves.

Will the NDP apologize to Manitobans for breaking their word and failing to meet every fiscal target that they ever set out?

Mr. Dewar: We want to apologize, Mr. Speaker, for the fact that last year we had to fight 454 forest fires here in the province of Manitoba, and I want to take the opportunity today to thank the men and women who were involved in that fight, as you can only imagine the difficulty that's involved with that. I want to thank them.

The Leader of the Opposition and his critic may not care about men and women who are out there fighting our forest fires, but we do. It required an additional expense of about \$30 million, and in the province of Saskatchewan it was around \$100 million more. I will note to the member that the Saskatchewan government initially said that their budget was going to contain \$100 million surplus. In fact, it was released last week, it will be close to almost a \$500-million deficit.

I'll also remind the House that, Mr. Speaker, it's always been our philosophy on this side of the House to return to surplus in a responsible way, and that is our plan.

Hydro Expansion Rate Increases

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Manitobans were misled by every member opposite in the last election. They went to every household, every apartment, every senior home and told them that Bipole III and Keeyask would not cost them one cent. Instead, Manitobans' rates are going to double, if not triple, over the next number of years.

Will the minister apologize to all Manitobans by doubling and tripling the rates in years to come?

Hon. James Allum (Acting Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, what the member always conveniently forgets to say when he stands up to talk about hydro is that in Manitoba we have among the lowest hydro rates in the country. And when we put that together with home heating and when we put that together with car insurance, we have the lowest bundle of utility bills in the country.

For the third straight day in a row, the member opposite has put the opposition's plan to privatize Hydro on the public agenda. We see it for what it is; we know what it is. The member wants to turn the lights off on Manitobans. He wants to put them out in the cold. We're going to keep Manitoba Hydro public for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, hydro rates have increased by 30 per cent since the First Minister

has become the leader of this NDP government. Manitobans cannot afford this spendDP government.

Mr. Speaker, will the First Minister apologize to all Manitobans for raising the rates at twice the rate of inflation?

Mr. Allum: Well Mr. Speaker, we invest in hydro for a number of reasons. One, it's a public utility owned by the people of Manitoba for the people of Manitoba. It provides clean, renewable, green energy that can be used for generations to come in order to ensure that we have a safe and healthy environment for generations to come.

The member opposite and his leader have a plan to privatize Hydro in the same way they want to privatize child care and in the same way the Liberals want to privatize the Liquor & Lotteries. Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we will defend public assets and the public benefits of Hydro for clean energy and good jobs for Manitobans.

Health-Care Services ER Wait Times

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are the victims of the longest ER waits in Canada not once, but two years in a row.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious patient safety concern, but the Premier (Mr. Selinger) seemed to have forgotten to apologize for that in his apology ad. I guess it slipped his mind.

So I would like to ask the Minister of Health today: Would she apologize to Manitobans who face the longest ER waits in all of Canada?

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

Manitobans are always looking for the best quality of care, and we on this side of the House have been working with them on that. That's why we have done everything from ensuring that not only the doctors that fled under their watch came back, we've increased the number of doctors.

And as far as ER wait times go, Mr. Speaker, we have been investing in emergency departments. We have been working and we will continue to work with Manitobans. And I wonder if the member opposite would like to apologize for the closure of the Grace Hospital emergency department on her time in the 1990s.

Doctor Retention Rates

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the worst doctor retention rate in Canada. Doctors come here, but they don't want to stay. Under this government, over 2,300 doctors have fled this province. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) forgot to apologize about that in his ad too, especially for the thousands of Manitobans who still do not have a doctor today.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health today: Would she apologize to Manitobans for failing to put in place a plan that would encourage doctors to want to stay in Manitoba and look after patients here and not flee like they're doing under her watch?

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

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put a few facts on the record to assure Manitobans, because, again, our new family doc finder has already connected over 48,000 Manitobans with a doctor or nurse practitioner. To date, 95 per cent of applicants have been matched up with a doctor.

*(14:00)

And we've already fulfilled our commitment to add 200 more doctors. We've added 276 since the 2011 election, and there are more doctors working in Manitoba than ever before. And our plan is to recruit and retain even more, because today there are more than 2,116 physicians practising in Winnipeg alone, and last year we saw the largest graduating class in our medical school's history with 109 new graduates.

So we are doing more to keep working with doctors, unlike members opposite who cut the number of medical classes. Are they going to apologize for that?

Aboriginal Students Graduation Rates

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General recently stated that the percentage of Manitoba Aboriginal students that complete high school is 55 per cent, which just so happens to be 2 per cent less than reported in 2010. The NDP government is going in absolutely the wrong direction.

Will the Minister of Education and his NDP government apologize to our Aboriginal students for his and the Premier's poor leadership when it comes to Aboriginal graduation rates?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member finally has some interest in indigenous education.

On this side of the House we continue to invest in the things that will make for a strong public education system for all Manitoba students, but in particular for indigenous students. We know that there's more to be accomplished in that regard, but let's remember that Manitoba's graduation rate when it comes to indigenous students is greater than it is in Alberta; it's greater than it is in Saskatchewan.

We need to keep improving, Mr. Speaker. That's why we put in place funding for the Aboriginal academic achievement that will now be just about \$10 million this year. We put in \$500,000 for transitional services when kids are coming off reserve into the public system.

And I have no doubt that when it came time, the member opposite would vote against those things because they don't believe in investing in public education. They don't believe in smaller class sizes. They don't believe in more teachers. In fact, they don't believe in public education at all.

Student Financial Aid System Implementation Timeline

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I'm a teacher, 22 years. What's wrong with you?

Mr. Speaker, a new student financial aid software—[interjection] I'll wait 'til the peanut gallery's done chirping over there.

So the new student financial aid software was supposed to be up and running by the end of June 2011, and the budget for that was \$12 million. As of today, we know that the costs have exploded to about \$30 million. This is yet another example and evidence that under the Selinger government Manitobans are paying more, and in this particular case they're getting absolutely nothing.

I ask the Minister of Education today: Will he apologize to hard-working Manitobans and tell them why the \$30-million student financial aid software program is still not up and running?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is bragging that he's been a teacher for 22 years; then he should apologize as a teacher for voting against the most progressive antibullying

legislation in the country. As a teacher for 22 years, he should apologize for voting against investments in public schools, for indigenous learners, for newcomers and for every child in Manitoba. He should apologize for voting against small class sizes that provide that one-on-one time between a teacher and a student. He should apologize for voting against new gyms, new schools, new science labs that make the capital—make our school infrastructure stronger and more durable for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I know he believes all those things, and yet he votes against them. So I suggest to him, he has more questions for his leader and his plan to cut \$500 million from the budget than he has for me. He ought to be ashamed of himself.

Child and Family Services Government Management Record

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I know the Province is embarrassed by the high number of children in the child-welfare system. Why else would they try and change the way the children are counted? Perhaps they should apologize to Manitobans for this.

But the apology this government really owes is to the children themselves for the treatment they received from this government's child-welfare services.

Who will apologize to each and every one of these children for the services they didn't get from this failing child-welfare system?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, every day there are hard-working Manitobans that are dedicating their lives to support Manitoba families. They are working side by side to ensure they have the services and the supports that they need.

We will not apologize for protecting children that are in the need of protection, but we will continue to focus on prevention so that doesn't have to happen, and make sure that we work on reunification, make sure that we implement new strategies and new initiatives that recognize the traditional way such as customary care. We're going to do that.

I ask the member opposite: Will his caucus apologize for not implementing anything from the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, from slashing family services by millions and then reducing support to

children 16 and 17 years old by 25 per cent? Shame on them.

Child Poverty Rate Manitoba Numbers

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, this province's ALL Aboard strategy was supposed to reduce child poverty in this province. Instead, child poverty rates have increased, leaving Manitoba with the highest child-poverty rates of any province in Canada at 29 per cent.

Whom in this government is prepared to apologize to the thousands of Manitoba children living in poverty, and will it help?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, we work consistently with all the not-for-profit organizations, with community groups to address the issue of poverty. Addressing the issue of poverty is multifaceted. It's about making sure that we have a strong economy, making sure that we have jobs, making sure that we have a strong education system.

I, again, ask the members across: Are they going to apologize for what they have promised around slashing \$500 million from the budget and be realistic about what will that do for poverty, as also privatizing daycare, privatizing the not-for-profit organization that will create concerns for all Manitoba families?

We're going to continue to work to address poverty by working together to improve housing and ensuring that we have one of the strongest economies.

Dedicated Stroke Unit Government Intention

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, it is 2016. Dramatically improved treatment for individuals who suffer a stroke, including the use of dedicated stroke units, has been developed and implemented in all other provinces but Manitoba. Stroke units have been shown to significantly reduce disability and death from stroke, which is probably why Manitobans' outcomes for stroke are comparatively poor.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Why is it that now, decades after the first dedicated stroke unit in Canada was introduced in the 1970s, that Manitoba still doesn't have a dedicated comprehensive stroke unit?

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

I can assure the member, and all Manitobans, that we actually work with the Heart and Stroke Foundation to put their recommendations into practice regularly, and we'll do it again. Earlier this year we expanded Telestroke to Thompson and The Pas to provide better emergency care for stroke patients in northern Manitoba. We'll be expanding that to more sites.

Mr. Speaker, we've also provided money this year to their Heart and Stroke Foundation's FAST stroke awareness program, and that work is already under way to make a dedicated stroke unit a reality in Manitoba. We've met with the Heart and Stroke Foundation about this unit, and I do agree it's a direction we need to head; it's the direction this government will head.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, instead of slow down, slow down, a Liberal government on April 19th will put a top priority on ensuring the best possible dedicated stroke unit is established as soon as possible.

It is interesting that, in 2013, a Winnipeg Regional Health Authority report said a dedicated stroke unit was supposed to be implemented by the end of last year but never was. With at least three stroke events occurring in Manitoba every day, over 2,500 Manitobans have suffered a stroke from the time of that report until now, with absolutely no access to the enhanced survival benefits of a dedicated stroke unit.

Is it ever the intention of the NDP to follow through on establishing a dedicated stroke unit or, indeed, any of their promises?

*(14:10)

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

As I've said repeatedly, both inside and outside of this Chamber, this work is already under way, and when the member opposite talks about his party's plan, his leader has actually called the—the phrase is, she has called the actual nuts and bolts about these proposals, how they would work, irrelevant. Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but the actual nuts and bolts of stroke unit planning is very intense. You need to work with the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

So, again, we're going to move forward. We're moving forward on a solid plan and we are working with the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

I'm also curious how members opposite would plan on funding a dedicated stroke unit when they want to eliminate the health and education levy from big banks and corporations.

Mr. Gerrard: It should never have taken more than 16 years to put in place a dedicated stroke unit.

Fifteen per cent of strokes result in death; 75 per cent of stroke patients are left with varying degrees of lifelong disability. Manitoba Liberals will ensure that a dedicated stroke unit is in place as fast as possible to provide better outcomes for stroke patients.

In contrast, in information that we have found, the NDP government has given directives since 2011 for all departments to go slow in implementing programs.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Is this the reason so much is going so slowly in Manitoba, including the non-development of a dedicated stroke unit in our province?

Ms. Blady: I thank the member for the question.

And as I have said repeatedly, a dedicated stroke unit is the direction that's been given and is what's going to happen on this side of the House that actually works with the Heart and Stroke Foundation and works with the RHAs and works with the players that are involved in this. We need to do it right, and the reckless plan that doesn't pay attention to the nuts-and-bolts complex medical care, coupled with giving away health and education levy breaks to banks and corporations—again, I'm not sure how you have a swift plan to construct a dedicated stroke unit when you're undermining the very financial means required.

So, again, I wonder if, you know, the member opposite has consulted with his leader, because it sounds like they're talking from two different pages on how they'll look after Manitobans.

Manitoba Economy Government Initiatives

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, the Premier is meeting with first ministers and the Prime Minister this week to talk about climate change and the economy. On our side of the House

we work diligently to make sure that we have strategic investments that grow our economy.

Can the Minister of Jobs and the Economy please tell the House about the great initiatives that we are making to grow the economy and keep Manitoba moving forward?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Our government is proud to work with our business owners and business leaders, our labour leaders, our community leaders. We're proud to work with our education and training institutions, and we're proud to work with young people.

And it's because of them that Winnipeg jobs grew to a 20-year high in 2015. It's because of them that the Conference Board of Canada is forecasting that Winnipeg will hit an eight-year high in economic growth in 2016. It's because of them we did the best of any province for creating new jobs last year. It's because of them that the number of new people working was the best in Canada last year. It's because of them that TD Economics is projecting that Manitoba will be one of the top three performing economies over the next three years. It's because of them that the Bank of Canada says Manitoba will be one of the top-performing provinces for 2016 and '17. It's because of them the Winnipeg Free Press reports Manitoba will be among the top provinces in economic—

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

French-Language Courtroom Delay Notice Concerns

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): The member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief) is two months early in launching his leadership campaign, Mr. Speaker, but it's never too early to start, I suppose.

In an unprecedented move, three of the province's top judges in Manitoba published an open letter in which they expressed their deep disappointment with the NDP government and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) in the delay of a French-language courtroom in St. Boniface. Specifically, they noticed their concern and noted their concern about the fact that they were not given proper notice of the delay of this courtroom and the difficulties that is causing in the justice system.

Will the Minister of Justice apologize to these judges and to others who are working in the courtroom system for the challenges and the

concerns that this has caused in our justice system in Manitoba?

Hon. James Allum (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, on this side of the House we believe profoundly in the safety of our communities to make sure that all citizens of Manitoba are safe in their neighbourhoods and their homes and their community, and at the same time protect the liberties of those Manitobans. And that's why this government has got behind a very expansive human rights agenda, an agenda that is inclusive and brings together Manitobans.

I know the member from Steinbach doesn't agree with that, Mr. Speaker. When we had the chance to pass an antibullying legislation in this House that would make sure that there were gay-straight alliances in our schools, he voted against it. In fact, his ability to think broadly is actually quite narrow.

What we know for sure is that crime is decreasing in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that we've passed a Restorative Justice Act that will ensure that Manitobans have different means in which to reconcile their differences. We're a progressive government that really believes in justice—

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

Tiger Dam System Contract Tendering Practices

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, there's so many things this NDP government could apologize for, so let's give them some options.

You know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) could apologize for the actions of the minister responsible for MIT for trying time after time to force through a sole-source contract for Tiger Dams without Treasury Board approval. Or he could, perhaps, apologize to the students of Brandon University that had to suffer through not one but two strikes under this NDP government.

So there's a choice, Mr. Speaker: Apologize for the minister's actions or apologize to those students whose hopes and dreams of a university education were destroyed by this NDP government.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I actually am glad to get a question from the member opposite. I know, certainly, highways is not very much on their agenda, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if it's because when they were in government they spent \$90 million

on the entire province. This year alone, in a record-setting construction season, we spent more than \$700 million as part of our billion-dollar-plus investment.

I know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite isn't talking about flood mitigation because he might want to take a tour around Brandon, around Westman, around pretty well every area that was impacted in the floods in 2011 and 2014 and see—he will see the difference we made.

You know, we're talking about apologies here. To quote Jim Prentice, if anybody's going to apologize, Mr. Speaker, he should look in the mirror, because he voted against that.

Affordable Housing for Seniors Government Record

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): One of the biggest problems facing Manitoba seniors is being able to find affordable housing and care. In 2012, the NDP government promised to build an 80-bed facility in Lac du Bonnet and, four years later, it's still not open. The Buhler centre in Winkler was supposed to be opened 18 months after the start of construction, 18 months from July 14th to December 15th, and it still is not open.

On December 18th, 2013, the NDP government has a press release for affordable housing for seniors in Transcona. It stated that the Paul E. Martin Estates would have an official opening in 2015. The calendar on my desk says it's 2016. Paul E. Martin Estates is not open.

You should be proud that it's not open yet, that you kept missing the budget. These are just a few examples of the mistreatment of seniors and dishonesty of this NDP government.

Will the minister apologize for making seniors housing—for not making seniors housing a priority and apologize for not giving seniors the respect that they deserve?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question and assure Manitobans that we do make it a priority because we have 431 new PCH beds under construction or in development in Lac du Bonnet and in Morden and at Holy Family Home and in Bridgwater and Park Manor in Winnipeg, with exploration under way for a third new PCH in Winnipeg.

We've gone from just 246 supported housing units in the whole province in 1999 to over 700 today. And, again, I can remind the member opposite that, you know, in 1997, the Tories cut over \$8 million from hospitals and PCHs in communities across central Manitoba including the Morden hospital and Tabor Home, \$1.3 million cut by members opposite; Winkler hospital and PCH, \$1.8 million cut; and in Portage la Prairie, when the Leader of the Opposition, I believe, was their MLA, Portage hospital, \$1.6 million cut and two Portage PCH cut, \$1.1 million—

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

Cattle Enhancement Council Packing Plant Promise

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture apologize to the cattle producers of Manitoba for this NDP government's \$12-million failure of the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council in their failed attempts to build, first a packing plant in Dauphin and then, on Marion Street, in Winnipeg; \$12 million of hard-working Manitobans' money gone down the drain due to NDP mismanagement.

Will the minister apologize for that?

*(14:20)

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, it's always my privilege to talk about an industry which I'm quite familiar with and spent 35 years calving out cows for the hard-working ranchers. And I want to acknowledge the ranchers today; they're in their busy time calving out cows.

But I ask the member opposite, by his commentary, can he apologize to the cattle producers of not sticking up for them when the federal Harper government chose to get rid of the community pastures, told us to get rid of the opportunity for young generation farmers to stay the living at it? We want to talk about the importance of what the cattle industry brings to us and food safety that brings a very key component.

I want to ask the member opposite: Where is his apology towards all the money that the grain producers have lost since the single-desk organization has lost, which is the biggest loss over the years for those producers. Agriculture's important on this side, not on their side, because they

look at corporates for their friends, not farmers, hard-working family farms.

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

The honourable—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morris has the floor.

Climate Change Conference Purchase of Carbon Offsets

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how to follow that up.

On December 3rd, when the Minister of Conservation and the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) flew first class to Paris for the conference on climate change, the minister said, and I quote, that their costs would be offset by the purchase of carbon offsets, their footprint. Oddly enough, though, a FIPPA request said, and I quote, no records exist of the purchase of offsets.

Will the minister apologize for misleading this House?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Truly I'm grateful from members opposite when they ask a question about climate change. It's too bad that their leader doesn't get on the bandwagon with them and actually acknowledge the existence of climate change, the greatest challenge that we as a human race are facing today, I think it's safe to say.

And I'm grateful to my friend from Wolseley for the good works and the attention that he pays to this particular topic. I think it's safe to say that there are few members in this Chamber that this issue matters more to than the member for Wolseley. So, on behalf of all of us who do believe in climate change, thank you, and thank you for the question.

Flooding 2011 Claim Settlements

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): The Premier (Mr. Selinger) stood in Melita on July 1st, 2014 and stated: Our government will take care of all the flood victims.

These flood victims included my constituents in the southwest region, from the farmers and residents in Melita and Pierson area, Assiniboine valley producers, to the farmers and residents around

Whitewater Lake. Many of these flood victims are still waiting for—to settle their DFA claims of 2011, let alone the claims in 2014.

Will this Premier and his government apologize to all Manitoba flood victims whose DFA claims have not been settled yet?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, we've worked diligently, our staff at EMO, to put in place historic levels of compensation with us in 2011 and 2014. And I want to put on the record for the member opposite that the previous Harper government has hatched the cost-sharing formula for DFA. I thought the member opposite might want to ask a question about that if he's concerned about producers in his area because what it would've meant for the last 51 disasters we've had in this province, 47 of them would result in no support whatsoever from the federal government.

So, Mr. Speaker, we as a Province are there for flood victims. I wonder when the apologists across the way, the Stephen Harper Conservatives that they are, will actually, for once, admit that that Harper government was wrong and, perhaps, it's because we all know that their leader is a Stephen Harper Conservative. If they're elected in this province, it will be Stephen Harper all over again.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: It is now—the Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on attempted transgression for Tiger Dams purchase, brought forward by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, in keeping with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on attempted transgression for Tiger Dams purchase, brought—sponsored by the honourable member for Brandon West.

That's for information of the House.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Now, petitions.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by P. Adams, G. White, G. Sveinson and many, 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.

Further petitions?

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by G. Sigfusson, C. Bjarnsson, P. McCauley and many more fine Manitobans.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

* (14:30)

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

(5) Although in-patient services including acute care, short- and long-term rehabilitation are available

throughout the province, brain injury patients who are discharged from hospital often experience discontinuation or great reduction of services which results in significant financial and emotional burdens being placed on family and friends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by A. Pyatt, M. Halliday, B. Donley and many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route—Information Request

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 40 and 60 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

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

(4) The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of the line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

(6) Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition is signed by J. Virkutis, J. Sheldon and S. Brémaud and many more fine Manitobans.

Budget 2016

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On April 30, 2015, the Finance Minister clearly stated, and I quote: There will be another budget before the next election. End quote.

The provincial government conducted budget consultations with Manitobans at significant taxpayer expense with the clear understanding there would be another budget before the next election.

Just two days after the Public Accounts for fiscal year 2014-2015 were released, showing the provincial government's deficit had ballooned by an additional \$100 million more than budgeted, the Finance Minister stated, and I quote: I'm sorry I wasn't clear, but the fact of the matter is we're weighing our options as to whether or not to introduce a budget prior to the election. End quote.

After months of misleading Manitobans, on February 4th, 2016, the provincial government finally admitted they would withhold the budget.

Manitobans deserve to have access to complete information regarding the true state of the provincial government's fiscal mismanagement.

The budget has been prepared, but the provincial government is hiding it and the facts from Manitobans instead of being transparent and accountable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government keep its promise to the people of Manitoba and immediately bring forward the completed budget they are withholding from public scrutiny.

And this is signed by H. Schmidt, A. Price, T. Sonnichsen and many others.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Brain Injury Canada estimates that 50,000 Canadians sustain brain injuries each year, over 1 million Canadians live with the effects of an acquired brain injury, 30 per cent of all traumatic brain injuries are sustained by children and youth, and approximately 50 per cent of brain injuries come from falls and motor vehicle collisions.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this petition is signed by J. Sarrasin-Arteager, R. Blakely, S. Falkevitch and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes petitions.

We'll move on to grievances.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to withdraw the Minister of Labour and Immigration's (Ms. Braun) report stage amendment on Bill 8, which is listed on today's Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the withdrawal of the Minister of Labour's Bill 8 amendment? *[Agreed]*

The amendment is withdrawn.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank members of the House.

Mr. Speaker, for House business we will be calling Bill 8 for concurrence and third reading. After that we we'll be calling Bill 5 for debate on second reading. Then we would like to call concurrence and third reading on Bill 11. After that we would like to call report stage amendments and concurrence and third readings on Bill 33.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker: So it has been announced that the order of bills for today will be third reading of Bill 8, followed by debate on second readings of Bill 5, and then third reading of Bill 11, report stage amendments to Bill 33, and then third reading and concurrence of Bill 33. That's for information of the House.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 8—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call for third reading Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave).

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Braun), that Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence familiale, congé en cas de blessure ou de maladie grave et prolongation du congé de soignant), reported from the Committee on Justice, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

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

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I am pleased to speak for a third time on Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave). I'm incredibly proud of this bill which will provide first-in-Canada protections for employees needing the time off as a result of domestic violence.

Under this bill, employees experiencing domestic violence will have the ability to take up to 10 days of job-protected leave to use as needed and up to 17 weeks of continuous leave in a 52-week period. This also includes up to five days of leave to be paid by the employer.

At committee we heard many brave domestic violence survivors share their experience of trying to deal with violence at home while working at jobs that they needed to support their families. I heard from them how accessing the supports and the services they need were difficult and often required time off work.

I am pleased to say that this bill will help employees experiencing domestic violence by ensuring that they have an opportunity to take the time off work that they need to access much needed service and supports such as attending counselling or medical appointments, accessing legal services and, most importantly, caring for their children.

In addition to the new domestic violence leave provisions, this bill also ensures that Manitoba's workers can access sickness and compassionate care benefits available under the federal Employment Insurance program without fear of losing their jobs.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to stand up today and put a few words on record in regards to Bill 8, the employment standards code amendment act, leave for victims of domestic violence, leave for serious industry or illness and extension of compassionate care, amends the Employment Standards Code to provide victims of domestic violence with the opportunity to take up 10 days of intermittent leave, five days of which are paid, and up to 17 weeks of continuous leave in any given year.

Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine how difficult it must be to be in a relationship with someone that is abusing you. I am extremely lucky to have a great wife and a great family, but I can well imagine that this has got to be something that's very difficult, and this bill will provide some time for victims who are in a state of domestic violence some leave to allow them to possibly seek some legal or law enforcement assistance. I'm sure it must take a lot of willpower to seek help and talk about the situation at home, and I know that it's very difficult, and I think anything, as legislators, that we can do to provide help for this is extremely important.

Bill 8 further amends the code to allow employees suffering from serious injury or illness to take unpaid leave for up to 17 weeks. As well as extending compassionate care from eight to 28 weeks in accordance with federal legislation for employment insurance benefit, this will allow

Manitoba to be in the same position as the unemployment insurance with the federal government, which is important so that everybody across Canada, hopefully, will be having the same types of regulations. In order to qualify for compassionate care, Bill 8 states an employee must have been working with a given employer for what was previously only 30 days to 90 days. And I guess this is to make sure that people are in an employable situation before this is given.

Bill further—eight implies a confidentiality clause in which employers must maintain the confidentiality of the employee in respect to all matters in the code relating to employee's leave. This prohibits the employer from disclosing any information except to persons who require the information to carry out their duties, which, hopefully, that will include police officers because I know in a lot of cases there are situations where the person is afraid to talk to somebody, and especially to the law, because they're afraid of what might happen to their spouse or their partner. And it's, I'm sure, an extremely difficult situation to be in.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 8 will be the first provincial legislation in Canada of its kind and will join the ranks with only a few other jurisdictions in the world. I look forward to seeing the results of this bill and how it will help to eradicate domestic violence. And my hope is that it will do something because as lawmakers, any laws we bring in should be done in order to help people out.

Domestic violence is a serious issue that often affects women. During the standing committee that Bill 8 was discussed in, there were a lot of speakers from various groups in Manitoba that stepped forward without their—with their own difficult stories. And I know I knew one of the women there, and I know how extremely difficult it would have been to stand up there and divulge your life story to a whole crowd of people. Like, I just can't imagine how difficult that would be. But that just also shows how serious the problem is. I would like to thank all the women who were brave enough to get up there and talk about their own stories. It's not an easy thing to do, and they have to be extremely brave. With these brave actions, we hope that whoever has been abused will inspire someone else who may be in the same situation to come forward and seek help, whether it be legal advice or law enforcement or just somebody to talk to, because in a lot of cases they're alone and they don't know

who to talk to. So it is extremely important that we help.

Mr. Speaker, one of the importances of the success of bill, of this legislation, will—it will empower women and others who have experienced abuse to move forward and seek help so they can live a safer and more prosperous life.

Employers know that employees having a difficult or even a life-threatening situation do not necessarily provide the best of employers. And it is in their best interest to make sure that the employee has all the resources necessary to remove themselves permanently from that situation. Our team PC supports all efforts of anybody encouraging employers or employees to do anything they can to get out of that situation.

It is because these victims that it is so crucial that we as elected members get this legislation and its subsequent regulations right. We have the duty to these individuals to ensure that we are crafting laws that will empower them to make sure that everything is done properly.

* (14:50)

One of the areas that I looked at was—is the abuser. We must focus more on the abuser. We've seen in a lot of cases where the abuser, really, nothing happens to them. It can go on for years where somebody is abusing their spouse or partner, and nothing happens. And I think that we need to look at legislation that may answer this problem a lot more than what we do presently. We need to make the abusers accountable for their actions.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the reasons, like, we talk about when we do a bill to do it right. During Bill 8 there were some presenters that had mentioned that they were concerned that proper consultation wasn't done. It was two members both from the LMRC that stated that they hadn't properly been represented in the aspect of this bill, and I would suggest that from now on anytime a bill of this importance is brought forward that all the proper work is done to make sure that everybody who has anything to do with these bills is consulted, to make sure when we make a bill we make it so it will be the best bill. And these complaints came from both the labour and business—the Labour Management Review Committee—both chairmen were—made presentations, and they were not happy that they were not consulted properly.

One of the things that we can look at, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that abuse doesn't just happen. It probably starts out at home with a lot of things the way people are growing up, their lifestyle, their—what is happening, poverty, et cetera. So we need to really start focusing on a lot of these other issues, and that's one thing I have to bring forward.

I know the bill is all about domestic violence, but this NDP government needs to focus a lot more on what they have been doing up until now. I mean, we lead the country in child poverty. We—there's so many issues that we have in Manitoba that stem as if—it's like from the bottom. We need to start working right at the bottom to make sure that people have the opportunity to do the best they can so that they may not end up with domestic violence at home.

And Manitoba has one of the worst records when it comes to violent crimes against women, and at nearly doubled the national average, the absolute worst rate of sexual assaults compared to other provinces, and this needs to be looked at. But, again, it can't come by just giving abused people some time off. It needs to start at the grassroots, at the bottom of the area.

According to Winnipeg Police Service's annual statistic report there were over 680 sexual assaults committed in the city in 2013. The estimated number is even higher with unreported assaults.

Food banks: women make up the highest percentage of food bank users in Manitoba along with children, and we need to change that in order to make life better for them so they wouldn't contribute to what's happening later in life.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the different approaches must be considered, that the Manitoba government must consult and put action-legislation that protects and empowers Manitoba women so that they can pursue better for all. And I would like to see more action in legislation in regards to the abusers themselves. Like, right now we're passing legislation that will give them more time off. We'll give them areas that are important, but not as important as stopping the abuse itself.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my comments at third reading of Bill 8 by quoting some statistics on the incidents of police-reported intimate partner violence in 2014. This is the most recent year for which we have these available. And for Manitoba there were more than

4,000 women who were victims of intimate partner violence in Manitoba; that is 4,136 to be precise.

Interestingly, there were 892 men who were victims of intimate partner violence. I think far less than the number of women, that's for sure. But what's surprising is that it's as high as it is, and it clearly is a significant issue as well as violence against women. This means that the total number of victims of intimate partner violence in Manitoba was over 5,000 in 2014. That's 5,028 people in Manitoba affected by intimate partner violence, victims of intimate partner violence. The incidence of intimate partner violence in Manitoba was 500 per 100,000 population. That is one of the highest incidences in Canada. Just by comparison, next door in Ontario, the incidence was 220, much less than half of the incidence here in Manitoba, and it is a clear indication that we need to be doing much better.

And it is good that we have legislation before us today in Bill 8 which will take an important step in helping women or men who are victims of intimate partner violence by providing a leave from work: up to 10 days of leave, either intermittently or a continuous period, as well as the possibility of a continuous leave period of up to 17 weeks. Up to five days are to be paid leave.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we heard at committee stage was many very moving and personal stories. I think there was no one there who could've come away from that but feeling that this is a major problem in Manitoba and we must do something about it. Clearly, this is a very significant and unfortunate part of life today in Manitoba, and we need to do everything we possibly can to change that to reduce, hopefully one day to eliminate, intimate partner violence in Manitoba.

We also heard that it was often the best strategy for victims of domestic violence, to the extent that they could, to continue working. But we also heard that there are clearly important times when victims need a brief time off, and, in part, this is to deal with issues around health and justice and to have some time just away from the difficult situation that has just happened. And so I think that this bill is important. It is timely. It is good that we have it before us.

I note, as did—as was already noted earlier on, that the LMRC had indicated that they weren't properly consulted. I think that is too bad. It could potentially have meant that an amendment could be

made at committee, but it wasn't, and even at that hour, the government felt that it wanted to go ahead. And certainly we are, and I am, and Manitoba Liberals are in agreement that this is of such urgent importance that we need to pass it and that we need to move forward on this bill, and I'm encouraged by the fact that we are now at third reading and that it should be passed urgently. It is—there are occasions when consultations are not done as well as they could be, but nevertheless, the bill is of such importance that it needs to move forward and, if necessary, amendments can be made at committee or even report stage, but we are where we are here with this bill, and I'm very pleased to support it.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, there are other issues which are important to us today which can also be acknowledged within this scope of doing all we can to help families and individuals of situations of family violence. I, myself, and the Manitoba Liberal Party has brought forward Bill 215, which, although it garnered support, has not been able to get on to committee stage and, hopefully, it will come back and hopefully, I will be here to bring it back next, after the election, and, hopefully, that can be done then and we can move forward on that issue too.

But I also want to mention another aspect, and that is because helping families, in particular, helping families at critical times in their lives, for example, leading up to and during and after the birth of a child. These are times when there can be changes in the family in a—quite a drastic way with the arrival of a baby. It is more difficult to sleep and there can be tensions because of what's happening. And so at this time, helping with that process, as midwives do, is really critical to making sure that these additional tensions within the family don't break out into intimate partner violence or other conflicts within the family as a result of the presence of the changes and of the newborn child.

In this context, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention the critical role that midwives have had in supporting families at what is a very joyous, but can also be an extremely difficult and stressful time. I've heard testimonials of the tremendous help that midwives have been during this time. I want to mention how critically important it is that we support midwives well. I note that midwives have been without a contract since March 2014, almost two years. Midwives shouldn't be neglected like this and midwives should not have to live in this kind of

uncertainty, as 'Manitoma' families rely on them for this vital support and assistance. So we need to support midwives so they can help mothers and children and families, and so that they can help to reduce the potential for conflict within families at the most critical time.

This, Mr. Speaker, is but one example of many individuals and people in our society who work together to try and help and support families and children. I want to thank all those who do, including our midwives, and I want to praise them and make sure that we're doing what we can to support them.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments on Bill 8, I look forward to this bill moving forward. I look forward to making a difference and improving the lives of those who've been victims of intimate partner violence, and hopefully we can build upon this with additional measures, if not now, after the election, which will help to reduce further the incidents of intimate partner violence in our society.

Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take a long time, I just want to briefly speak to this bill. I think it is a historic moment in this Chamber, and we should take note of that. I hope this afternoon we are about to pass the first law in the country that will recognize the needs of victims of domestic violence to take time away from their work so that they can address whatever needs that they have as they rebuild their lives, be that going to court or getting treatment or being with their kids, and that when they do that that they don't suffer a loss of income.

What we heard at committee and what many of us know who have worked directly with victims of domestic violence, who know victims of domestic violence, who have been victims of domestic violence, what we know is that having an income is a huge predictor to being able to escape and rebuild your life. We know that when one of the things that happens to victims of domestic violence often is that they suffer at their workplaces because they're late or they're absent, and they don't feel like they can explain that to their boss. They suffer in their workplaces sometimes because harassment at work becomes part of the abuse. And employers maybe who don't know how to handle that, who aren't educated, decide that the best thing for the workplace, then, is that that person who is being harassed no longer be employed there. And we all know those stories; that does happen. Women and

other victims of domestic violence lose their jobs because they are victims of domestic violence, and I think that this bill will mean in Manitoba that there is protection against that.

No law, no law solves a problem like domestic violence, but laws build on each other. And I hope in this, before this House rises, that we will also pass another bill on domestic violence that will strengthen the ability for victims to get protection orders—that will also help—as do the programs that have been put in place by our government and previous governments to ensure that there is funding for those services. All of these things build on each other.

And I also just want to say before I close that this bill isn't only important as a piece of legislation, but I know that there is work that the Minister of Labour in her department have taken on to work with those people employed at SAFE Work Manitoba to work with employers to provide education so that workplaces can become a place where people feel like they can disclose that they are victims, where coworkers have the tools that they need to help people be safe and employers have the tools that they need.

I want to thank the Minister of Labour for putting forward this bill and her staff in Employment Standards who worked hard to get this bill here. I want to thank my sisters and brothers in the labour movement who have been champions of this bill. I want to thank all the folks who came to committee; we had an employer come to committee who talked about her experience as a survivor and the role of compassionate employers in being responsible for all aspects of their employees' lives, of recognizing employees lead whole lives.

And I want to say to this Chamber today, when we pass this bill, we will have done something that I believe will save people's lives, and that, in any profession, is a good day.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 8, and it is indeed an all-encompassing bill here. We see quite a few details in here, and, as an employer, there's several aspects here that will apply to the workplace that I was at one time involved in and now I am still involved at a distance but don't get to spend much time there.

And, as a former employer and a current employer, I have to say that it's difficult to

understand all the things that your staff are going through. And you look for the signals, Mr. Speaker, and, obviously, in an environment of this nature, secrecy amongst the staff or amongst the individuals that are being abused is one of the challenges that we have as employers, and the embarrassment, of course, and not wanting people to know. They don't think that people know, and it's a very delicate balancing point for employer when to ask and how to ask and when to step in.

So, indeed, as employers, we need to make sure that those tools are available so that the employers can be delicate in how they handle the situation, so they know how to ask the right questions, the leading questions without being too intrusive or accusatory and making sure, of course, that we are sensitive to the needs and requirements of staff that are in such serious situations that impact, of course, not only the workplace but their family unit and, indeed, sometimes their safety, Mr. Speaker.

So, again, we want to help and sometimes the staff just don't know how, and they suspect that there may be an issue. We may see certain signs and want to know how to proceed, and sometimes when we do, we're turned away by the individual because of, as I said, embarrassment or as secrecy or, obviously, threats to their safety from the particular partner that they may be dealing with, Mr. Speaker. So it's making sure that it's an open environment that those people have an ability to come to and to make sure that they can get help when needed, when they decide that it is time for their safety and often their—the safety of their children to move out of the household to what may be a safer place and to take what is a massive step for those people.

*(15:10)

It's not a step, obviously, that they take lightly, and, as you see people that go back time and time again, hoping that the situation can get better and often doesn't, the cycle of violence continues, and we want to make sure that we know when to step in and how to help.

When I've dealt with the shelters in Brandon, Mr. Speaker, I know that they are short-staffed, that they deal with the issues all the time of resources, and one of the things I've heard more recently is that they have trouble finding bedroom furniture and suites and that type of thing in order to help the individuals to come to them for help to set up a safe environment for themselves and for their families. So we want to make sure that all those types of things

are available when needed and that, you know, we have the help that is available for individuals.

I hope this evening to be able to attend the Women of Distinction dinner in Brandon, Mr. Speaker, and I see, going through many of the individuals that have been nominated this evening, have dealt in this particular environment and certainly have a track record of helping women and families at risk and men at risk as well, although much more common for the women to be at risk, obviously. But many of these young women and women that have been nominated, when I look through their nomination pages we see that they are often dealing with individuals at risk and making sure that they are safe, or have an ability to go to a safe place in the Brandon community, and we thank them for the service that they provide.

It is not an easy task to listen to these stories, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you know. I have had occasion to hear a few and see where we can help them with certain instances, and as with many stories that we hear, we often see how the decisions are made and where they—their life took them to travel down this particular road and how they got to where they are, and it is a difficult time to ask for help and assistance, and we know we want to make that help and assistance available and comfortable so that they can come to you for that.

So it is, as I said, a bill that I believe we will be supporting and that we have spoken in that regard here. Mr. Speaker, you know, when that choice does come from that individual to seek help, it is important that the employer not only know how to proceed, but how to do so delicately and to make sure that the individual that's asking for help can be safe and to make sure that we provide a place of safety for them not only in their home, of course, but in their workplace.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are many others that wish to address this bill, so we'll see who else has words of contemplation and of support.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, the member from River East was about to talk and I think she's

making her way to the seat. So she can do that, I know she has a lot to say on this matter, and I think if we give her that opportunity, she will.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And after 30 years you would think that I'd be able to find my way to my seat a little more quickly.

But I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, to have an opportunity to put a few words on the record about Bill 8, the employment standards code amendment act, providing leave for victims of domestic violence, leave for serious injury or illness and extension of compassionate care.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say at the outset that this is certainly a step in the right direction and it is another piece of what we need to do to support those that have been victims of domestic violence.

And I do know that there are some that have indicated that there wasn't the proper consultation done as a result of this legislation coming forward, and that is unfortunate because when we bring in this kind of legislation we want to make sure that we get it right. And I'm hopeful that the proper consultation will still be done so that when we have the legislation proclaimed that it will be legislation that we can all be proud of in this House. So I'm hopeful that that will happen.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put a few comments on the record and maybe provide a bit of a history lesson for members in the Legislature because I am feeling very proud and very privileged to have had, 30 years ago, a great mentor in the person of Gerrie Hammond, who, I think, most in this House would recognize and remember, who was really a champion for women and women's issues in Manitoba. And she taught me the importance of proper consultation.

And I know that when I was a Cabinet minister in Gary Filmon's Cabinet, Gerrie Hammond was tasked with travelling the province and consulting with women right across this province of ours, and she did an admirable job. It was called the Women's Initiative. And she had some senior bureaucrats with her that travelled the province and really listened to women. And in those days, I mean, that was 30 years ago, there certainly weren't the support systems in place and we were just beginning to put supports in place to support victims of domestic violence. And there was a patchwork of programs across the province. There was no standards. There was no consistent funding when we came into government.

And Gerrie Hammond was the champion of that. She went out and listened to what women had to say.

And, as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, we as a government then put in place a standard funding model for women's shelters. So it wasn't piecemeal, and I'm pretty proud of that. And we moved forward. When we came into government, there was no second-stage housing. We put in place second-stage housing so that women, when women moved out of shelters, they had the opportunity to go somewhere else for a period of time to get their lives together to maybe get back on track with a job, to find appropriate housing, so that they could move on with their lives. So I was proud of those initiatives. And we continued to put in place the kinds of supports that women needed. And that was as a result of consultation.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, there isn't any government that does everything right or everything wrong. But at the time, we did the right things for the right reasons for women. And I'm proud of that.

And I want to say that this government has continued to make progress and to upgrade and modernize the kinds of supports that we put in place. And this is another small step, but we're certainly not finished, along the way. There's a long way to go.

And we still hear the horrendous stories of those that have been involved with domestic violence. And it's still not, Mr. Speaker, a subject that many of those that are impacted or are victims are willing to share. There's a lot of embarrassment. There's a lot of emotional feelings that go along with, you know, domestic violence.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that we do have a long way to go, but I wanted to put those few comments on the record, because we have progressed. And I'm proud to see that we have progressed in our province. And I know that there is more work to do and I know that successive governments to come will continue along the path of hopefully doing the right things for the right reasons for the women and those that are victims of partner abuse right across this province.

So with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add my support to the legislation, and I just hope that we get it right when we do the proper consultation to ensure that the regulations are what are needed for those that are victims of violence in our province.

* (15:20)

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise to put a few words on record. I was part of the committee that heard the presentations on Bill 8, and as the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) had said, it was difficult not to be moved by some of the very personal stories that were brought forward that evening. There were many people there that had, in one type or another either personal contact or indirect contact with people that experienced domestic violence. And those of us that have been in positions like we are, I have no doubt run into numerous cases where we have seen people come through our doors that were obviously victims of domestic violence, and we're trying to find ways to make sure that they get the kind of help that they need whether it's from a local shelter or one other—or whatever other way we can find for them.

So often they are badly impacted by a long-term domestic violence and are, as some would say, frightened by their own shadow almost. They are certainly uncomfortable with anyone and it is very, very difficult to get the whole story out of them and do what you can to help them. And to some degree an employer would be put in a similar position, though he should have a better relationship with an employee than just a stranger. It does put them in a difficult situation because they are not allowed, of course, to talk about the disclosure, but they are aware of it, and should anything happen and they have little control over what's going to happen back in the home, what position would the employer be in? I feel some concern for the employer because should things go very badly and there be some type of injury involved, that the employer would feel some responsibility in regards to that.

And I know that during the course of the evening when we had committee hearings it became obvious that there hadn't been as—perhaps as thorough a consultation as we would like to have seen and, in particular, that the Labour Management Review Committee, which often sits down and provides good advice on the labour standards changes that have been—come into place in the past, had not had a chance to go through this. And I think that that would be a very important thing to do. I think we might actually get a little bit of balance in that that might be missing from this particular bill.

Now, there were many groups that came to speak in favour of this bill that evening, and with due cause, though there was really no one there that had had experience in terms of this type of legislation or this type of negotiation through their labour

negotiations—whether it had been put in. I understand that this is something that has now become a more common practice in Australia jurisdictions and I think that has worked reasonably well down there.

But we do have, unfortunately, very high levels of domestic violence in some parts of the province and we need to be very much aware of what's that doing not only in the committee, but how we feel with it as those people are coming out of the community to some type of shelter system. So it is certainly something that we need to look at ways of providing additional supports for. We are, however, very supportive of this type of thing and looking for ways to put it into the labour standards, and I think it's important that it be moved on in a clearly timely manner. So I'm glad that this is moving forward.

But it is very important that we try and find ways to make sure that this works in as least disruptive a way as possible in regards to the employer. We don't want to put the employers in a difficult situation and if we do I mean, the long-term impact will be that they will be reluctant to get involved in these cases, and that's certainly not consistent with the intent of this bill. So we need to work on this.

It's also very interesting to hear the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) talk about the whole development of the shelter system. I know there had been for many years a patchwork across Manitoba, some areas very strong, others not so strong, and that there was a system put in place and some linkage between the different parts of the system so that there was working together to strengthen the position and to make it easier for victims of domestic violence to be moved from one area to the other where they felt most comfortable. And then that still does occur with transfers from communities where they're finding it very difficult, where there's maybe not the supports that they need from family, to other parts of the province where they may have better support in place, and certainly make it work better. And there's—their chance for success is accordingly greatly improved when they have the types of supports around them that they need.

So, certainly appreciate the chance to put on record some of the comments here as to what's going on and our support for that.

I know that there are many in the room that might want to put further comments on the record as well. So I will provide that opportunity, Mr. Speaker,

but I do hope that we're able, in a position, to move this forward fairly quickly. Thank you.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few comments on the record in relation to Bill 8, the employment standards code amendment act, obviously, more importantly known for Manitobans and victims of domestic violence, leave for serious injury or illness and extension of compassionate care.

The history of this bill, obviously resulting from the NDP's rebellion and one of the ideas brought forward by the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald). Now, there's no doubt that the NDP's rebellion didn't get a lot accomplished for Manitobans, and then, as you can see across the way, it continues to leave a lot to be desired. But one good thing that did come out of the rebellion was actually the idea of Bill 8 and the extension of leave for victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, in a previous life I worked for Community and Youth Correctional Services in the Westman region. It's Brandon, Manitoba, for those who don't get outside the city of Winnipeg. And so for three years I had the opportunity to work as a probation officer there, working with youth as well as working with sex offenders and victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. A good friend of mine, who's since passed away, Mr. Bob Hunter, was the region's guru, for lack of a better word, who specialized in domestic violence in terms of handling the counselling sessions for perpetrators of domestic violence who are in a position to at least better, maybe, understand their actions, the implications of their violence towards their partners and their children and tools to help, obviously, redirect that aggression and, like I said, and understand the long-term consequences not only to themselves, more importantly, their victim. Mr. Hunter was a great mentor to me as a very—as a young person working as a probation officer and suddenly being exposed to a much broader world that you simply aren't aware of, even ourselves in this Chamber.

I remember, actually, when I first started there, and every morning the fax machine would be there, and it would be that shiny fax paper that came in rolls—and it's almost starting to feel like I'm dating myself—but it would come out and it would be the Brandon Police Service's police report for the night before, and it was absolutely fascinating in almost a bizarre sense, Mr. Speaker, to see what was actually occurring in your community of Brandon in terms of

crimes that evening before, and then what you saw being reported in the Brandon Sun, maybe in their little in brief in sort of their little crime roundup section in the paper and realizing the significant disparity between the two, and realizing that there was a lot of actions or activities on the criminal-of criminal nature going on within our community. And sometimes I would see these addresses and realize, oh, my God, that's just down the street from where I live, and you can imagine, as well, living, I mean, Brandon, although it's been—it is the second largest city here in Manitoba. It is a city of only about 40,000 people, so it is relatively a large small town. And there'd be circumstances and instances where I would be out at, say, the Brandon Shoppers Mall, or just out and about in Brandon, and, actually, I would run into some of my clients at Probation Services, and I remember, you know, almost a certain degree of awkwardness, for lack of a better word, when you ran into them in a public setting because you knew their history. And then—so I would be with maybe my partner, and by then she knew not to ask because obviously confidentiality prevented me from sharing any information, but she would know that that was obviously a client.

*(15:30)

I don't pretend, Mr. Speaker, obviously, to know the psychological ramifications of domestic violence. I do well know, and I've seen firsthand the physical impacts of domestic violence. My partner and I, we were renting a apartment when I went to Brandon University on 18th Street, not far from the university, and the landlord and her boyfriend had the unit below us, and I remember one evening being awakened by loud and angry shouting and screaming going on and loud thuds, clearly, an individual being tossed around.

So we subsequently called 911, and Brandon Police Service attended quickly, and such, but the following day, Mr. Speaker, when we saw the landlady and saw the physical effects of the brutalization she had occurred, and it was a fascinating insight as a conversation. and from our perspective as an outsider, not being intimately involved in these situations, we simply say, you know, why don't you leave? Why are you still with this individual?

And to see in many instances, and not just in this one particular instance, but in my life through Probation Services, so many times the victim, actually, feeling that they're the ones to blame for

being on the receiving end of violence, Mr. Speaker, that somehow if only they hadn't said something to their spouse or partner that had set them off—him or her off, that you know, if they, you know, if only they worked harder in their relationship. You know, and it's always that, if only, if only. And you know, it's—I know that my partner has a bit of a temper or some other language they would use to, like I said, almost justify the action—inexcusable action being taken towards them as an individual. And I have to say that was always a confounding part of that interaction and role that I had Probation Services, because I simply didn't comprehend that disconnect between seeing an individual bloodied, bruised and clearly damaged, and seeing the home—and seeing, you know, holes in the plaster where fists had gone through or where bodies had been thrown up against it. And to see a complete, almost apologetic tone from the victim that, you know, admonishing us for calling the police and that you know that this is a personal matter almost.

And so, opportunities like—in legislation, like Bill 8, Mr. Speaker, I don't think any legislator in this Chamber thinks that this is going to address, in whole, the situation. I think what we need to recognize and be cognizant of, this a tool available to victims of domestic violence. And like any other tool, whether it's having access to counselling services, whether it's having access to a domestic shelter like Osborne House or—sorry, Osborne House doesn't exist anymore under members opposite, but domestic shelters and such.

And part of the role of government—and whichever government forms on April as a result of the election—April 19th, will be to make sure that employees and employers are made aware of the changes that are contained in Bill 8. So that employers have an understanding of their obligations in terms of confidentiality and, as well, in terms of responsibilities under the amendments to the labour code in terms of leave, Mr. Speaker, and, as well, that the employee is made aware that they can ask and they can receive this leave to deal with obviously a situation that is already an incredibly stressful situation—a situation who's stress is most likely impacting them as an employee, impacting them as a partner, as a—potentially as a parent, and that—and as an employee.

And so to be able to remove maybe at least—remove or minimize anyway, one small component of that larger stress that they're under through the assurances that, you know, yes, you can take this

leave, that you are entitled to this leave, you are a victim of domestic violence and your job is protected, that your—that our primary role, as an employer of you is to ensure your safety in that, hopefully, during this time frame, in this leave, Mr. Speaker, that you have the opportunity to find the resources in the community and get that trusted team to help break that cycle of violence. Because, indeed, it is very much a cycle of violence and a cycle that victims often recognize, and yet, for a whole variety of reasons, are able to, in one hand, almost dispassionately view the pattern of their own behaviour in terms of picking partners and yet falling into the trap.

I was just conversing the other day on social media with a friend of mine who lives on the west coast, Mr. Speaker. She is a nurse, and she was commenting, actually, in relation to a post I had put about mental health awareness and about the young man from my community who stood before us, as a community, saying, I am a survivor of suicide. And so she had reached out to me to thank me for sharing his post and his information and for reminding people that suicide is not something that we should hide or scurry from, that it is something that we need to, just like mental—well, it's a component of mental health awareness and the whole sort of Bell Let's Talk; we need to talk about it.

And she commented to me that she found herself in a continuing cycle of violence and that her former boyfriend was currently up on charges for choking her into unconsciousness, Mr. Speaker. And she even commented to me that that seemed to be a cycle in the partners she chose throughout her life. And I was quite shocked to learn that. Obviously, I'm not particularly well connected with her just given the geographic distance and the time since graduation, but she was—like I said, when somebody sort of reaches out and makes that comment to you—and, again, you realize sometimes you just don't know what's going on behind closed doors.

And that's really what, in part, this legislation is hoping to do, is open up that door and allow individuals to say to their employer in a confidential manner that I am a victim; I'm a victim of domestic violence, and for my own safety, I need a leave of absence to ensure that I have the protection, the counselling and whatever other services the community can offer to make sure that I am no longer a victim, that I am able to move beyond being a victim and find a healthy—and be cognizant that I am worthy and able to engage in a healthy

relationship and that I can, indeed, break this cycle of violence.

And, you know what, against the backdrop of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, we've seen some very high-profile cases of violence against women, women who were victims of domestic violence. And despite all of the information and police being aware that this individual was indeed a victim of violence, despite all the best efforts of the courts to impose protection orders, despite every effort from friends and families and from their own employer to do whatever they could to protect that individual, the situation came to a very tragic conclusion.

I'm not going to pretend, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 8 may not have resulted in any different outcome in that particular situation, but I do believe that, going forward, that it may be—we may have the opportunity to help another individual and other individuals who find themselves in circumstances of similar nature and who are reaching out, and now, as I said, no longer face that additional stress of worrying about their employment status because they want to break that cycle of violence.

* (15:40)

Now, while I seem to be obviously focused just on the issue of domestic violence, Mr. Speaker, we need to be aware that this bill is actually more than just leave for victims of domestic violence, and, obviously, I'm speaking to that because that's an issue, as I indicated, that I'm most familiar with just given my background with community youth correctional services. But we're also talking about leave for serious injury, illness or extension of compassionate care.

Because what we're finding in today's day and age that, in a lot of instances, illnesses and diseases that at one point would be considered terminal, are ones that can be conquered. And I choose that word carefully, Mr. Speaker, to emphasize the fact that there is a fight involved by that individual in their health, their health team and their family, that it is not a simply matter of, say, a magic pill and suddenly, you know, disease x, y or z is suddenly cured. We have made great advances, but, with a lot of these advances, can be very physically debilitating to that individual in terms of recovery.

So and—while there are opportunities for compassionate care to, again, to be able to afford individuals that additional option for leave or long-term leave for serious injury or illness up to

17 weeks, again, takes that burden—because we know so well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health, health recovery, that the spiritual and emotional and mental components are as equal contributors to your physical well-being, and that's been well documented and it's been well researched.

So to offer individuals an additional 17 weeks of leave in order to facilitate that recovery, Mr. Speaker, again, to take that stress off them as an individual is an important component. So 17, again, 17 more weeks to recover, 17 more weeks to, again, to deal with the—what can be often a great physical, mental and emotional stress on an individual through the contracting of a particular serious illness or injury, whether that be, obviously, you know, a motor vehicle accident. I mean, if we—we've seen in the own—Chamber one of our—one of members opposite's left and one of the individuals—or one of the reasons they've cited was a back injury that they had sustained with a simple slip and fall within their own home. So you have to wonder maybe if this legislation had been made available then that member might have been able to continue on in their duties knowing that their job is safe, at least until April 19th.

And, while we need to make sure that those options exist, Mr. Speaker, that we do recognize that there is that role for the physician, and I do believe that while this is not the type of legislation I—that anyone is going to be taking advantage of, there does need, with any piece of legislation, to make sure that there are those checks and balances contained within to prevent any misuse. And, again—but we want to make sure that those burdens are not just that, are not burdens, that they're not onerous, either financially onerous on the individual, time consuming or stressful on that individual, whether it's a victim of domestic violence, injury or sickness.

So, I mean, the requirement of a physician's certificate in terms of departure, Mr. Speaker, is a more-than-adequate requirement, I think, for both the employer and the employee in terms of protecting both their interests.

But I—and I also actually appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the inclusion that a physician's certificate is required in terms of the employee's fitness to return to work, as the employer may require the employee to provide a certificate stating and confirming his or her ability to return to work. And, again, that is not because an employer wants to disbar an individual from returning to work. I think

it's—again, it's—I think it's actually in the best interests of both parties—you as an individual returning to work, that it is not your own opinion because oftentimes—and as you can tell by a cough that I've been displaying in this House for quite some time, my own internal stubbornness to see a doctor about it—that we will often overestimate our own ability or overestimate our own wellness. So to have that impassioned and scientific and medical validation that we are, indeed, ready to return to work, I think, is good for the employee. So it gives them, again, that—their journey back to health. So if they're recovering from, say, an injury or a long-term illness is going well and that they are able to return to work in a full-time capacity, it helps validate their recovery.

But it also, Mr. Speaker—I think it gives onus or gives relief to the employer that they are not in a position to take a—to take an employee back that simply may not be ready. And it could be an uncomfortable situation if an employee is returning to you after or still continuing a battle against a long-term illness and that the employer can see that this individual's simply not ready to return to work, that they're physically maybe not able to return to work or maybe they can just tell through conversation and observation that this individual's simply not able to return to work and that.

And so there is—again, it gives the employer that option to say, you know what, that's great that you are in a position to return, that you want to return, but let's, perhaps, allow a third party and a medical professional to make that ultimate determination so that we can put forward a return-to-work plan that allows you to reintegrate yourself within the workplace, to come back up to speed to anything that you may have missed and to make sure that, obviously, that your return to work is successful because, obviously, that's another component of this. That we simply don't want to take an individual out of the workplace and help them through their recovery, whether it's, again, whether it's through recovering from domestic violence, recovering from injury or recovering from illness and then set them up for failure because during their time that maybe situations or circumstances within their workplace have changed, which may only add to their stress level and result in a setback. So, obviously, you know, obviously working with employers and physicians on that is something of importance, Mr. Speaker.

The other important component—and I give credit to the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) to ensuring that was included—was the issue of ending leave early. Again, there's going to be individuals that have a faster recovery time than other individuals. So if, in this case, a worker, an employee uses the employment standards amendment act code put forward by Bill 8 and identifies a term of which they planned departure, Mr. Speaker, and they're recovering, we'll say—we'll say for the sake of this conversation, that it's recovery from an injury—the recovery is—goes much further or faster than originally anticipated by their physician, but they still must give at least two weeks' notice to their employer of their wish to return.

And I think that is an important component of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, because I remember when I ran a not-for-profit and we helped people with physical disabilities, we would often—obviously, if I was in these circumstances, I would want to, obviously—I—my job is to make sure that we as an organization can function. So if an individual came to us and, say, indicated and was able to show that they needed, say, 30 weeks of leave or some portion thereof, I would look to hire an individual on a temporary basis to fill in that role so that the organization as a whole could continue its mandate to help people with physical disabilities or health issues find and maintain employment.

* (15:50)

But, obviously, then, I have a responsibility to that individual that I've hired on a temporary basis to give them their due notice that the employee that they've—that they're replaced has indicated that they wish to return earlier than originally scheduled, because obviously, then, we're dealing with multiple individuals and, say, again, an individual who may have thought that, you know, oh, I found employment, and, while I do recognize that it is only a term employment for, say, you know, a four-week—or, sorry—a four-month period, it will give me, you know, obviously valuable experience on my resume, and, as an individual, maybe I can use that as a springboard of future employment within the organization or obviously like or like agencies. And to suddenly, you know, maybe get a call saying yes, the individual you've replaced said they're going to be returning tomorrow and you need to clear out your desk, I mean, that would be almost akin to being fired, even if you were aware that you were going to have to vacate this position on, again, on a term basis.

So, again, it allows that transition of the individual who's making use of these provisions, the transition to prepare themselves to return to work during that two-week time frame and two-week notice period, Mr. Speaker. But it also gives the employer that notice and that two-week time frame to if, again, if needed, if that individual is returning earlier than planned, to give again a reasonable notice to the term employee who has replaced them. And, again, it's one of—it's an issue of courtesy and respect, and I think that—I think that's a theme that all workplaces would be in a much better place if we all worked just that much harder to achieve that level of courtesy and respect.

Mr. Speaker, another important component of this legislation is one of confidentiality. Now, obviously, maintaining confidentiality in these circumstances—and, again, whether their circumstance is a domestic violence circumstance, whether it's an illness or injury, oftentimes when an employee goes to an individual, and I've been in similar circumstances, they do so and there can be a certain hesitation for fear that this information, which they obviously consider very private information, there's a concern that somehow they may be shared without—outside the confines of that office, which we—a tremendous breach of that individual's privacy, but, obviously, could have detrimental consequences on their ability to recover in terms of stress and may have detrimental consequences on their ability to perhaps pursue the matter further or, if need be, to pursue the matter again should they find themselves in similar circumstances down the road if they had a bad experience. So, to ensure and to put in force into the legislation the confidentiality of that legislation, Mr. Speaker, is an important component.

Now, there is one caveat I will put to it, Mr. Speaker, and I can almost imagine the angst that an employer may potentially be under if an employee came to them and he—him or her said to their employer that they were, indeed, a victim of domestic violence and, say, they were showing the physical signs of being a victim of violence, and they were asking for leave and, obviously, would be granted leave under Bill 8, but, you know, I'm not sure just if you're bound by those confidentiality and yet if you feared for this individual's well-being, I can only imagine the turmoil that might cause you as an individual.

So, hopefully, this will be something that can be worked on through the Manitoba Labour Board as

they bring forward this legislation, as they disperse this information to employers, whether it's in bulletins that will be displayed in various employee offices, lunchrooms, or just on bulletin boards as the employees' information often is, as to updates in new legislation that affects them, but also just in terms of—you know what, I think this—I think legislation like this requires a larger mandate in terms of public information, a mandate to make sure that, because I'll be honest, lots of times you'll put information on an employee work board of the latest bulletin that comes out of Manitoba Labour, and I can think of—and I've seen it first-hand with employees who simply don't glance at it despite your best efforts of even mentioning, maybe, during staff meetings and that, that the employee standards branch has brought out a new bulletin and has to deal with, you know, x, y or z, and you encourage your employees to look at it.

So perhaps the government needs to be looking at—and in partnership with other agencies, whether it's shelters, whether it's hospitals, whether it's hospices, of a long-term, larger educational strategy to make sure that both employers and employees are fully aware of the circumstances surrounding Bill 8, of the opportunities around Bill 8 and of the obligations around Bill 8. But at the end of the day, I believe this—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member's time on this matter has elapsed.

Any further debate on this matter?

Question before the House is reports—or third reading of Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave).

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call for debate on second readings Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands), standing in name of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk).

Is there leave for this to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Leave has been denied.

Is there any further debate on this matter?

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act—I guess, Mr. Speaker, if promises and press releases could do water management, we would have the best water management in the world here in Manitoba from the last 17 years of broken promises and press releases but really, no action at all on doing surface water management.

The current legislation before us here, Bill 5, Keystone Agricultural Producers has expressed some serious concerns with the legislation and noticed—noted this past December that the, and I'll quote them: The tone of the release is definitely not where we were in these discussions; we're back to where we were when we started these discussions. End of quote. So, clearly, this government does not listen to those who know these issues, and they continue to just act on their press releases and make more promises for the future.

And their list of environmental failure, the NDP's list of environmental failures, is long. Amongst them is the legislated Kyoto greenhouse gas emissions targets. Didn't make that one, and, in fact, believe it was a previous premier, Gary Doer, who said if you don't meet these, you should resign. So I—you know, you're—and then he quit. So what—so I guess at least he was admitting that he couldn't achieve his own laws. So we know that the health of our lakes and rivers has been worsening over the last number of years, thanks to the inaction of this government. Presence of zebra mussels in the Red River basin has been documented since at least 2009, yet the NDP did nothing to stop their spread into Manitoba's lakes and waterways such as Lake Winnipeg until they were discovered in Lake Winnipeg, and then they hauled a bunch of potash up to the harbours at Gimli and dumped that in and said, mission accomplished. But we know that that's not the case because the zebra mussels continue to spread, and it's from this inaction that it continues to be there. Our game—big game population's dangerously low, some of the—our moose populations. This government has continued to refuse to address these issues.

* (16:00)

They destroyed—this NDP government has destroyed hundreds of kilometres of trees in creating Bipole III, and you don't even have to go into north of No. 16 Highway; you can come out into my constituency to where you can see where they destroyed shelter belts that have been there for generations. And now those shelter belts are piled up on the side because this is where the NDP has ordered Manitoba Hydro to build Bipole III. And those shelter belts were there for a reason, to help with—prevent soil erosion, but now they're gone, so we'll see what happens there.

The Winnipeg water treatment plants, how they've ordered—the NDP government's ordered the nitrogen removal in spite of the opinion of respected scientists, but when these—when this government gets on a mission to go the wrong way, there is no stopping them here. So—and you know, it's very glaring when you talk about flooding and water management, the failure to even talk to Saskatchewan about their drainage projects that were happening there, they're dumping unprecedented amounts of water quickly into the Assiniboine River basin. The water always did flow there, but now, with these drainage projects, it's coming that much faster, and you just need to talk to the people around the Shellmouth Dam that can tell you that first-hand.

But there is lots of good things happening in Manitoba in spite of the NDP, and one of them is the Deerwood Soil and Water Management Group. It's on the South Tobacco Creek. It's in the Miami-Deerwood-Altamont area, and this project happens to have some of the longest standing records of water flows, water nutrient—or, the nutrients within those waters that they're flowing, and they have the data—this group has the data to back up some of the test results that have been going around.

You know, one of the things was, when zero till came into agriculture and began to be used more 'widestead', and it was thought that zero till actually—zero tillage—actually reduced nutrient losses, and this group, Deerwood, because they're able to test water in small, contained areas as it ran off, they found that this was actually not the case, that the nutrient load was just as high and, in fact, some of the highest nutrient loads that were coming off—because they were in a small, contained area and they could test this—some of the highest nutrients were coming off of bush and land that was not being used as pasture, it was just native bushland. And it was as a result of the grasses dying off and, then, the phosphorus being released as these grasses were dying.

So this group has really done a lot of really excellent work. They're doing some more work down—farther down the South Tobacco Creek, down in the neighbourhood north of Plum Coulee and north of Roland to test nutrient loads as they go down there. But one of the very interesting and very practical projects that they've done in the Deerwood Soil and Water Management was create small dams. And they've been able to hold back water. Now, in the—when these farmers decided to do this project, to create small dams, the professional engineers came along and said this will not work. This will not hold back water. It's not going to work.

But the farmers got together and built these small dams, and what it is, it holds the water back for a short time and then it's controlled release on it. So, when you have a heavy rain, you have snowfall, melt—or, snowmelt, they can actually control the water as released. And it does two things; first of all, it mitigates flood—flooding farther down the South Tobacco Creek so that you have—you don't have as much water coming at one time, and it also holds back nutrients. And these dams have been in place, some of them for over 30 years now, and they're still holding, they're still working, and it's a testament to these local people who knew the topography of the land and knew how to work.

And it's not just about flooding; it's about drought-proofing too. We have to—I know that floods have been in—on top of many people's minds for a long time because of the wet years that we've had, but we have to think about drought-proofing too.

And there's another project that's in my constituency which has been proposed for the last—over 40 years. It's called the Boyne Valley Water Initiative and this is a dam structure that they want to build on the headwaters of the Boyne River and it would hold back water for both potable water usage and for irrigation and for flood control and for refreshing the Boyne River when it gets very low, as it has in dry years. The Boyne River is primarily a spring, a freshet that moves the water out when the snow melts and when you get heavy rain but during the drier parts of the years, or when you have very dry years, it can get down to a basic trickle. And towns like the town of Carman depend on the Boyne River for—and the Stephenfield Dam, for their potable water usage within the town. And this dam project on the Boyne River would certainly help to assure that they do not run out of water, as they came very close to here a few years ago.

And so there is—we have the possibility of doing lots of projects like this to hold back water, which is both, again, it's flood prevention because you are controlling the water flow in—when it's heavy runoff, and also in terms of drought-proofing. And I'd like to give credit, too, to the Assiniboine River Basin Initiative; this is a group of producers that have gone together to address the issue of both flooding and, again, drought-proofing along the Assiniboine River. And drought—or pardon me—flooding is obviously paramount for many of these producers, landowners there right now, and not just landowners but cottage owners and that in the Shellmouth Dam area.

But this is where government has a role to go in and work with these groups, not against them, not imposing their will on them. And this is something which the NDP just does not understand how to do. And with the Assiniboine River Basin Initiative it becomes even trickier, it's not impossible, but it comes even trickier because you're dealing with Saskatchewan, you're dealing with the state of North Dakota, which all have tributaries that go into the Assiniboine River. And—but it's just well past the time when we should have been doing this. We've sat here for the last 17 years, and this government's refused to even accept that there is issues there and that we need to find a positive solution. And that's what we really need to do here, as there's so many projects like this that we could be doing all across the province.

And there's another drainage project up in the Interlake, in the Arborg, area that's been proposed for many years, and this government has sat on it, and stalled, that would ease the flooding that's happened in that Interlake area and in the Arborg area and some very productive land that's been lost because of the inaction of this government to pick up on where the local municipalities have been asking for help there.

And, of course, there's the coffee parties that this government has done in terms of building a second outlet on Lake Manitoba. Instead of having coffee parties, they could have been getting a solution to this and moving along. But they—there is not the political will by this government to actually find a solution. And it impacts so many Manitobans from this because if you're living in that flood plain around Lake Manitoba, you are either not going to invest, you're hesitant to invest because you could be flooded out again because of the lack of action by this government, or many of them have just simply given up.

And I've been, when I was, in 2014, after the flood around Lake Manitoba, I was—no, perhaps it was 2011, the years go by so fast, that I was out in a pasture, or hayfield, along Lake Manitoba, and this was very productive hay land and cattle-producing land, and it was really shameful to see what had happened to these producers, because driving across what was once a very productive hayfield, there was now refrigerators laying there, there was tires laying there and the cattails had taken over so much of this land.

* (16:10)

And it took the productivity away from this land. These—many of these producers, having lived through BSE through the 2003 and on, have—had been struggling just to make ends meet anyway, and then you have this flood on top of it, and we've lost so much of our base of our cattle industry that was around Lake Manitoba. And you're not going to be able to rebuild there. You're not going to take the chance of rebuilding there until you can be assured that the lake will not flood like that again, that they won't open up the Portage Diversion and flood them out again, as what happened in 2011. And this is the inaction of this government. This is the press releases and coffee parties that this government lives on, but we need positive action here and in harmony with the landowners and cottage owners, First Nations that are—that have been affected so affected, so—hard by this flooding in the last few years.

But, again, I always want to emphasize that it's not just about flooding; it's about drought proofing. We need to make sure that we have long-term plans for water management, surface water management. There's—we have lots of productive land that could be used much better—I, you know, only think—I keep coming back to this Bipole III. This Bipole III route that's currently proposed is going to impede upon a bunch of potential irrigation—land that could be developed for irrigation, and, again, you've got this Boyne Valley Water Initiative that would supply the water. They've also using retention ponds for irrigation now. We have the technology to do this, but, unfortunately, this government is not interested in increasing the—helping producers to increase their productivity and to be able to build the economy—help build the economy in Manitoba.

And agriculture is such a large part of our economy and yet this government continues to work against—either work against or else just not do anything at all in terms of helping the agricultural

sector deal with surface water management. And organizations like KAP could be so helpful if you would just start to listen and start to enact what they are suggesting, because there's—there are a lot of things we can do. There's a lot of things that cost a lot of money, but we need to be creative in how these are financed.

But then, again, Mr. Speaker, this government is totally opposed to things like Triple P funding arrangements. They—in fact, they even brought in legislation to outlaw Triple P funding, so there's, you know, there's so many things that we could be doing. The potential in Manitoba is so great and yet this government—I guess the infighting just crates a stalemate within government; they can't even begin to think creatively. I guess, when you've got to watch your back all the time or watch who—what—who's going to say to who, then all of a sudden that becomes a priority rather than dealing with what Manitobans would like to see happen in our province.

So—and it affects—it's not just a rural issue; surface water management is an urban issue. We've seen the sewage leaks into the Red River, in the city of Winnipeg, and these are things that need to be addressed. Certainly, there's—as I said, it's just not a rural issue about surface water management. This needs to be proactive by all Manitobans, and it will help strengthen our economy if you take a serious look at this and continue to work with all sectors of the economy rather than trying to pit one sector against the other. And, you know, maybe the NDP are good at this because they're used to doing it within their caucus, but it's not helpful to Manitoba to be so unable to bring forward positive pieces of legislation.

Water is something that we're actually very blessed with here in Manitoba. There was—I was at an ag conference in Denver, Colorado, where water is a huge issue, and it's the scarcity of water. So it—and they had—it was interesting listening in some of the breakout sessions about how they manage water from a scarcity point of view, and that impacted on their—the usage of it, on the types of irrigation and types of crops that they could grow, the urban population demands for potable water. So it was very interesting to sit there and listen to that because, in Manitoba, we've never—very seldom, should never say never, but—very seldom have had that issue of a shortage of water, and—but I know back from my farming days, when we had a lot of cattle on hand, that water is something that's vital. You have to

make sure you've got a clean, adequate supply of it, and also, that you use it wisely and make sure that it's there for—in the future, too. And so this is something—surface water management is something that we need to look at very seriously and make sure that we treat it as the precious resource it really is.

And, unfortunately, we've let too much water go down the rivers into Hudson Bay rather than holding back some of this to be able to use it. And it's—rather than look at grandiose, big projects—I know the Assiniboine River-Holland dam has been talked about, but with the environmental pressures it's going—would be very difficult to do that, but we've got lots and lots of small projects that we could be doing across this province but, yet, they're—and it's not about government leading, it's about government taking up the initiatives of private individual and private—a small, local groups that—who have the best knowledge of how to handle that resource within their communities.

So, you know, while we're all in favour of surface water management, there's certainly a much better approach that we could be taking in this province—or, much more proactive stance, rather than the heavy-handed, bureaucratic, top-down management that comes out of this government. So we look forward to—in the coming months, the coming years—to creating a much better working relationship with municipalities, with our conservation districts, with our partners to the west and to the south of us—different jurisdictions so that we can, actually, begin to take advantage of this huge natural resource called water that we have in this province, and make better use of it and, at the same time, mitigating some of its damaging effects when there really is floods and droughts which are—can be as equally as damaging to communities.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to us doing some really proactive surface water management in the coming years.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to talk about Bill 5.

Before I start, though, I have had the opportunity to wish the member from Dawson Trail, the member from St. Johns, the member from Fort Rouge all the best, and I salute them for their service to this House and to the people they represent.

I know that that time will come for all of us in this Chamber. There's a time that you want to be able to leave on in your own terms, and I certainly think

that they've served their constituents well and I wish them all the best.

Now, in regards to Bill 5, we're just tickled to death that our House leader was able to negotiate the final time we can come back and debate this bill and get it through into committee. We have an opportunity here today, to make sure we get it right. And, in this House, we've talked many, many a time, and I have, in particular, make sure that we—we make sure we consult, make sure we get it right.

I happen to live in the Interlake area; I live in Teulon. As almost everybody in the House knows, we're very fortunate there to have some of the very best drinking water in the country. I know that, when I had my business, I used to take my water with me as I'd travel because it was such good water, and we're so blessed to be able to have that type of water, and we need to make sure that that water is protected, not only for us, now, but also for the future generations as we protect it to the best that we can and make sure that it's there, like I say, for the next generations.

* (16:20)

I know my daughter moved down to St. Adolphe and they had a cistern; they had the water hauled in. And she said, Dad, if there's any way we can get a big bulk tank and haul that water from Teulon down to St. Adolphe, we'd be just tickled to death. And we didn't make that purchase, but we did make sure that every time we went we did take buckets and buckets of water.

And, of course, the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) was talking about water, too, and I know I'm dating myself a bit here, but we had a cistern when I was growing up, and we know how precious water is. We didn't have the opportunity to have running water at the time; we pumped it out and, again, it was great water. Again, we got to make sure that we have it protected and, again, well looked after.

Now, it's interesting that this government's had 16 years in order to finally do something in regards to surface-water management. Now, I talked the other day about the member from Portage la Prairie that brought in a great program for stormwater. And we were proud to lobby and help at the Keystone Ag Producers at the time to start the ALUS program, a program that we believe in very strongly, when we can hold water back, release it in a time-release mechanism that would be better for the farmland,

better for the people down the water stream in order to ensure that those in checks and balances, again, were put in place.

Now, we know that Manitoba is a bit of a flood plain, to say the least. We do know that we have water that comes in pretty quick, lots of times through no fault of our own. But we do know—we do know, very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that we have to ensure that whenever we have these checks and balances in place, that we do the best job we can. And we know that KAP has offered a lot of advice not only to us as opposition members waiting with baited breath to be able to make that opportunity if the general public decides so on April the 19th. Hopefully, we can do a bit more than just lip service.

And we're finally to that point where we have this opportunity on Bill 5 to talk about exactly that, and we know that we've reached out. In fact, I know in 2003 when I first was elected, we went—I went to Regina and we talked with them about water-surface rights. And we brought a lot of those ideas back and of course this government wouldn't listen. We had an opportunity to try and put some checks and balances in place. And we saw what the Shellmouth Dam has done and we saw what's happened in regards to the flood through Brandon, through a number—large parts of this province, unfortunately, and we haven't been paying attention enough.

And we know that things come at a cost. But flood after flood doesn't help this province grow and prosper. And we know that whenever we—we had the flood of 2011, and I know that I was there myself; a large part of my riding was around Lake Manitoba. I threw my share of sandbags and was proud to be there standing shoulder to shoulder with a number of those folks. And they went through a 'tumble'—terrible time. And I know this government promised multi-year funding. Multiple-year funding was the word of the day, not just today, not the first year but multiple-year funding. Well, right after the election we saw what happened. That promise went by the wayside.

Unfortunately, this government refused to add up to that commitment. It was just merely lip service. And I know that there's a number of cattle producers that was up in the Interlake area and in particular through The Narrows. That was an average herd at that time, of about 300 to 400, cow-calf operation. Many of those had to be sold off because they didn't have the land nor the opportunity to be able to relocate and be sustainable long term.

And as a result of that, our cattle numbers are down significantly—significantly—and, as a result of that, those farmers will never, ever be back. So surface-water management is very important—very, very important—so, when we have that opportunity to get it right, and I know that I went up a number of times to The Narrows and met with a number of those—in fact, the reeve from Coldwell, Brian Sigfusson, was a very important part of those talks, as well as several of the chiefs in the area, and we had a lot of good discussions and a lot of good advice. And part of that is making sure you're listening, making sure you're paying attention and making sure that you act on that as you have the opportunity.

So, as this bill moves on to committee, we know there's going to be some presenters on it. And I know that the Keystone Ag Producers will, in fact, have a number of suggestions. And I'm encouraging—I'm encouraging—the government to listen; they haven't on Bipole III. They've went through and decided to clear out a whole wide path around the largest path that they could possibly take and go down to the western part of this province and then back through the farmland, great farmland, which will be out of production forever. And not even respecting the rights of those farmers who have, time and time again, asked this government to make sure—to make sure—their equipment is washed, make sure it's protected.

It's not against—about necessarily where the line is located, but it—to make sure that, in fact, that they don't carry disease from one field to the next. I know that from time to time that we in the House have different opinions on what things should be done and how it should be done, and we look at the east side road. I've had the opportunity to go with the member from La Verendrye, and we went up through there, and that's a wide path—wide path—that this government and the East Side Road Authority has taken that swath through there. And there is tons and tons of land that they've cleared out, and there's all kinds of opportunities for Bipole III that could have went there, but this government decided to exercise their heavy-handed government and force Manitoba Hydro take it down the west side.

And I noticed the member from Midland talked about a bush clearing just outside one of his communities. Unfortunately, this government again decided that that was the way it should be. That land is now at risk because of this government's decision.

And we know that whenever you take those chances, that Manitobans will be the one that's going to have to suffer. So, when we talk about The Surface Water Management Act, we need to make sure that that's taken into account as well. I know that this government also tied it—decided to try and do some zebra mussel protection. That didn't work out so well.

Mr. Matt Wiebe, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We need to pay attention to the scientist. We need to make sure that whenever we ask for advice that we listen. There's a number of scientific studies that have taken place, different things that work, different things that don't work. And it's up to us to make sure that we do pay attention, and we, certainly, have brought those forward to this government as well. And, as we get ready to take this bill to committee, I know that it's been—I've got calls on it, several members have gotten calls on it, and it's long overdue in order for us to ensure that we get it right.

So we know that as this session comes to a close, we'll be paying attention to this bill, so will a number of other Manitobans in order to make sure that we do get it right. When we pass legislation, we know that it's going to be entrenched in law for a number of years to come, and, just by a change in government, just by the stroke of a pen or the dot of an I, it's not that simple to change. And we need to make sure that we get it right.

So I'm encouraging the government, as I said earlier, to make sure that they listen, to make sure that they pay attention.

And, of course, the thing that I have not talked about that I want to talk about for just a couple of minutes, and that's in regards to the wildlife and the impact surface water has for them. And not only as we as humans, and, of course, we know that we have an abundance of water here, but it's not all good potable water, and it's not necessarily all good water that can—we can utilize each and every day. We've seen the millions and millions of dollar that's been spent. In fact, on the news just recently in Flint, Michigan, we saw what had happened with that community.

A lot of health risks are being taken as a result of not making sure that the checks and balances were in place, and a lot of lives were lost and will be—will continue to be at risk because people weren't paying

attention. And we don't want that to happen here in Manitoba.

* (16:30)

So we know that, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that this is our chance. This is our opportunity to make sure we get it right, and I know there's a couple others that want to speak on this bill that have stories similar that we sometimes don't get the opportunity. So I want to share that opportunity with my other members and looking forward to moving it through to committee.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I—it gives me great pleasure to stand to speak to this, and because I live fairly close to a large river, one of the largest rivers—second or third largest river—third largest river, I guess, in Manitoba, the Roseau River, we've seen, over the years, what uncontrolled drainage does and I'd like to take the House here back to, well, before anybody was in here, I suspect, back into the '70s.

The International Joint Commission held meetings throughout southern Manitoba, and those meetings were—the purpose of those meetings were to discuss the drainage project in northern and northeastern Minnesota in the Beltrami uplands. The Minnesota government and American government had decided that they were going to drain a lot of land there that would become farmland. Of course, that water all had to come down the Roseau River, and the Roseau River started out by Sprague and comes all the way across to the rose—to the Red River.

But on its way there, it doesn't run in a straight line, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as rivers wander all over the place. One of the places it goes through is what we call and we refer to as the rapids area in southern Manitoba, and that's close to where I live. At any rate, the recommendation that came down from the International Joint Commission—I'll point out first, there was an Army Corps of Engineers that did all the engineering work, both in Minnesota and in Canada. And when they had the meeting, they suggested—the meeting in Dominion City—in fact, I made a presentation to that meeting—but they suggested that there would be controls on the Roseau River. So that—because through that rapids area, and the rapids area stretches for probably 40 river miles. River miles are a lot different than land miles, but still there's a lot of high bank all the way along there, and that uncontrolled drainage that has come through there has done massive, massive

amount of erosion. That erosion does a number of things and it affects a number of things.

The controlled structures that were supposed to go there that were negotiated with the provincial government at the time—and that provincial government, by the way, was the Schreyer government—the controlled structures were never done. Any of the work that was supposed to have been done in Canada, and it wasn't all on the river, some of it was on a tributary coming into the river, it was never done, never started and never talked about, unfortunately.

So, the erosion it has caused—that was caused after that, with all of the water that has come down that river, does a number of things. It pollutes the water with all of the dirt that goes down. The banks there in places are 60 feet high. They have moved back 200 feet. That's a lot of earth that has come down that Roseau River, and it comes through the Red River. Just as importantly, all through that rapids area was a wonderful spawning ground for fish, particularly your walleye. We call them pickerel. That was a great area for fishing. Unfortunately, that whole spawning ground has been ruined.

The biggest sturgeon that has ever been caught in Manitoba was caught on that very river on the property that my mom and dad owned a mile north of my house. Today, there's not a sturgeon in the Roseau River that you or anybody else would see. But I will tell you that the Americans are working to restock the river and they're putting 50,000 fingerlings into that river every year in Minnesota, hoping that they would get 1 per cent of them that will survive by coming down the river, go to the lake and come back and spawn in that river.

We destroyed, or we allowed a lot of nature to be destroyed, by not paying attention to it—

The Acting Speaker (Matt Wiebe): The—order. Order.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Matt Wiebe): Point of order.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I'm not being frivolous. I wonder if the member might, I might ask the member a question regarding the sturgeon that he referenced, because the—what I understood, seriously, I understood the largest sturgeon ever

caught in Manitoba was in the Red River, and it was at a certain size.

And I wonder if—I'm quite curious. If the member—*[interjection]*—I'm asking leave to ask a question.

The Acting Speaker (Matt Wiebe): The Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) has asked leave of the House to ask the member from Emerson a question.

Is there leave of the House? *[Agreed]*

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Matt Wiebe): Leave being granted, the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

Mr. Graydon: Yes, I thank the—

The Acting Speaker (Matt Wiebe): Sorry, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), to ask the question first.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I am interested in the historical nature of this, and I was aware that in Manitoba history the largest sturgeon supposedly caught in Manitoba was caught on the Red River, and the size is just escaping me. But I want to—I would be curious if the member could enlighten me as to what size the sturgeon was that was caught in the Roseau River and just roughly when that was.

Mr. Graydon: I will endeavour to get that. I probably do have it in my office with the report of the International Joint Commission. I have the full report with—all of the 'appendishes' are there, and I believe it will be, it will state the size of that sturgeon. And the sturgeon was caught in the Roseau River and taken to Dominion City. And, if you go to Dominion City, you will see a replica of it out there. It was in Jim Waddell's book that he put out because he came up there and took it down to Dominion City in a horse and wagon. So, if there was something caught after that, I'm not aware of it, but at the time that was the biggest sturgeon that was caught in Manitoba.

That's the best I can do for the member, but I will—the other thing the member could do, he's just sitting there, instead of playing brick 'brac' on his—he could google it. Yes, he could probably google it. But, at any rate, thanks for the question, I appreciate that.

But the—what has taken place from that uncontrolled drainage, and we've just had some more

of that uncontrolled drainage happen again now in Minnesota, and it's been brought to the attention of the Minister of Infrastructure, that there is a dike or a channel with dikes on it that brings the Roseau River from the American border into the rapids area. That was deteriorating. *[interjection]* And—no, you didn't do that, I didn't see anything. At any rate, that channel was deteriorating badly and it's needed a lot of repairing. But, when that deteriorates, it also comes down the Roseau River. The Roseau River empties into the Red River. And that again causes silting all the way down.

Last fall, there was a drainage issue in the RM of Franklin. And I was called and I talked to the minister about it. The minister said, yes, we'll give you permission to clean it. They talked to the municipality. And the municipality cleaned the cattails out of the drain, out of a provincial drain. The water didn't go anywhere because the river is silted; it's full. So that's what happens when you don't pay attention to the surface water management in our province.

There is another issue too. There's a lot of drainage been done, and I don't blame farmers for doing drainage. I don't blame them for doing that at all. There's a lot of inputs go into the ground to grow a crop, and it only takes a three-inch rain, and if it's there for two days or three days, they don't have a crop. We've had no work done on tile drainage. Tile drainage would 'eliminate' a lot of the surface drainage. But we need to do the research on that and promote that.

Conservation districts were a great thing when they came out. There was money there for them to work. There hasn't been money in a conservation district for years, not the money that they need to work with. But they do have the people and the local people that will work with the government and have a plan that isn't going to cause any problems down the road.

* (16:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the ditches on all of our major highways, none of those ditches, that's not—highways have a motto: We build a road. We build a mound for you to drive on. We don't do drainage in the ditches. So, what we have—and it doesn't matter if you're on 75 Highway, 59 Highway, or 68 Highway in the Interlake—what you have is cattails in the ditch. There's no drainage plan whatsoever that goes into this.

And, so, I can understand that the Minister of Infrastructure says hey, my job is just to put a mound up there that people can drive from point A to point B. But there is some long-term problems with that type of thinking. First of all, if the ditches are full of water all the time, it's difficult to hold a road bed together. But just as important, or more importantly, you've got cattails growing, you're not able to do any type of harvesting of the feed that's growing in the ditch—of the grasses that are growing in the ditch. So, year after year, these grasses decay and you end up with phosphorus. You end up with phosphorus growing down there every spring and goes into the lakes.

When we take a look on the American side, they build their roads and the ditches drain water. The farmers there harvest. They harvest all of the hay that's possible, unless it's a terribly wet year. But they harvest that hay, so it's not getting into the waterways. And I really thank them for that because all of the water that's in North Dakota and Minnesota along the Red River comes through into our lakes. And it doesn't do our lakes any good at all.

But it does two things: it does supply feed that they can use for their livestock and it's not at a cost—that isn't at a cost to any government agency. When we start trying to clean up Lake Winnipeg, there's a cost to that. There's a cost to our fishing industry. There's a cost to so many things we just don't think far enough ahead when we are doing certain things. So the Minister of Infrastructure should take note that just because they put a mound out there that you can drive on, doesn't mean that he doesn't have a responsibility to put a drain beside it.

At any rate, it's going to take some time to turn all of this around. I think, with co-operation between governments and agriculture, with the farmers, the conservation districts that are in any one of the area—they know what's going on in the areas—they need to be consulted and, hopefully, at committee, that the minister that's bringing this bill forward will pay attention to it. Pay attention to what's being said there. And he may want to make some significant amendments to his bill. He may not, but, at least, come there with an earpiece that he'll be able to hear what people are saying.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words today.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Indeed, a pleasure to speak to Bill 5 today briefly. I know we do want to get this particular piece of legislation on

to committee and hear what Manitobans have to say about the proposed changes under this legislation.

I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'll begin by saying that, looking at the number of calls I get to my office over the last number of years, probably water issues bring the most number of calls. And I think the old adage is, you know, whiskey is for drinking but water is for fighting over. And we see that more and more all the time, especially when, during years or terms of high water or excess water, there's always seems to be concerns coming forward from a lot of my constituents and, certainly, constituents around Manitoba.

And, you know, go back to 2011 when we had so much moisture in southwestern Manitoba, it was absolutely amazing to drive around that country on the first day of September—I remember taking a bus tour through there, and there was—which would normally be, in southwestern Manitoba, combines to no end there. But, spending about six hours on the bus that day travelling all over southwestern Manitoba, there was not one single combine going in the fields that year because a lot of the—most of the crops in that area were not even seeded that year because of the excess moisture. And, certainly, the producers in that, and this is a very, very large piece of southwestern Manitoba, in fact, did not see the crops that year and actually had trouble for a couple of years after that in terms of seeding crops.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And the real irony in that story is for years that particular area of the province was the most driest conditions that would exist in anywhere in Manitoba, and it was really something to see that dramatic change with all the excess moisture there.

And, clearly, we've suffered through some major floods in Manitoba in the last few years. We certainly recognize that a lot of—more water is coming from our neighbours in Saskatchewan; there's currently a lack of drainage regulations there in Saskatchewan. I do think, from what I understand, there could be some changes in terms of regulations into the future, but, for now, I think the signal to the producers there is that regulations are coming, so we better make sure we do all the drainage we can at this point in time. And, clearly, that has serious ramifications for us here in Manitoba.

And I know my colleague from Arthur-Virden raised a point today in his private members' statement. We have one individual in his riding that

was severely impacted in 2011 from flooding. And I know the promises have been made across the way from the government that, you know, we're there for everybody and we'll be standing beside the people that got flooded and we will make sure compensation is available. But the fact of the matter is that a lot of those issues have not been addressed, a lot of those claims remain open and they haven't been resolved. The case that the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) raises is a very substantial flood, a very substantial loss in income, and a loss in his cattle herd, and it has a dramatic ramifications for that particular family farm.

And, clearly, agriculture producers along the Assiniboine Valley are still facing flooding issues, outstanding claims that haven't been resolved as a result of the operation of the Shellmouth Dam. And, again, the promises were made by the government, but it looks like they're handing—hiding behind their actual legislation that should be designed to actually protect producers in that region. And, unfortunately, very few cheques have been written to those agricultural producers who have been flooded out year after year after year, and it certainly is very disheartening to see. And I know those producers in that particular area are very frustrated with the government and have been for quite some time.

Clearly, changes have to be made in terms of recognizing the implications to Manitoba producers, and I think it's incumbent on a government to make sure that they're doing all they can in terms of the long-term management of water in Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand this particular legislation will have a name change for conservation districts, changing them to watershed districts, and I think there certainly has been a movement within conservation districts to recognize watersheds. And there has been some money and some work done on watershed-management planning, and I do want to commend the conservation districts for their work in this regard.

You know, conservation districts, in my mind, have been a very effective tool at the local level in terms of managing water and providing programs to producers and also to area residents, so it's not restricted just to agriculture producers. And I've also find conservation districts have been very effective at leveraging money to provide those particular services and programs to area residents, and I commend them for the work they do.

My constituent, Heather Dalglish in the RM of Cornwallis, she is the head of the conservation districts at this point in time, I know she does a lot of work with conservation districts throughout the province and certainly is encouraging conservation districts and the promotion of conservation districts and some of the municipalities that are not involved in conservation in trying to bring them onside.

* (16:50)

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, from first-hand knowledge, I have a lot of issues being raised in one municipality that is not part of a conservation district and trying to work with government to work through some of those issues, and there is quite a few issues in that particular municipality. And I think it would be a lot easier for the local residents who are having these water issues to be involved in a conservation district so they have someone there working directly on their behalf.

And, unfortunately, we get into a situation where we have conflict between the municipality and the provincial government and the landowners, and a lot of the issues can't get resolved, and it's quite dramatic.

In fact, you know, I just had another call this week, in fact, from that particular municipality and some residents that were having issues, water issues, in their area. And we've been pretty frustrated in terms of trying to get those water issues resolved. And I think it's about building relationships, and, hopefully, the government will work towards building relationships with conservation districts, and, hopefully, they will be promoting the conservation district philosophy with those municipalities that are not involved.

I do realize that there is some financial repercussions to the government. If a municipality does want to get involved in a conservation district, I certainly hope that the financial side of it isn't holding this government back from promoting those municipalities that are in conservation districts because, in my mind, they actually do very good work.

We have had some successful water management projects. I'm thinking about, for instance, on Pelican Lake, there's—there had been a diversion set up there quite a number of years ago, and it has proven fairly effective in terms of managing the levels of Pelican Lake. The only time that we run into trouble is if we do have a period of

excess moisture and that was a bit of an issue for a couple of summers, that we had some excess moisture there, and so we did have some, a couple of times, when we had excess moisture in the Pelican Lake and we had trouble trying to get it—keep the water down to protect the cottage owners around that particular area. But having said that, you know, to me, that was phase 1 of a much larger projects that could be undertaking. So we're starting to have a little more of an active look downstream of the Pembina, on the Rock Lake and Swan Lake. There is some issues that where we're trying to address there. But, of course, when you deal with water, everyone has a different perspective on water levels, water management and how those types of things are going to work.

As a result of the flooding on the Souris River, and, I guess, speaking of a couple of my communities, I know Wawanesa now, after the flood of 2011, they've taken it upon themselves to get a dike around their community. So they're in pretty good shape should any significant flooding happen on the Souris River. So that's certainly very positive to see.

I know the community of Souris, I think they're in the final throes of finalizing some of their diking around their community so that hope that their community would be protected as well should we encounter serious flooding.

And I should offer to members an opportunity to go and visit Canada's longest swinging bridge in Souris, Manitoba. That particular bridge was actually washed out or actually taken down during that high flood of 2011, and the bridge was subsequently rebuilt partially by a disaster financial assistance program. So it is a fabulous bridge there now, and it would be a good opportunity to go and visit that particular structure, Mr. Speaker.

And it is good to see the work that was done. Obviously, there was a cost to the local community there as well. And it was fairly substantial. I think it's about a \$5-million structure by the time it was replaced. So, certainly it is something, if you take the time; if you're driving down No. 2 Highway, take a few minutes, stop in Souris and see that significant landmark there.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a mention. I know my colleague mentioned the idea of tile drainage. And there's no real regulations in place at this point in time, but I know other—some local municipalities that are taking a proactive approach in

terms of how they manage and regulate those particular structures, and I think there's opportunity as more and more tile drains go in, that we have a look in terms of how we regulate the moisture and the water associated with tile drainage.

And there certainly is a lot of work ahead in terms of water management here in Manitoba, and we certainly look forward to working with municipalities and producers around the province in the future.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I just look forward to this particular legislation going to committee, and hearing what Manitobans have to say about this particular bill.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this matter?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands).

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

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): On House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, March 7, 2016, at 6 p.m., and, if necessary, on Tuesday, March 8, 2016, at 6 p.m., and on Wednesday, March 9, 2016, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands); Bill 13, The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework); Bill 15, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Recognition of Customary Care of Indigenous Children); Bill 17, The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act; and Bill 18, The Path to Reconciliation Act.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, March 7, 2016, at 6 p.m., and, if necessary, on Tuesday, March 8, 2016, at 6 p.m., and on Wednesday, March 9, 2016, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 5, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands);

Bill 13, The Education Administration Amendment Act (First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework); Bill 15, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Recognition of Customary Care of Indigenous Children); Bill 17, The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act ; and Bill 18, The Path to Reconciliation Act.

Should we proceed to the next bill?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, insofar as there's two minutes before 5 o'clock, I recommend that we call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 3, 2016

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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