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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I was tempted to ask leave for the House to sit 'til December. I was quickly dissuaded by a conversation almost—in fact, unanimously amongst all members of this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I know that private members' time is not usually used for government business, but could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to consider Bill 22 for concurrence and third reading, and for leave of the House to then bring forward a motion to concur the report of the Rules Committee after that.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed directly to Bill 22? *[Agreed]*

And is there also leave of the House, after we've concluded the business of Bill 22, to proceed to rules concurrence, concurrence of the rules? Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 22—The Elections Amendment Act (Signatures Required for Nomination Document)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call, under concurrence and third readings, Bill 22, The Elections Amendment Act (Signatures Required for Nomination Document).

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 22, The Elections Amendment Act (Signatures Required

for Nomination Document); Loi modifiant la Loi électorale (nombre de signatures exigées sur les documents de mise en candidature), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

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

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, all aboard the love train.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pettersen: I'm touched. I've only been in four and a half years but, believe me, it's been the highlight of my life. I always wanted to be in politics right from when I was 14, writing a paper on American history on George Wallace, and how times have changed, you know, with Trump there.

But I always wanted to be in politics. I was a teacher for 33 years and loved it, and wanted for my children to grow up to go into politics and so I'm very touched to have the four and a half years to work in this building and to work with you people on both sides of the House.

As a teacher, I always said I always wanted a laugh a day. And believe me, teaching is a tough job and sometimes you don't get that one laugh a day. But I use the same theory here, in the Leg. And there were some times, you know, you're laughing out loud and things were great, and there's other times when things are serious and you almost want to cry, the situation that comes on, so emotions are back and forth.

But, as a teacher and as a MLA, I'm proud to say that honesty, integrity are so important—so important—as a teacher but also so important as a politician. And, when I was elected and was given the mandate to represent Flin Flon, I had a daunting task. The constituency of Flin Flon always pointed—they said, look at what's happening in Thompson, look at what's happening in Le Pas. We've got to do better. And at the time, just before Thompson, they just got a \$100-million UCN building and Le Pas got a \$60-million library, so, you know, my task was, like I say, a hard mountain to climb. But, you know, I have to say that with the work of our Premier (Mr. Selinger)—especially our Premier—and his

Cabinet ministers, but especially the Premier, we worked hard. And for my constituency, overall, I was able to add up about \$180 million worth of funds for different projects, roads.

In Flin Flon, we're changing the landscape there; we're going to be building a brand new ER, 20-some-million dollars. We had just—spending \$20 million on the road into Flin Flon, it's only 15 kilometres. And this is why, Mr. Speaker, that task is so daunting. The NDP had been in for 14 years and my previous MLA could not get the 15 kilometres done. Same with—I talked to—I was going to say Mr. Lemieux; I can't say that, but I say—*[interjection]* I—okay—sorry.

But we try to get 15 kilometres done to Nelson House but, like I say, there was a person that kind of controlled the North and, believe me, it wasn't me, so it was a daunting task to get anything done. And the other most important thing I think I was very proud of is making sure Cranberry was kept on the map. We spent \$23 million on a residence, \$3 million on a industrial garage and we're hoping to get a—updated kitchen facilities, that cooking can be taught there. Cranberry's very, very important in the education of the North, and I'm very proud to have worked very hard to make sure that we support Cranberry and northern education. Thank you. Thank you.

We've done a lot of things in our party over the years but like I say, I'm only here four and a half years. I—alls I want is a small little 'asterik' at the bottom of the page that, you know, the member from Flin Flon was there when the member from St. Vital, who was the Education Minister at the time, brought in the antibullying bill, Bill 18. As a teacher, that was one of my proudest moments. And you know what, I know everybody want it on both sides of the House because it's the best for children. We might have want to, you know, dot this i and cross this t on either side, but overall I think both sides of the House realize that we needed that bill. And, as far as a teacher is concerned, that was very important for me.

* (10:10)

I taught 33 years and, of course, I've taught criminals, I've taught murderers, rapists and I taught some kids that committed suicide. And, believe me, that is not a fun time. That is not a time when you always think—and I always think back to Schindler's List, but, you know, I could have done more.

You know, you see kids that are reaching out, but you don't understand that. And right now what's happening in Cross Lake is just one—one—First Nation. There's many First Nations that need help. Pukatawagan, Nelson House, Tadoule, all these First Nations have unemployment rates over 75 per cent. They need hope, and, you know, I have to say our government has stood up, even though maybe it's a federal jurisdiction, our federal government has said, you know—our provincial government has said, you know, it's not just about the money; it's doing the right thing.

And I really am glad to be part of that and I know the Premier and the minister from The Pas and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was up at Cross Lake and it's a sad time. I know my friend from Dauphin, the minister from Dauphin, used to teach up there, and like he said, he went through that many years ago, so the process of that happening is going on and on and on. There's a pattern.

Let's break the pattern. Let's stand up together, both sides of the House and say, we've got to do something. In my constituency, in the Flin Flon constituency, I have, like, the highest per capita income, but I also have the lowest. It blows your mind that there's kids there with a high-school education that are making over \$100,000 a year. And then I can just drive or go on the winter road, say, to Pukatawagan, and, you know, 75 per cent of the people don't—75 per cent of the kids don't have that chance.

We need roads. We need a road from Flin Flon to Puk and Flin Flon to Lynn Lake to open up the North, to open up opportunities, open up opportunities so the youth can leave and go look at the opportunities, whether it's in Flin Flon, Le Pas, Saskatchewan, whatever. They need to have hope and in my constituency, you know, I go around to the reserves, I go around to the small cities of Lynn Lake or—small city—small towns of Lynn Lake or Leaf Rapids, and of course they used to be mining towns; they used to be vibrant. I mean, at one time Lynn Lake was at 3,000 people; they're at 400. One time Leaf Rapids was at a couple thousand, and they're at 400.

These towns need opportunities, whether it's through education—I mean, there's infrastructure, and I hope—like I say, I'm proud as a MLA to have gotten the Premier up to the Flin Flon constituency, up to Flin Flon, up to Cranberry, up to Snow Lake. He came and talked there, but I would like other

ministers on both sides of the House to visit these towns of Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake. They need opportunity. They need—possibly there's going to be a mine in Lynn Lake, but the whole mining thing has changed. It's changed in that the huge companies of HudBay or Vale, they're looking at doing minimal investment in those areas. They want to become just a resource company. They just want to mine and ship the ore out. Forget about polluting in China or in India or whatever, because there is no restrictions there, and forget about the investment that the province has put in for a hundred years in Flin Flon or in Thompson.

We can't let that happen—we can't let that happen—we have to fight to make sure that the North is viable. We have to make sure that we stand up for the North. That is the most important thing, I think; we have to realize that the North is under stress right now, whether it's the Port of Churchill, whether it's Thompson or Flin Flon or any of the reserves, it's under stress, and we've got to, on both sides of the party—whoever wins the election is going to have to come and look and see and maybe make some tough, tough decisions. I hope so.

I think—as I was writing my speech last night—I've written about 300 different copies. I don't know if you know this, but I was so depressed, so—and I don't know if I can say this—pissed off. But I went to Cuba for a month. I went to Cuba for a month, I took dance there, I took two weeks of salsa dancing, one week of tango. Yes, I want—*[interjection]* Thank you, thank you.

I—and I will not dance here, Mr. Speaker, I promise that. I'll leave that to other members but, no, I went there to get my head on straight, to find out what do I want to do. And my goal—my goal when I came here is to represent my constituency the best I can. And I'm proud of what I've done. I'm proud that I stood up, you know, for the betterment of Manitoba and the betterment of the NDP party.

I have to say, five of my closest friends—I mean, there's a lot things being said in the paper, but I look at them as the five loyalists, and we had a tough time as a party, as the NDP party. We're not going to hide from that. And when the five loyalists stood up and gave up their jobs, gave up their careers, it was a daunting task for our party to put—bring it all back together. And it's still a big job.

But I had a decision to make and, like I said right from the start, if you're a politician, it's up to your honesty and your integrity. And, when I was

asked for my honesty, I had no hesitation what I was going to say. Unfortunately, for some, they think it was the wrong decision. But I made a decision, and that's what I have to say with everyone on our side of the House, is that I respect everyone's decision. It maybe was different than mine, but I respect it, because we stood up for what we believe in. And the thing about bullying, we have to realize, if we're going to talk the talk, we're going to have to walk the walk.

And, during that period of time, there was a lot of shenanigans going on. Some, I think, we're not proud of, but it was still going on. And I have to say—and I have to say it now—I thought of this many times, do I want to say it? But during that time of the leadership, there was an agreement. There was an agreement with the minister from Thompson that the status quo is not a choice in that he—we had dinner over that—he would support us on the second ballot, and we would support him.

The night before, of course, the minister from Thompson, we had a couple drinks. It was the minister of Dauphin and the minister of the—Seine River. And, of course, we all shook hands on it, but, of course, the next day, integrity and honesty was not his traits. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was the member from Thompson that said to me over lunch one day, he says, Clarence, make sure you walk in with your integrity and make sure you walk out with your integrity.

And it's ironic—I know this hurts, but I have to say it. I have to say it because things have happened that shouldn't happen within our own party. We shouldn't be eating our own. And what I mean by that, after the leadership election, then, all of a sudden, the minister of Thompson is already thinking about the next leadership. And I'm one of the casualties of that, I guess. He wants the 60 delegates.

So I'm not proud saying this. I didn't want this to be part of my speech, but you know what? If I don't say it, who is? And if we're going to talk about bullying, we've also got to walk the walk. I couldn't live with myself because bullying is—antibullying is very important to me, that we stand up to these. I mean, you look at the way Trump—what he's doing down in the American elections. We can't allow that.

And so I want to move on from that, but it's something I have to say.

Now we're going to be coming, I guess you would say, on April 19th, there's going to be a

change. We don't know what the change is. The biggest comeback in political history could happen. In fact, I told the Premier (Mr. Selinger) I wanted to be there for it. Ironically, I won't be on that side of the House, I guess. But that—I feel bad because, you know, even in today's caucus, you know, people were saying, well, you know, you're always a NDP, and I always will be. I love what they stand for; I, you know, whatever. But, I guess, at the end, maybe the party that I voted for is not this party. I don't know because I am conflicted.

* (10:20)

But the people of Manitoba, I trust the people of Manitoba. They will decide on the 19th. They have, in the past, decided and we've had many great leaders of—from both sides of the House, and I'm not worried one little inch of who gets in. I know the opposition premier will—has a track record to look back on, that the Conservatives done very well. All he has to do is look to Saskatchewan. And I do—I do have something to say about that. I was born in Saskatchewan and, yes, after all these years, you know, telling you guys to get off the melons, I actually am a Saskatchewan Roughrider fan. Yes, yes, yes. I know, I know. I, you know, the truth will set you free.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pettersen: I know, the truth will set you free. And I guess I had to say that.

But, you know, guys, I've enjoyed every minute that I've been in here and, Mr. Speaker, a lot of it is thanks to you. You have kept control and you've led us and scolded us and set us straight in many ways. And I know you're going to be leaving, so I congratulate you on the great job that you've done. I thank you.

I also have to say, there's—the other people that are retired, or quitting, or whatever, I have to congratulate them. They've worked hard and they deserve the time of rest. And some of you on the 19th, like we were just kind of laughing, some of you might not have any choice; you might be leaving anyways. So, I mean, I also congratulate you for running because any time that you're involved in politics it's an honour. You're representing your constituency, you're representing the people of Manitoba, you are representing your party and I hope it's in that order because that is important. Your constituency needs you to stand up and work together.

And I hope, you know, lately in the Leg., here, of course there's been, you know, talk back and forth, and both parties are—and all three parties are trying to scare each other, scare the electorate. But I have to say that, you know, when you leave it up to the people of Manitoba, they will decide. And when they decide, I'm proud to say that they will make the right choice. And I'll support whoever the leader is. And I have to say that if it's the Leader of the Opposition, he just has to look to Saskatchewan. If it's the greatest comeback in history, then, you know, I'll be supporting him.

And I just want to say thanks for this opportunity for letting me speak and I wish everybody the best and thanks. You're all friends and if you're ever up in Flin Flon, please come and see me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I support this bill and I hope it proceeds and is accepted into law very quickly.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, just a couple of words prior to speaking about Bill 18.

I want to thank the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) for his comments. I don't think that I'll ever hear the phrase love train again in my life, but if I ever do, I'll think of the member for Flin Flon and the comments that he's left us with today and beyond.

I—while I have the chance, I've not had the opportunity to say a few words about the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), and I wanted to take that opportunity. We were in a difficult position sometimes because we were neighbouring ridings—are neighbouring ridings, and we represent different parties, which can be a challenge, at times, in terms of personal relationships. But I wanted to say that the member for Dawson Trail was always an honourable member. We had disagreements, but it never became personal, I don't believe. We were always able to speak in a way that had as much friendship as you could have on other political parties when you're in neighbouring ridings, and I appreciate that. And I wish him and his wife and his family well in the days ahead.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention my predecessor, Mr. Penner, who also has always had a very fond place in his heart for the member for Dawson Trail. I'll leave it to the member for Dawson Trail to talk about the first time they met here in the House and

their past friendships. But I do know that he always spoke very well about the member for Dawson Trail. Also, his wife, Bev Penner; I get together with Bev quite a bit still, and she often asks how you're doing, and I know that she'll wish you well on your retirement as well.

I—Mr. Speaker, I haven't had a chance to address you during a time when you're in the Chair. Being House leader and interacting with Speakers is sometimes a bit of a challenge, and—for the Speaker, of course, but also for the House leaders at times. And the relationship is important because there's a lot of things that have to happen in this House that happen behind the scenes, and, of course, some of that happens with House leaders from different parties, but a lot of that is involved with the Speaker as well.

And, you know, we supported you in your run for Speaker; we did so believing that you would be a fair Speaker, that you would be a Speaker that would respect this House and the dignity of the House but also allow members to have the debate that's necessary in this House.

I think I've told you in the past, but, you know, one of the reasons why you had our support was the work that you did as a committee chair when you were involved with committees in the past. And we saw that you were fair and gave all opportunity to different parties and different members, and it's important for others who might be doing committee work in the future to think of that and to know that members watch that and they respect people who are involved in that committee process and all processes of this House.

So I wish you and your wife well and hope you get a chance to travel and do different things beyond the Legislature. I look forward—I don't know how to phrase this exactly, but at some point in the future you'll be hung in the Legislature—your portrait will be hung in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker—and I hope that you'll put me on the invitation list because I'd love to come and see your portrait unveiled when it's here in the Legislature. It'll be, I think, an honourable time because you've been an honourable Speaker.

In terms of this particular bill, this was a recommendation by the commissioner. I don't usually—of elections, the Chief Electoral Officer. I don't usually comment a lot on what their recommendations are other than we accept them. We know this is a busy time for those who are involved in the election process right now.

We appreciate Elections Manitoba and what they're doing in getting prepared for the election, those who've been enumerating and those who will be—continue on through the process during the election.

This recommendation has come from their office; we accept it as something that they feel will help the election process run better, and we look forward to other recommendations that the Chief Electoral Officer might have in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, just to close out—

Mr. Speaker: Debate?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, just to close debate on this particular matter. As I indicated earlier, there's several matters that are related to government business that we wanted to, by consent, by agreement, move through the House, and this is one of them.

I just want to briefly comment that, as the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) indicated, there's all leaders' party support for this particular recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer. If one is out door knocking, as many of us are today, you will see there until recently were still people going in the snow and the rain trying to get names on the voters list. And I'll go a little further than the member for Steinbach and indicate that we really felt for—those people that have to do the enumeration and the electoral officers and the very tight timelines they face with respect to preparing the list.

This was a recommendation, essentially, by the Chief Electoral Officer to help those people and clarify their work in a world where the very time constraints that we put in place to allow for more revisions to electoral lists and more opportunity conflicts with the old notion of having the old Anglo-Saxon notion of having so, so many names. So this was a very, I think, efficient and genuine recommendation, which is why we, as all parties, agreed to it.

* (10:30)

I also want to close out with a comment I often use in the House, from the sublime to the ridiculous, which is a quote from Napoleon Bonaparte on the island of St. Helena when he was sent there. And most of the stuff they would do in this Chamber, as

illustrated this morning, is on the spectrum of sublime.

Admittedly, there's another spectrum, the ridiculous, that occurs in this House which—it's not the best choice of words but I happen to think that a lot of what we've done in the last few weeks and a lot of what I heard in this Chamber from members, both today and other days, is part of that tradition in the parliamentary system of respect and honouring the opinions of members who are, as we know, in the end responsible to the people that elect them, and the respect shown for yourself and the other departing members and the comments that we hear in this Chamber, I think, whether positive or negative, are part of that extraordinary tradition of speaking, of being able to represent your constituents in this Chamber, which is, by all counts of any of us who are here, one of the greatest honours we all have.

And, with those few comments, I hope we'll have an opportunity to put the question and deal with the next matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 22.

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

CONCURRENCE MOTION

Standing Committee on the Rules of the House First Report

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that the First Report of the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House received on March 10, 2016, be concurred in.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Any debate?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): I just want to put a few words on the record regarding this particular iteration of the rule changes.

As we always do, it's important to thank the Clerk's office who has been very involved, obviously, with the creation of the rules, drafting them, bringing forth suggestions in terms of rules that should be changed to make this Legislature run better.

Obviously, the last iteration of rule changes that we went through a year ago were much more significant in terms of how the Legislature runs, how bills move, how they're timed; that was a difficult but a very worthwhile process. Coming out of that we committed, as House leaders, to have continuous meetings and to have regular and annual meetings, to not make as major of changes but to fine-tune things where they weren't working well or they could be worked better.

This particular tranche of rule changes—a lot of them came from the Clerk's office in terms of suggestions, in terms of rules that either maybe had fallen into disuse or didn't make a lot of sense in terms of why they were still on the rule changes. Some of them had to do with minor corrections to the way things were printed, but there were also some other things in there that are important, I think, to all of us as MLAs in terms of how the House time gets used and that it gets used in the most appropriate fashion.

I don't have any idea coming out after the next—this election who will be the House leaders for the parties that are elected or which parties will be forming government or opposition, but I would certainly hope that the House leaders who follow myself and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and also the MLA for River Heights will also work in that same spirit of co-operation.

I have great admiration for the member for Kildonan in terms of what we've been able to do together, and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in not only making significant changes to the rules that, I think, improved this Assembly but also to have a commitment, to have a continuous dialogue. I was surprised to learn that a rules committee even existed a while back, and then the fact that it hadn't sat for 10 years. After we went through the first change of rules, I realized why nobody had sat in it for 10 years, because it was so difficult. But that was because there hadn't been changes for a long time.

I think if we can continue this pattern of having regular meetings, House leaders who will co-operate, to recognize that this isn't a zero-sum game when it comes to rules in the House. What comes at the benefit of one party doesn't have to come at the expense of the other party; that there are rule changes that happen that benefit all of us, whether you're in opposition, whether you're

in government, or whether you're an independent member of this Assembly.

And, Mr. Speaker, if we can continue that spirit of co-operation, whoever fulfils—or, fills our roles after the next election, and I would certainly encourage those future House leaders to have those regular discussions. You won't always agree on the rule changes, you—there are times where you'll find it's not to your advantage to agree to certain sorts of things. That's okay. You can set those aside and look at other things so that the changes to the rules don't always have to be monumental, always have to be seismic but they should always be fine-tuned and they should always be looked at because, at the end of the day, it benefits not just us as MLAs but it benefits our constituents, as well.

So I am proud of the fact that we've been able to work co-operatively together with, of course, the staff of the Assembly, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the member for River Heights, to continue that process and, hopefully, have a bit of a cultural change in terms of the Legislature. That we recognize that the rules are here to benefit all of us and, if we can have a set of rules that make sense for all political parties, regardless of where you are—either in government, opposition or as independent members—that it is, in fact, beneficial to everyone.

So I, again, thank my friend from Kildonan and my friend from River Heights for allowing us to get to this point where we are going to, I think, pass this next set of rule changes in a unanimous fashion, and I leave an encouragement for future House leaders to work in the same spirit of co-operation and bipartisanship and non-partisanship to effect other rules that we either weren't able to change or that we didn't have time to look at, at this particular time.

And, in particular, and I put this on the record, the issue of committees and how committees function in the Assembly, I think that has to be looked at. There are a lot of good things about our committee system but there are, certainly, many things about our committee system that could be improved, both in terms of membership, in terms of—in making that more stable, in terms of the kinds of things that committees can do, to both empower and engage MLAs more effectively, and also to recognize that the presentation system that we have within our committees is important and that all parties, regardless of they're in government or opposition, should respect that and do everything they can to respect that process, because it's

something that's both fairly unique to Manitoba, but also important to Manitoba.

So I encourage, and leave as a challenge to the future House leaders of the respective parties, to look at that as the next go-forward item on the issue of rules, in terms of how our committees operate in this House, because we've made great improvements, but I think there are things that could continue to be improved and could continue to be worked on.

So, thank you, again, to my counterpart from Kildonan and the member for River Heights for their co-operation and working in both a friendly, a non-partisan and a statesman-like way on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): These—this is the second in what I expect will be a significant and ongoing series of rule changes.

And I want to thank, personally, the MLA for Steinbach and the MLA for Kildonan, House leaders from the other two parties who have made a very significant contribution and who have worked co-operatively—indeed, I believe we've worked co-operatively together to try and improve things for everybody in this Chamber.

I want to thank, particularly, the Clerk and the Clerk's office and the staff because the contribution that has been made here has been enormous. We are very much in the debt of the Clerk and the Clerk's staff because these would not have happened without that input and without the diligent work in ensuring that every change that was made was reasonable and responsible.

* (10:40)

I believe that these rule changes represent an important step forward. And it's important in creating a situation which is fairer, which is better for MLAs, better for the Clerk and the clerk staff, better for the Chamber and, as a result, I believe, better for all Manitobans. It is good when Manitobans can see that there are instances of real co-operation among parties to try and advance the activities here and, thus, to benefit the whole province.

So I would, once again and in closing, thank the MLA for Steinbach and the MLA for Kildonan for all you have contributed, and I'm sure that as we move forward and have regular meetings of the rules committee, that we will continue to make advances in this area and be able to improve the function of

committees and improve the function of this House and improve, as a result, the legislation that we produce.

Thank you.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to talk too long, but I do have to put a few words on the record.

I really—sometimes there's a conjunction and alignment of the planets that allow for a significant change, and I—it's been extraordinary to me, personally, from the first day when I had discussions with the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and he said, let's just try it. Let's try to change the rules, and we're both say, we probably can't do it. And that was last session, and it was an extraordinary—no one out of this House—outside of this Chamber will really understand, but it was really an attempt to balance and to make lives a more effective and to make this Chamber more functional.

This next tranche of rules though, merely—though mostly administrative-type were pushed on us by the Clerks, and look, Mr. Speaker, there's—I have a tooth replacement I'm doing right now, and the choice between doing the rules committee and a tooth replacement is a, you know, it's a tough—I don't know what decision—would I rather go to the dentist, would I rather go rules committee?

It's not overly exciting, but it is incredibly important because, in a parliamentary system, the rules-based approach that recognizes—and this is something very important that we've done, we actually recognize the role of independent and third parties. We tried very hard to not diminish the role of whoever's the third or an independent party in this set of rules. And the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and the member for Steinbach were equally certain to protect the rights of individuals and the rights of minority interests in this Chamber.

Again, that was quite a tremendous feat. And we shouldn't forget that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) helped us out a lot during last year's first set of rules that we put in place.

And so I want to thank the Clerks and all of the work they did. I want to thank the member for Steinbach. Oh, yes, and I want to thank the member for—Cullen—

An Honourable Member: Spruce Woods?

Mr. Chomiak: Spruce Woods. Thank you—for his assistance as well during the first tranche. The leader of the Liberal Party—the House leader for the Liberal Party, it was again a good example of how we can fight like crazy for our principles in this Chamber, do it within a rules-based context, and still respect each other. It's like any other relationship, it's not that simple, but I'm very gratified that we managed to do that.

I think this is a better place for the rules we put in place. I think it's been a better place since when I was first elected and there's been more women in this Chamber that have helped make this Chamber less of a testosterone factory. I think that the work of the House leaders has been extraordinary. I never thought, in my time, that I'd ever see the kind of rule changes that we put in place, and then the subsequent rules, and I agree with the member for River Heights and Steinbach that the next era, whoever falls as House leader, the next change should be the committee structure. We have the—we are the only place, I think, in the country that has public presentations on all bills.

We're trying really hard to put together two principles: the principle of having people have some kind of assurance that they'll have the opportunity to speak—without waiting for long, long periods of time—and at the same time prevent any party from shutting the door on presenters. And that's a very tough balance in a democracy. It's an extraordinarily tough balance.

And we have had conversations about it. We've been unable to get to it just because of the volume of work, but I certainly urge on whoever follows us in this Chamber to use the example of the member for River Heights and the member for Steinbach in congeniality and in working for the betterment of the Chamber and subsequently the members and our constituents and, quite frankly, the province.

So, with those few words, I look forward to a unanimous concurrence in these rules reading forward, and a hearty thanks again to the officers of the table and yourself, Mr. Speaker, for the way that you have been able to get us to do this through both your commitment and through your hard work and your work in the background.

So thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion to concur in the report of the rules committee? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, as the honourable Government House Leader, on House business?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we—you may have anticipated this; I'm not sure, but I think I'm—I am going to ask leave of the House to move to the PMR and to let the—that was—that will go for one hour.

An Honourable Member: It's not 11 o'clock.

Mr. Chomiak: Oh. I—

Mr. Speaker: So, the will of the House to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 7—Steady Progress on Health Care, Education and Jobs

Mr. Speaker: Now, the hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution under consideration this morning is entitled Steady Progress on Health Care, Education and Jobs, sponsored by the honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino),

WHEREAS although Manitobans have weathered two major floods and a global economic recession, the province has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, with new jobs and steady economic growth; and

WHEREAS the provincial government's diverse team is working hard for middle-class and working families, making steady progress in improving health care and education and creating good jobs while fighting climate change and growing the green economy; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is improving health care, by hiring more doctors and nurses and building more facilities, like QuickCare clinics to help take pressure off emergency rooms and reduce wait times; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has created 14,300 publicly funded child-care spaces since 1999 and has a plan to create 12,000 more spaces so parents can go back to work or school to get the skills they need for a good job; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has made funding for schools, colleges and university a top priority, in order to increase access, affordability and opportunities for everyone in the province, not just the few; and

WHEREAS the provincial government's infrastructure plan means smart, strategic investments in needed highways, flood control, schools, hospitals and downtown revitalization to strengthen Manitoba's economy and communities; and

WHEREAS the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) was a senior minister in the provincial government that cut teachers and nurses, and he has now committed to more than half a billion dollars in cuts that will put the services that Manitoban—that families rely on at risk, including for the most vulnerable people in Manitoba's communities; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Liberal Party's policies are the wrong priorities for Manitoba families, including policies like delaying flood protection projects and removing the health and education levy on large employers which would lead to health—cuts in health and education.

* (10:50)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the front-line workers and hardworking Manitobans who continue to make Manitoba's steady progress possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue to work hard for even stronger health care, education and good jobs for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Concordia, seconded by the honourable member for Tyndall Park,

WHEREAS although Manitobans have weathered two major floods and a global economic recession—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House to consider the resolution as printed in today's Order Paper? *[Agreed]*

WHEREAS although Manitobans have weathered two major floods and a global economic recession, the province has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, with new jobs and steady economic growth; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government's diverse team is working hard for middle-class and working families, making steady progress in improving health care and education and creating good jobs while fighting climate change and growing the green economy; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is improving health care, by hiring more doctors and nurses and building more facilities, like Quick Care clinics to help take pressure off emergency rooms and reduce wait times; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has created 14,300 publicly funded child care spaces since 1999 and has a plan to create 12,000 more spaces so parents can go back to work or school to get the skills they need for a good job; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has made funding for schools, colleges and universities a top priority, in order to increase access, affordability and opportunities for everyone in the province, not just the few; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government's infrastructure plan means smart, strategic investments in needed highways, flood control, schools, hospitals and downtown revitalization, to strengthen Manitoba's economy and communities; and

WHEREAS the Leader of the Official Opposition was a senior minister in the Provincial Government that cut teachers and nurses, and he has now committed to more than half a billion dollars in cuts that put the services that families rely on at risk, including for the most vulnerable people in Manitoba's communities; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Liberal Party's policies are the wrong priorities for Manitoba families, including policies like delaying flood protection projects and removing the health and education levy on large employers which would lead to cuts in health and education.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the front line workers and hardworking Manitobans who continue to make Manitoba's steady progress possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to continue to work hard for even stronger health care, education and good jobs for all Manitobans.

Mr. Wiebe: It's indeed my pleasure to rise today to bring this very important private members' resolution before the House.

And it's an exciting day, Mr. Speaker. I have to be frank; it's exciting because it's the last day that we're going to gather in this House, and it's an exciting day because, like many of us, I've been out on the streets; I've been speaking with constituents; I've been speaking with the people of Concordia. And I can tell you it's an invigorating process. It's something that gives me a lot of energy. It gives me a lot of hope. It gives me a lot of excitement. There's no shortage of good ideas; there's no shortage of good conversations to have with the people of Manitoba.

And I'm very proud when I speak to them, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud that I can say to my constituents, look in your own backyard; look in our wonderful province. We can see with our own eyes the good work that this government has done, and we can see the future before us very clearly.

I will take this opportunity to say thank you, thank you, thank you; I can't say that too many times to the people of Concordia. As I said, and I've said many times, I value their input. I do take it to heart. I do spend a lot of time on the doorsteps listening as well as telling people our vision for the province and where we've come. But I do appreciate their input and the kind words and the encouragement that they give me.

But I'm hearing very clearly from them many, many things. I'm hearing very clearly from them the pride that they have in this province. I hear very clearly the pride they have in our neighborhood, in our communities and very, very much I'm hearing from them the pride that they have for what we've been doing as a government to make life better for all Manitobans. They understand this. They understand building a better Manitoba for all Manitobans, not just for a few, and they understand that that is so applicable to the place that we come from in Concordia.

I've often said Concordia is a great snapshot of the province of Manitoba. I've got all different income levels; I've got all different kinds of

backgrounds, ethnicities, religious affiliations; I've got a whole milieu of different people in my constituency that can give me their perspective. I grew up in the neighborhood; I feel very passionately about my neighborhood; I think I know a lot about my neighborhood. I meet people on the doorstep that give me a different perspective every single day, and all of them understand that when we're building a Manitoba that works for everybody that that's how we're going to get to the next level, that's how we're going to build our future, not by just catering to a select few.

We only have to look in our—as I said—our backyard, Mr. Speaker, so to speak, in Concordia, whether it be in health care, the health and fitness centre, \$45-million project that will now be moving forward because of the investments in our community from this government: something that will benefit seniors, it'll benefit newcomers, it'll benefit absolutely everybody who uses our health system and not just wants rehabilitation on the other side but needs prehabilitation, needs to stay healthy, needs to stay—preventative medicine to stay healthy and out of the hospital in the first place.

We only have to look at our schools. For the first time in a generation, Mr. Speaker, new classroom space being built, new equipment, state-of-the-art equipment being installed in our schools for the sole purpose of giving our students the absolute best opportunities for the jobs of tomorrow. And it doesn't matter if they start in a trade and they want to go to university, they—maybe they think they want to go to university and they start a trade and see that they really enjoyed in school.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Absolutely every student has all of those opportunities in front of them. Absolutely every student understands just how important the academic side of things is, along with the rest of what they're doing. But for the first time in a generation, new class room space, new opportunities for students in our schools—I can see my time is ticking down here, but I will—I know the House is quite excited; it is the last day, and I assure everyone that you will get an opportunity to have your words put on the record, too.

So, when I talk to the people of Concordia, they understand the investments. They see the \$10-billion commitment to this province. They see the lowest unemployment rate in the country, first or second or

third. They see that people are working; they're working in good jobs. They're seeing the projected second best growth in the country right here in this province and that gives them hope. That gives them a clear path to the future.

Now, I have a bit of a different perspective, maybe, than some in the House. I'm still the youngest MLA, I think, in this Chamber. I haven't caught up to some of the folks in here yet. What I will hope, though, is that there are more young people elected in this upcoming election. I know quite of number who are running have put their names forward and I congratulate them on that because we do need young people because they bring a different perspective to this House. They bring the perspective that the investments that we're making are a down payment on our future. They're a down payment on where our province is going and how it's going to grow in the future.

I know lots of people, personally—I know it's anecdotal evidence, that are seeing what's happening in Winnipeg or in Manitoba. They're seeing the growth; they're seeing the investments, and they're saying that's a place I want to be. That's a place I want to be because it's good—a good place to raise a family and it's affordable and all of the things that we often think of are great things about our province. And I'm happy to talk about those. But, what they often talk about is they talk about the growth and the potential, and we're just getting started here in this province. Young people understand that and we understand that on this side of the House.

I'm being told I need to speed things along here, I have so much to say and so little time, but I do want to talk about what—the other thing that people understand at the doorstep. They understand the danger in electing the other side of the House. They understand the difference between what we have done and what could be done in this province if members from the other side of this House were given the keys government.

They understand that we have made our choices clear. We have talked about investment; we've talked about building on young people, building in education, in health care, in our infrastructure. They understand where we're coming from. And then people say to me, so where are the other guys coming from? And I have to say, oh, I don't know.

In fact, nobody knows because they won't tell us what their plan is. They think that they have some kind of magic calculator that will allow them to cut half a billion dollars a year, that they'll have a magic calculator that'll allow them to lower taxes and still invest in this province, and still continue to invest in the way that we have to keep our economy growing. They believe that there's some kind of magic efficiencies that can be found in government.

Now, we have often talked about the importance of efficiency. In fact, we found many in this province, and I'm very proud of that. But people instinctively understand that there's no easy solution to this. There's absolutely no easy solution to this. They understand that if we want our economy to grow, it takes some investment. The federal government understands this and people understand this on the doorstep.

I'm proud, when I can talk to them, to be clear with them where we stand, to be clear in the investment that we want to make in this province and, at the same time, talk about where the members of the opposition are coming from where they won't tell us what their plan is.

*(11:00)

Now, the members of the Liberal Party will tell voters where they're coming from. Their laundry list of priorities aren't the priorities of Manitobans, but when they talk about privatizing Manitoba liquor they—my constituents understand, instinctively, that this is not a good plan. When they talk about cutting the health and education levy and cutting \$400 million from those—from education and health in our province they understand, instinctively, that this is not the right thing to do.

So, as we close in this House, and I appreciate always the opportunity to speak and put some words on the record, but what I appreciate even more and what I'm even more excited about is going out those doors today going to talk to the people of Concordia to the people of Manitoba to humbly ask for their support once again to put my vision and our vision on the table clearly, and to say this is where we're going, and I ask for their support to do that.

I would ask the members opposite to do the same put their vision clearly on the record and we'll see where we stand April 20th.

Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): It is, indeed, a pleasure to stand on this and put a few comments on the record to follow up with the resolution made by my colleague from Concordia.

And I would like to indicate that it would've been nice if we would've heard factual and accurate information from this member. It would have been nice if there had been a clear picture painted of what the province is experiencing right now.

We did not get that in this resolution. What we got from this government is what we usually get from them, and that is all talk, all spin, all rhetoric. They just want to look at something, they're cherry-picking and they are not actually looking at many of the challenges that are out there right now.

I will speak to health care, my other colleagues are going to address the other areas, but there is a serious challenge in our health care system, Madam Acting Speaker, and this government does not want to admit it. Instead, what they're doing in all of their comments, whether it's publicly or in here, is fearmongering. That is showing such an incredible disrespect for Manitoba voters. To think that Manitoba voters are going to be put in such a position, I think, shows such incredible respect for the intelligence of voters in this province and, right now, we do not see Manitoba voters buying into the fearmongering that is put forward by this government.

And the fearmongering—and we've seen it in particular by some members that is very vitriolic—it is awful, dangerous rhetoric, and they don't seem to have a concern about how far they go in making those types of comments. And, you know, it's not just, you know, light comments; these are significant comments; significant fearmongering that is going on. And a government that could stand on its own record would not have to fearmonger like that. The only reason they're fearmongering like that is because they can't stand on their record.

And in the last campaign that is what their campaign manager told me as I met him in the hall right after the campaign finished, and it was Michael Balagus and I ran into him in the hallway and I said to him, Michael I said: Thank you. You brought American-style politics to Manitoba. That's the first time we've ever seen it so awful.

And he said to me, he says: Well, what else are we going to do? We were going for a fourth mandate—a fourth majority mandate. We couldn't run on our record, so we had to fearmonger. He told me that in the hallways of this building, and I knew, then, that this election was going to be even worse because if they couldn't defend their record from four years ago they wouldn't be able to defend their record now.

And so, in fact, Madam Acting Speaker, we were expecting this because they have nothing more to give. All they can give right now is fearmongering because their record doesn't stand up to very good scrutiny. We have the longest ER wait times in the country, not one year—two years in a row. We could fly to Europe on the time it takes somebody sitting in an ER to get cared for by a doctor in an ER. That's how long our waits are. That is not acceptable. This government promised, in 1999, that they were going to end hallway medicine. Well, 17 years later hallway medicine is not even close to being resolved. In fact, we've gone from hallway medicine to highway medicine to taxicab medicine to parking lot medicine to no medicine at all for some people in Manitoba. So the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) forgot to put that into his comments, the longest ER waits in Canada.

On the flip side of that are the people. It's not just the rhetoric. It's not just the information. It's the fact that there are some people sitting in ER waiting rooms waiting for care. We have heard of a person that has had a stroke. We have heard of a woman miscarrying. All of these things have been happening because people are waiting in a waiting room and they can't access care.

This week we have heard of a rally; in fact, a rally in the Interlake on Friday. Mr. Speaker, 300 people showed up for this rally, 300 very scared, very frustrated people because of a severe doctor shortage in the Interlake. In fact, the CEO of the Interlake RHA had indicated that they were short up to 40 doctors—40 doctors—and that loss of doctors has only occurred in the last couple of years under the watch of this Minister of Health (Ms. Blady).

Why have so many doctors left the Interlake, and why are so many continuing to leave? We have a crisis in that area. These people that rallied on Friday were worried that their ER was going to close. They have every right to worry because this government has closed over 20 rural ERs.

They're also worried at the information that is now floating in the area, not only with—might the Eriksdale ER close, but so might the Arborg ER close. They are very afraid because if somebody's going to be having a stroke and needs immediate care, they're going to be on the highway, so they're calling it highway medicine, and, in fact, they are saying it is in absolute crisis.

And yet this has gotten worse and worse under this government, and all we get out of them is this ridiculous spin and rhetoric about the things they think they're doing so well while some of the most significant areas of concern are going undealt with.

If we look at the doctor situation, Madam Acting Speaker, over 2,300 doctors have left Manitoba under this government. We have the worst doctor retention rate in Canada, and we have the highest reliance on international medical grads.

Why is it like that? Why have they not dealt with this situation? Why have they not put together a proper physician recruitment and retention plan that should have been dealt with a long time ago? Southwest Manitoba has been in a doctor shortage crisis for years; now the Interlake. What's next, Madam Acting Speaker?

We also see a nursing shortage in Manitoba that everybody is silent about. A year ago, we were told through the government reporting that there's a nursing shortage of over 1,800 nurses in Manitoba. Those are vacancies. Recently, the MNU has indicated there will be another 1,000 retirements coming up in the next few years.

Last week on Monday, this Minister of Health, in her seat in this House, said the problem is fixed. There is no nursing shortage. How in the world are we going to address a problem like that if they don't think there's a problem?

I met with nurses yesterday and they are very concerned at the lack of acknowledgement of this issue by this government and the lack of action. We have had, in the last two years in Manitoba, an expense of \$49 million in two years on overtime—almost \$50 million in overtime in Manitoba in two years. In the last five years, this government has spent \$47 million on private agency nurses. Those are private duty nurses. Those are coming out of a system that this government trashes all the time. If it wasn't for those agency nurses filling the holes, we would have a health-care system that is indeed crumbling.

So almost \$100 million in overtime in private duty nurses. Where has this government been in acknowledging the issue, being truthful about the issue, and putting some kind of plan in place to address this issue? Instead, we get bafflegab out of them over and over and over, and they're not out there talking to people who are directly affected by these areas.

This government has been gouging people in Manitoba with the highest ambulance rates in Canada, and for 17 years they haven't addressed that at all—the highest ambulance rates. We've got seniors and poor people that won't take an ambulance, that may deny some of their challenges because they don't have the money to pay for the highest ambulance rates in Canada.

* (11:10)

And the people in the Interlake and all the rural areas where they have closed rural ERs, guess what's happening? Those people are taking ambulances because they can't drive to their own ER, and they are being charged for ambulance rates.

Madam Acting Speaker, if that isn't two-tier medicine, I don't know what is.

And one of the biggest problems coming up is the significant shortage of personal-care-home beds. If we want to look at why our ERs are in crisis, all we have to do is look at the failure by this government to build personal-care home beds. We have a waiting list of over 1,200 and this government has absolutely failed. That is one of the biggest issues, and it is going to go from a crisis to a catastrophe because there are no shovels in the ground except in one place.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, they have failed. Thank you.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): First of all, I'd like to just give my best wishes to all of those people on both sides of the House that are retiring, and thank them for the many, many years of service that they have given to their constituencies and to the people of Manitoba. And I know they're going to have a wonderful time out there enjoying the—enjoying that retirement.

It's my own personal desire not to join you right now, so I'm hoping that the people of Burrows will consider keeping me on. We've done a lot of good work in there and I'm so—as the member from

Concordia was speaking about how grateful he is to have had the honour of being able to represent his people, I couldn't feel more gratitude to them for allowing me this chance to be here and to work together with them.

They are an amazing, diverse group of people and I'm reminded as I go door-to-door—which was one of my favourite—is always one of my favourite things, because you just meet so many amazing people, as we all know in here on both sides. It's always interesting to me how willing people are to share their hearts with you, having just met maybe the first time, in actual heart-to-heart conversation, and sharing about what's going on in their family, and what they might be going through.

And I've had people cry at the doorstep because we brought in cancer free drugs for all people saying how grateful they were for the many, many things that have happened, and for the things that we still need to do. It's certainly not suggesting that there aren't many ideas about how to improve things as the member from Concordia spoke of as well.

So I'm very grateful to him for bringing this motion forward. We know that we are doing very, very well in Manitoba. We have one of the strongest economies, and as I've been going door to door, people have really—really understand that that job growth—that being No. 1 in job growth in 2015, be having the second lowest unemployment rate, being able to have—make sure they have jobs. And there's just really nothing more important, Madam Speaker, than being able to provide for your family.

And that's what our government is focused on: ensuring that every Manitoban has the ability to provide for their family, and to make sure that they have a quality of life that is decent and good for them. And that's what we've been working on ensuring for all of our years.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The Conference Board of Canada of course just came out recently and said that, you know, this growth that we're seeing is also very connected to the—our decision to invest in infrastructure and flood mitigation, to not do the kind of cutbacks we're seeing from the other side's position.

A few other things that we're in education—I'm very, very, very proud of everything that we're doing there, but particularly working to—ensuring that all people, and our—all of our indigenous people, get the best opportunity possible. And so some of the things,

Mr. Speaker, that we've put into there is \$500,000 to academic Aboriginal achievement. That increases that fund to \$10 million.

We also know that—and we have many programs that work with these kids, kids that have to come off reserve to the city to further their education. And, so, our commitment to \$500,000 for transitional services when coming off reserve is key.

We also have programs, like in my area, for example, Wayfinders, which works with our kids who come—newcomers—kids who come from the North and have to come here without their families at a young age in order to carry on with their educational program. So helping them be able to do that, to feel welcomed and at home and cared about, I think is just tremendously important.

We've also increased our commitment to community schools, and I have community schools in my area. One of them, for example, is the Elwick Community School, and they have just done a tremendous job at reaching out to the community and making sure that everyone in that area knows that, you know, that school's open for them to be able to use for all sorts of things at all times. And I think increasing that is tremendously important.

The Continuity of Care legislation that, I think, has just seen first reading—ensuring that foster kids, when they're in foster care, that the social worker and the principals will all be working to ensure that they are able to remain—to get the best possible plan. Whether that is remaining in the school that they're in—I know many children that I worked with over the years when I was working in the field of young people involved in crime who would come into a recovery unit, that was just a huge—that's a huge issue, and we want to make sure that those kids get the opportunity to have that kind of continuity of care.

We have also—probably one of the first things I should have mentioned, is our First Nations, Metis, Inuit framework, which is ensuring that the history and the culture is in our curriculum. That things like the '60s scoop, and residential schools, and cultural genocide that occurred are spoken about openly in our schools and in our classrooms. And we're already doing that, but we want to ensure that that continues.

Working on numeracy and literacy, foundational skills, building to job skills—in my own area, I think one of the most important things is our work in the earliest years. And we have seen much, much

research done in this area, and we know that if we can help a baby, for example, be born full-term instead of premature, we have changed the trajectory of their life forever for the better. Many, many chronic illnesses are connected to a baby being born over three weeks premature. And so things like our prenatal benefits, that makes sure that we are reaching the most vulnerable women. Things like PIIPC, that works, again, with some of the most vulnerable women in our province, are so important.

And these things are at risk. The Leader of the Liberal Party has come out with some policies that I just can't even understand anyone thinking that dropping—that cutting the corporate tax of our five per cent of our richest corporations—and I'm hearing from members opposite that the Conservatives support and endorse that plan, as well—is \$471 million out of health care and education—a disgrace. I don't know what else to call it, Mr. Speaker. But to suggest they should not pay their fair share, I find absolutely beyond belief. It doesn't help businesses if we do not educate our children. It does not help businesses if health care needs are not met. And there has been not a word about how this money would be replaced.

People are shocked and stunned at the idea of selling off our liquor stores, as well; \$300 million out of our budget, again, money that goes to health care and education and addictions. That money, now, is being used to help all Manitoba's people. And those two proposals in themselves are shocking. The Liberal leader's idea bringing equity is to give well-off women a tax break that's worth \$7 million.

Do you know where else that \$7 million could go, Mr. Speaker? It could go into green teams for our youth, to continuing to improve that. It can go to teen moms. It can go into increased prenatal benefits. It can go to things that actually affect equity in our province.

* (11:20)

So—oh, I haven't even gotten to the Conservative agenda. That's because we're not sure what it is. But one of the things we know it is, going back to the Leader of the Opposition's comments in 2013, where he said he would cut half a billion dollars out of the budget. He will—now, I believe he said he will remove that 1 per cent, so that will end up—end the investment in infrastructure and in flood mitigation, and he's going to balance the budget.

Well, anyone with any math skills whatsoever know that that is impossible—cannot be done. You cannot take out that much revenue and still continue all the investments.

So I have found the people at the doorways are very, very astute about these things and they're not wondering which set of policies are better. It seems clear to them that they can see the investment that has occurred all over Manitoba and their desire to ensure that jobs and health care and education continue to be supported is very, very strong.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion.

I want to address several matters in this motion, one being the payroll tax. The NDP refers this as a health and education levy, but they long ago put this money into general revenues, so any relationship to health and education spending is not now clear.

First of all, the Liberals' commitment is quite clear: to start reducing the payroll tax when we have balanced the budget and reduce it over a number of years. Liberals are, and will be, fiscally responsible. This is important because the payroll tax drives jobs and investment out of Manitoba, and we need to fundamentally change the climate in our province and send a message to entrepreneurs and to Manitobans that we will change the culture and improve the outlook for jobs and investment in our province.

The NDP have claimed that there's recent job growth but, in fact, employment in Manitoba today is less than it was in June, 2013, a month before the NDP raised the PST by 1 per cent. The claim that the NDP are based on spin, spin, spin and not on reality. It's important that Manitobans know what's really happening.

Mr. Bidhu Jha, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It is also sad that, under the NDP, the sales from manufacturing in Manitoba are below now the level they were at the high point in 27 and 28—2007 and 2008, I'm sorry. So that high point was a number of years ago, and what has happened has been a decline in manufacturing. And although there's been a little bit of recovery, we're still below where we were.

With regard to flood protection, I believe that a Manitoba Liberal government will work faster and much more effectively to prevent floods, at working co-operatively with Manitobans and with the federal

government. Let's face the facts that in 16 and a half years that it took the NDP to bring in a surface water management plan. That bill, we hope, will be passed soon. But the fact of the matter is that the NDP have been a go-slow party for this province when it comes to aspects of flood protection which are really, really important.

As far as the liquor commission, the Liberal plan is not to privatize the liquor commission; it is to keep the liquor commission responsible for the wholesale for liquor. We will enable people who work in liquor stores to have the opportunity to become the owners and operators of those stores. Mr. Speaker, we will provide people with opportunities as well as providing an environment in which we support entrepreneurs, we support initiative, and we end the practice of governments advertising to the sale of liquor. Governments should be regulators; governments shouldn't be the promoters of liquor sales all over Manitoba.

Manitoba Liberals are, and will be, fiscally responsible. We know that the province's finances can be much better managed than they have been in the last many years under the NDP, and Manitoba Liberals will do this. Manitoba Liberals will be accountable. We will change the way that the infrastructure program works so in fact that there is true accountability and it will support municipalities in a far better way than is currently happening under the NDP.

All Manitobans have been very distressed at the chaotic and problem area of Child and Family Services. The front-line workers are doing their best, but it's the NDP who have operated a framework which has been a disaster. Our candidate in Fort Richmond, Kyra Wilson, has a tremendous amount of experience in Child and Family Services. She has heard the stories, the very painful stories of many, many children and families suffering under the NDP system. And we will make the changes to have a system that works better, that all who work within the system will be proud of the system because it works better and better supports families and doesn't need to apprehend nearly as many children. This will be helped by investments in housing and in nutrition in the North to reduce—to improve the supports for families and improve living conditions.

In health care under the NDP, we have extraordinarily long waiting lists in our emergency rooms; this has been reported nationally. These

are far too long and it's very poor management of our emergency rooms. Mr. Speaker, The Brian Sinclair inquest looked at this very carefully and put forward an extraordinary number of observations of mismanagement by this government and recommendations for improvement. Those recommendations need to be promptly implemented instead of being left on the table, and there are so many which are still not implemented.

Manitobans deserve and should have as a top priority a 'dedicated' stroke unit. Mr. Speaker, every other province in Canada has one. Dedicated stroke units have been shown to reduce disability and death to stroke significantly, and Manitoba Liberals will put that as a top priority.

Manitoba Liberals are concerned about the epidemic of diabetes, and under the NDP, they have not paid the attention, not done the effective changes that need to be made to address this. We have gone from 50,000 to more than 100,000 Manitobans with diabetes in our province. Manitoba Liberals will address needs of northern housing and northern food and nutrition, among other aspects to make sure that we have a focus that we turn this epidemic around and that we improve circumstances.

There are real needs for a long-term, effective, proper plan for personal-care homes in this province and Liberals will do that review and put that plan in place.

There is a need to better support home care and recognize that we can do even more than we are doing in home care, and particularly that occurs in rural areas where there's many shortfalls.

There are improvements, always, that can be made and we will work with those who work in home care who perform a tremendously important service to Manitobans to make sure that the home-care system is built up and even improved significantly from where we are now.

In child care under the NDP, we have had more than 10,000 children waiting for years for spaces. Manitoba Liberals will bring forward plans to really address this issue and not just tinker. We need a proper system that will make sure there are no longer these extraordinary waits and uncertainty for many young mothers.

In children, I have brought forward, with the help of the MLA for Riding Mountain, the bill on newborn screening. And we have passed that and it

becomes into effect in September. It is an important step because that difference will make a difference for children for their entire lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals will do the same in making a difference that lasts a lifetime by making sure that every child with autism gets the therapy they need. We will make sure that we move, under medicare, some of the services delivered by psychologists so that assessments for children and help with behaviour and learning disorders are there quickly, so that we can improve the lives of children and make a difference for children that lasts a lifetime, and improve the lives and the functioning of our education system in the lives of teachers, because we are paying attention to getting children ready and not, as the NDP have done, gone slow on too many policies.

* (11:30)

The NDP directive that we uncovered in a Freedom of Information request showed that the NDP were asking all departments to go slow on implementing. This was an extraordinary measure and it's really incomprehensible why the NDP would do that.

Manitoba Liberals have a dynamic leader in Rana Bokhari. She is younger and forward-looking. From her perspective, Manitoba Liberals have progressive policies which are fiscally responsibility and environmentally sustainable. Manitoba Liberals are committed to doing what is needed because it is the right thing to do. We need, and we are, building that support province-wide for the Manitoba Liberal Party and the Manitoba Liberal Leader and the Manitoba Liberal policies. And our-Manitoba Liberal Party will continue to grow the support and we hope, indeed, to have a Liberal government on April the 19.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure to stand up and put a few factual words on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I thought actually, when the member from Concordia was standing up and was going to be bringing forward this resolution, I thought, maybe, it was his farewell speech the way it had started, but then as it sort of wrapped up it turned into just the resolution for today.

So the resolution today, it talks about steady progress on health care, education and jobs, and we

found that, in the last election—2011 election—and myself since I was the class of 2011—I found that, as we were running in that election, there was many things that were at the various doorsteps within my constituency that absolutely was troubling Manitobans. They were feeling that the government of the day, the NDP government—and back then it was still the Selinger government—had not been listening, had stopped listening to Manitobans. And then, what did we have, we had a candidate that was actually going around and drinking a little bit too much of the NDP Kool-Aid and promising that they were going to do all these fantastic things over their next mandate if they would just vote the NDP in.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And one of the things that the candidate was going around and promising was to do all these great things without raising the—without raising taxes, without raising the PST, and in fact the candidate, the Selinger candidate, had also kept mentioning—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I want to remind the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) that, when we're referencing the members of this House, it's by their constituency name or ministers by their portfolio. So, I'm asking for your co-operation.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that last comment.

So the NDP candidate was going around and promising—basically repeating the same thing that the member from St. Boniface had mentioned, and that was that they weren't going to raise any taxes.

And so we know that, in the Lac du Bonnet constituency, that the Manitobans who call the Lac du Bonnet constituency home didn't buy into that spin, Mr. Speaker, and, therefore, elected me to be their MLA, and it's been a great privilege sitting in this fantastic House, this Manitoba Legislature, representing the constituents of Lac du Bonnet.

Now, we did find that, over the next two and a half years after that provincial election, they didn't only broaden the PST, they actually raised it by that one point or 14 per cent which then was bringing in roughly a half a billion dollars back into the NDP general revenue.

Now, what have we found? We found that this government is basically—they have a broken record. They've got broken trust, and they're a total broken government, Mr. Speaker, and more and more as we

listen to members from that side of the House either say their farewell speech or listen to comments, whether via Twitter, as the member from St. Norbert has dove into that, that it is a fractured team over there.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I did want to spend a few minutes this morning talking about the state of our education in Manitoba here. This coming year would have started my 22nd year as a teacher, and I absolutely—when I decided to run to become an MLA, I left the teaching profession when I was still loving it, and this was an opportunity to come and represent the people of the Lac du Bonnet constituency, but not only the people of the Lac du Bonnet constituency, but come into the Manitoba Legislature and bring in those—back then, the 17 years of experience I've had working in the school system, also in student services and bring that expertise as well as all the contacts that I've had the pleasure of meeting and making over all of those years within the education world.

And there are absolutely fantastic teachers that are trying their absolute utmost best in this great province of ours, Mr. Speaker. But, as we continue to hear, as the time goes on and as we're getting closer to the election date, more and more people are coming and speaking quite loudly that it's—that they're frustrated. They're frustrated with the amount of things that are being top-down delivered onto teachers, basically downloaded onto teachers, downloaded onto administration, downloaded onto school divisions.

And we see the Minister of Education; he went on a vote-buying tour and spending spree, Mr. Speaker, in the fall, and that continued on right after Christmas all the way up 'til the blackout period. And what's interesting is that we have a Minister of Education who is repeating the lines of the member from St. Boniface all of the time, and he's basically patting him on the back.

And there was an interview done in the University of Manitoba paper, *The Manitoban*, and the Minister of Education had said, and I just want to repeat it because I find it a very interesting quote, because this tells—this should be talking to all of Manitobans about where his mindset is and where he's thinking of going and continuing on with this Education portfolio, if he so does get re-elected. The Minister of Education said, and I quote. He said, what we've successfully done in Manitoba is to

change the equation from if I go to university to when I go to university.

Now this speaks to the limitations of his experience within the education world. This doesn't talk to the thousands of students that don't necessarily choose university. University is a great option. It's one of the options.

There's also college, apprenticeship, private vocational institutions. For goodness' sakes, there's also the option of entrepreneurship, students getting out right out of high school and starting jobs. In some cases, students go on to post-secondary education and then they decide to, after a little bit of time, switch gears and decide to either go to college or go from college to university. It does happen.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

But for this minister to straight-up basically say that they are changing the fact that they want to see students go just to university, he's ignoring all the facts on exactly what the options are, Mr. Speaker and Madam Acting Speaker.

Now, some of these situations that are going on in this province right now is the fact that we are absolute last—last in Canada. Manitoba is last in Canada when it comes to literacy, numeracy, and science, Madam Acting Speaker—last in Canada.

* (11:40)

At one time, we were actually leading the country. We were in the top three in the country in literacy and numeracy, now we're dead last. And over the last results that had come out, we actually fell further from 9th. So we are absolutely at the bottom, and it seems to be getting worse under this NDP government, and under this leadership of this education minister.

What else has come out? Well we've got the Auditor General report on the state of our Aboriginal education results and stats, and the fact on what the Education Minister's actually accomplishing, and it's a scathing report. We're showing that the Aboriginal graduation rates is 55 per cent, which is actually 2 per cent lower than in 2010, Madam Acting Speaker.

So that is not going in the right direction. We also see that the Auditor General had blamed a lot of this on the fact that—lack of leadership—lack of leadership in encouraging the programs to get moving.

So, with that, Madam Acting Speaker, I appreciate the time. I know that we're looking for a change for the better April 19th.

Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Thank you very much, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, and it's great to see you in that role today. It looks good on you; you may want to consider running again.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I waited. I was hesitant getting out of my chair this morning, because I thought that members opposite would actually want to speak to this resolution if it's something that they felt so strongly about, but I suspect that many of their members, like our members, see through this as nothing more than a desperate attempt to deflect from the abysmal realities of their track record under this NDP government.

And that's nothing more than what this is. It's smoke and mirrors, it's trying to deflect away from the true realities of the track record of this NDP government. In fact, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, if members opposite truly wanted to run on their track record, they would if they could. But they can't because their track record is so abysmal. So we know that that's why members opposite are afraid to get out of their chairs today, to put some words on the record with respect to their track record, because it is an abysmal one.

But I know my colleague from Charleswood and my colleague from Lac du Bonnet have touched on the various areas of healthcare and education. Of course we know, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, that we are dead last in healthcare wait times and ER wait times in the country, and that is not a good track record. Again, why members opposite don't want to get up and crow about the past.

We know also that in the areas of education, as the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) so eloquently put earlier, that we are dead last in some of the fundamental areas of education. And what's unfortunate, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, is that that is hurting our children and our future generations in Manitoba. We're dead last in the areas of reading, writing, arithmetic, science, and that is—that does not bode well for the future of our province, our future workforce here in Manitoba.

So I want to thank my colleagues for putting on the record those facts, Madam Acting Deputy

Speaker, but I also want to talk a little bit about jobs, and the facts surrounding jobs here in the province of Manitoba. Of course, we know that Manitoba is down 6,600 jobs from this time last year, that's net jobs; of course, we're down over 11,000 full-time jobs. Manitoba lost 5,300 jobs in January alone, the second most among all provinces, and Manitoba lost—has lost seven—9,300 private-sector jobs and self-employed jobs since the PST hike, and the second-worst record in Canada.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So we're dead last, or almost dead last when it comes to job growth, especially since the NDP implemented the PST hike, which we know, of course, has hurt the lower earning Manitobans and those most vulnerable in our society. And we know that the tax hike has hurt those people, but it's also hurt jobs for those people. And that's unfortunate.

We also know that Manitoba has lost 7,900 private sector jobs since this time last year alone.

And so those are the facts of the job losses in Manitoba under this NDP watch. And we know that they, under a desperate attempt before the last election, when they went door to door and they promised not to raise taxes, we know what they did.

Their first available opportunity, they got in and they expanded the taxes, and then that wasn't quite enough in the way of revenues to deal with their spending addiction. Then they had to raise the PST 14 per cent, from 7 to 8 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And that's after they stripped away the rights of each and every Manitoban to have a say on that tax hike when it comes to a referendum on major tax increases or major tax changes in Manitoba.

We of course know that that used to be in the balanced budget legislation, Mr. Speaker. And we know that members opposite have zero respect for those people who have fought for our hard—for our way of life, and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) will have four minutes remaining.

The hour—the one hour allocated for private members' resolution has elapsed.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

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