

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	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
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	NDP
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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 9, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 36—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2015

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 36, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2015, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, this bill implements budget and tax measures contained in Budget 2015, supporting steady jobs, good growth, innovation and technology, a green economy, culture, volunteers, caregivers, seniors, students, graduates and renters.

Mr. Speaker: Pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please indicate by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please indicate by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

* (13:50)

Order, please. The question before the House is first reading of Bill 36, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2015.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wiebe, Wight.

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 29, Nays 20.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: So is there further introduction of bills?

Bill 37—The Radiation Protection Act

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour, that Bill 37, The Radiation Protection Act; Loi sur la radioprotection, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Blady: This bill will update the requirements for the installation and operation of X-ray equipment in Manitoba to better protect patients and health-care providers. We want to ensure equipment is being operated to the highest standards to best protect Manitoba health-care workers and patients.

Thank you.

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

Bill 38—The Intimate Image Protection Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the minister of child and youth opportunities, that Bill 38, The Intimate Image Protection Act; Loi sur la protection des images intimes, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill helps Manitobans cyberbullied or victimized by the distribution of nude or intimate images by enabling lawsuits for damages and other relief, and establishing Manitoba's own Cybertip.ca of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to help get those images down from the Internet or connect victims to criminal and civil remedies.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 213—The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I move, seconded by the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: This bill will establish a bill of rights for Manitoban seniors, establish an elder abuse protection team, 'imposed'—impose a duty to report elder abuse, prohibit reprisals from reporting elder abuse, permit and encourage information sharing about elder abuse, Adult Abuse Registry committee, the minister responsible for The Protection for Persons in Care Act and the executive director appointed under The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act, and make it an offence to make a false report and require the minister to table annual reports in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions. No petitions? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public

gallery where we have with us this afternoon Madison Dodds, grade 10 student at Souris School, who is the guest of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) and a constituent for the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk).

And also in the public gallery we have with us this afternoon from Faraday School, we have 57 grades 4 and 5 students under the direction of Mr. Paul Vernaus, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Mr. Chief).

And also located in the public gallery we have from Rosenort collegiate, we have 22 grade 11 students under the direction of Arlin Scharfenberg, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin).

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us this afternoon John Melnick, John Melnick Sr., Jan McGillvray and Pauline York, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Non-Profit Organizations Funding Notification

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, further to an issue we raised last week with the Premier concerning the clawback of—by the government from a number of non-profit agencies of approximately 16 per cent of their remaining year's budgets, according to the FIPPA response we received—and there's some confusion on this, I guess, by—maybe centring around the Premier—but according to the FIPPA response we received, 122 non-profits were communicated with and told that they should remit back 4 per cent of their annual budget in the remaining quarter or 16 per cent of their last quarter's budget.

Now, the Premier's hastily prepared talking points said that that wasn't the case, that only five agencies got notified.

So I would like the Premier to clarify today: Where does the error lie? Is it in his office or is it with the team at the FIPPA response agency?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I do remember the question. And in response to his

question, where the error lied, the error lied on his part of the House where, in fact, they thought that money had been clawed back which hadn't been clawed back.

Mr. Pallister: Well, then, if that was the case, why wasn't it in the FIPPA response?

The FIPPA response said that 122 agencies working—non-profit agencies working with some of our most vulnerable citizens were told to remit back a significant amount of their resources. The Premier says it didn't happen. He also said in his response that there was a mistake made and that there were communications made to these various agencies to say, we didn't really want your money, yet agencies have contacted our members and said that's not true. They were asked to remit money; they were not contacted not to remit money. So there's a contradiction between the talking points that the Premier's referring to again today and the actual facts as we are led to believe they occurred.

*(14:00)

So I'd ask the Premier again: Did or did not he ask these 122 agencies to remit 4 per cent of their annual budgets back to his government?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we clarified this last week. Agencies received correspondence. It was clarified that the money was not to be remitted, that they did not want to take the money back.

This is quite different than what we heard this morning with the Leader of the Opposition's announcement on social impact bonds where there would actually be profits flowing out of the community, Mr. Speaker, and not be available for front-line services.

We protected front-line services in this budget. The members opposite have voted against that. We've ensured that front-line services are protected for families, social agencies, health care, education. As a matter of fact, there's been some significant increases in a variety of these agencies to ensure that they can continue to offer these front-line services.

Mr. Pallister: Well, asking front-line services to remit 16 per cent of their remaining budget is hardly protecting front-line services.

So let's get this clear, then. According to the Premier of Manitoba, the FIPPA employees got it wrong, okay; a civil servant who was responsible for responding got it wrong; non-profit agencies all got it wrong; everybody got it wrong except the Premier.

But he's got six months to develop his spin, so let's hear it again. Let him prove it if, in fact, an effort was made by the government to communicate to these 122 agencies they didn't have to sacrifice their already scarce resources, Mr. Speaker.

Let's have the Premier table some evidence, a single piece of evidence that such an apology or a correction actually occurred, or is it just in his talking points on his desk?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the money was not clawed back from these agencies. The budget has substantial resources to protect front-line services.

Members opposite proposed \$550 million in cuts. I don't think they've communicated that to the non-profit sector, that they'd be losing all that kind of money; perhaps they ought to do that.

The budget has protected health-care services, education services. We've seen increases equivalent to the growth in the economy, Mr. Speaker. We've seen adult learning centres receive additional resources this year. We've seen targeted resources go to the non-profit sector that are doing many important things in the inner city, and we will continue to support those agencies. We won't put them in a situation where they have a bond that generates a profit that goes outside of the community.

We believe in social enterprise which keeps profits and supports in the community, reinvests in the community, creates jobs in communities, allows people to have labour market opportunities in communities and get on with their lives in the communities. That's what we're doing.

Non-Profit Organizations Funding to Agencies

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, just when you thought the NDP couldn't sink any lower, they're clawing funding from 122 not-for-profit agencies.

They've decided to blame a civil servant. In this case, we are told that this staff person made a mistake and, I quote, did not understand how the process worked, end quote.

Mr. Speaker, this career civil servant said in their email to the affected agencies, and I quote, I have been directed, end quote, in reference to the clawback.

Is the Premier (Mr. Selinger) now saying that there was no direction, that this staffer just simply woke up on November 28th and, on their own, decided to send an email to the affected agencies asking for the clawback?

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

Of course, the premise of his question is entirely incorrect, as the Premier has just clarified there was no clawback. In fact, we continue to support community agencies because we believe in community agencies. We want to make sure that community is connected with our—with other organizations so that we can continue to enhance the quality of life for every Manitoban.

Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, with the Leader of the Opposition; he wants to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget. That won't do anybody any good anywhere in Manitoba.

FIPPA Request Costs

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the minister and the Premier are falsely claiming that only five agencies received the clawback request.

In the FIPPA response, I asked for a copy of the correspondence sent to affected agencies. I was advised it would take 35 and a half hours at a cost over \$1,000, and I'll table that estimate of cost.

Is the Premier suggesting to the Legislature that receiving five pieces of correspondence, as he claims, requires a payment of over \$1,000 in a week's worth of work?

Mr. Allum: Again, I want to indicate to the member opposite, because this is a very important question, that the premise of his question is entirely wrong.

There was no clawback of funds and, in fact, we continue to invest in community organizations and community agencies in order to improve the welfare and well-being of all of our communities, not only here in Manitoba but across—not only here in Winnipeg but across Manitoba.

Now, the member opposite has been a part of a opposition that has one goal and one goal only, and that's to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget. And as I said in the last question, Mr. Speaker, that won't do anybody any good anywhere in Manitoba.

Service Provider Numbers

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, according to the FIPPA response, in reference to the clawback request, and I quote: The total number of service providers that responded was 122. End quote.

Could the Premier explain how, if only five not-for-profits, as he claimed, received the request, that 122 actually responded to the request? Or would the Premier like to use this opportunity to stand in the House and correct the record for putting misleading information on the record?

Mr. Allum: You know, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that proposed a budget that's focused on jobs for Manitobans and opportunities for young people, and part of that equation is investing in community organizations and community agencies to make sure that we have healthy neighbourhoods and healthy communities.

The members opposite have voted against everything we put on the table to invest in communities. They voted against investments in social services agencies. They voted against neighbourhoods and they voted against the people who live in those neighbourhoods.

The biggest threat to community organizations in this province is the Leader of the Opposition and every member of his caucus.

Social Impact Bonds Social Service Program

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, today the PC Party of Manitoba introduced the use of social impact bonds and the programs they fund as a way to help families deal with the complexity of government programs.

This government has been criticized for their lack of transparency, as we've seen here today, and their complicated and administered-heavy programs.

Would this government join us today in exploring an exciting innovative program that has been gaining attention around the globe as a way to mobilize private sector altruistic capital for the public good?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think Manitobans are entitled to ask how this member and this party opposite purport to represent the interests of not-for-profits, of children and families, when they announced their vision for child care, which is higher fees for parents,

lower standards for kids, higher profits for international corporations.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, actually, I would encourage the member to actually read the statement so that he would understand what we have to say.

Given this government's record of reacting only in crisis, would it not be better to be more proactive when dealing with the issues? I'm sure this government agrees with all of the experts on social policy that it is necessary to deal with the root causes of problems and to measure a meaningful outcome, something this government has no history.

Why can this government not support the use of social impact bonds as a way to achieve a desired outcome?

Mr. Mackintosh: Members opposite just have a new election slogan, Mr. Speaker. It's not not-for-profits.

Mr. Speaker, they have a vision of lowering child-care standards to entice private companies to provide child care in Manitoba, and they're going to do that, they said, by eliminating red tape. Parents actually call it The Child Care Safety Charter. They call it nutritional standards. They call it space and amenity requirements.

Parents call it protections; they call it red tape.

Moody's Investors Service Manitoba's Credit Rating

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): This government only responds in crisis. Why wouldn't they get behind a proactive approach?

Mr. Speaker, Moody's has once again commented on the poor financial performance of this NDP government. On May the 1st, Moody's expressed new concerns about the continued lack of fiscal discipline and the NDP's failure to eliminate the deficit by '16-17 as they promised. Credit negative is the term that Moody's uses.

Moody's was skeptical last summer when they issued a negative outlook. Now they're deeply skeptical and have issued a new warning.

Is the Finance Minister not concerned that the indicators are increasingly unfavourable?

*(14:10)

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): We've had the opportunity to debate this issue in the House and in Estimates, Mr. Speaker. We obviously take

any points raised by any of the bond rating agencies seriously.

As members will know, our ranking is two steps higher than it was when members opposite were in government.

I also remind the members that both Dominion Bond and Standard & Poor's affirm our ranking. Our ranking is one of the highest in the nation, Mr. Speaker. When you remove the resource-based provinces, we're one of the highest, and we'll continue to do that.

But I just want to ask the member, just earlier on in this session, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, he stood up and he voted against a tax rebate for aviation fuel purchases for international commercial flights. The member opposite just stood up and he voted against a \$325 tax credit for volunteer firefighters. The member opposite just stood up and—

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

Manitoba's Credit Rating Government Spending Forecasts

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): We voted against record debt and rising deficits.

Mr. Speaker, this new statement by Moody's offers the harsh criticism that there is a reduced willingness to return to balance, and the failure to make progress on financial targets is placing additional pressure on Manitoba's current rating with a negative outlook.

And what's the Finance Minister's response? He removes from the budget the financial forecasts for total government spending, forecasts that would reveal that Hydro debt will soar in the coming years, forecasts that were in the budget last year and the year before that.

What does this Finance Minister think that he can hide key financial information on total government spending from the world's bond rating agencies?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Again, Mr. Speaker, just earlier on in this House, the member voted against a tax decrease for small businesses. He voted against the research, development and tax credit; he voted against extending the film and video tax credit; he voted against expanding the green tax equipment tax credit; he voted against the Cultural Industries Printing

Tax Credit; he voted against the housing rental construction tax credit; he voted against the Seniors' School Tax Rebate; he voted against Rent Assist.

I say shame on that member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Friesen:—knows full what we voted against is a government that hides key financial information from Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the writing is on the wall. International bond agencies are warning of a looming credit downgrade because of this NDP's financial mismanagement, limited options, and this Finance Minister has no magic wand to wave to make it go away. The NDP is hiding the total government spending forecast from Manitobans and hiding it from Moody's.

When the Finance Minister next meets with bond rating agencies, won't he have to reveal then what he is hiding now about total government spending forecasts? If he has to tell Moody's, why won't he come clean with Manitobans, provide the real numbers and stop the cover-up?

Mr. Dewar: I remind the member just a few short minutes ago that they voted against the seniors' school property tax rebate, Mr. Speaker, which increased the maximum rebate from \$235 to \$470. We'll increase that next year to two-tee thousand three hundred. They voted against Rent Assist.

Earlier on in question period, the member for Portage stood up. I thought he was going to apologize to the House for revealing the secret agenda of the members opposite. They want to privatize home care, they want to privatize health care, they privatized MTS, and now they want to privatize child care. Shame on them.

Investors Group Field Maintenance Costs

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, we voted against record increases to the debt which threatens the front-line services that Manitobans need, want and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are tired of paying more and getting less, and one need look no further than the new stadium as a prime example. At a time when we should be celebrating the FIFA World Cup and our very own Blue Bombers here in Manitoba, it's unfortunate that I have to stand before the House

and ask questions about the mismanagement and cost overruns with respect to the stadium.

Mr. Speaker, allegations suggest that the NDP government fast-tracked the project for political purposes just prior to the last election, and we know that the project ballooned from \$115 million to more than \$200 million.

The question is: How much more is this going to cost the taxpayers of Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Mr. Speaker, after yesterday's games, it's impossible not to feel the fever, the soccer fever that's going on.

Mr. Speaker, this past spring, we saw there was Jets playoff fever. The members opposite voted against MTS Centre. Had it been left up to them, there would be no Winnipeg Jets; there would be no Manitoba Moose. They're the party of no: no to hydro, no to stadiums, no to economic development.

The hotels are packed; they're full. Hotels to Gimli, hotels to Brandon, hotels to the US border, hotels are full to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the economy is booming because of FIFA. Members opposite wouldn't have built that stadium. It took a government with vision.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Stefanson: Allegations brought forward by a third party suggest that the NDP government fast-tracked the stadium project for their own political purposes just prior to the last election, and subsequently, Mr. Speaker, the stadium is riddled with construction issues from cracked concrete to lack of fireproofing to heating, insulation and drainage issues, to name but a few.

The question is: How much are taxpayers going to be on the hook for as a result of this NDP mismanagement?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we had a football stadium that was 50 years old. Our fans, Manitobans, wanted us to invest and look at alternatives. We did so. Instead of putting \$50 million-plus into an old stadium, the decision was made to take a look at a new facility, and we could all be proud of the facility we have. Investors Group stadium is one of the state-of-the-art stadiums in all of Canada. Many people have spoken of this.

There are many people who have talked about the economic benefits with regard to what's

happening: Beyoncé concert, Paul McCartney, AC/DC, you know, Taylor Swift, you know, FIFA.

Today I was pleased to attend an announcement and the kickoff to the Grey Cup with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and Wade Miller and Jason Smith and many others, the mayor of Winnipeg, proud–proud–to host these world-class events.

What has the opposition–

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, there has been a consistent lack of transparency on this stadium deal. You know, why is the member opposite refusing to answer this question? Manitobans need and want and deserve to have the answer to this question of how much they are going to be left to pick up the pieces.

Mr. Speaker, how much more is this going to cost the taxpayers of Manitoba?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, Investors Group stadium is in–that investment is generating a lot of economic benefits [*inaudible*]

You know, and the member opposite's speculation and I could ask her, you know, who's the other gunman on the grassy knoll. Someone, you know, said something some time; people are asking questions.

You know, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans can see the benefit. There's huge excitement about FIFA in the province of Manitoba. Automobiles–5,000 automobiles are lined up south of Emerson wanting to come to Manitoba. Sports tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world. Members opposite, take your blinders off–take your blinders off.

Tourism, we've got so many things going on in Manitoba. Members opposite are a bunch of–

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

NDP Leadership Government Record

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): The economy's booming from all the lawyers that are involved with this government, Mr. Speaker, you know, not that that's bad.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the deception from this government over the last

16 years. We saw where they tried to hide an email that the former minister of Immigration had put forward that condemned her and her government. The auditor said that there was no plausible explanation. We saw that there was a blacking out of freedom of information from the Deputy Premier, and they said that that was all–that was because of those–Cabinet information. They said that we–they couldn't show us the massive payouts of political staff, and they dated the cheques so that they won't be revealed in a year from now.

* (14:20)

We know that all the deception, all the gerrymandering that happens doesn't fool Manitobans. Manitobans understand. They don't have confidence in this government. In fact, half of the Cabinet doesn't have confidence in this government.

Why doesn't the Premier (Mr. Selinger) admit he lost the confidence of Manitobans?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Mr. Speaker, like, wow. You don't need this anymore, I'm turning this back in.

But, yes, there was no question and maybe I don't have an answer since there wasn't a question.

But I will just say, if the member opposite has any interest–any interest–in the concerns of Manitobans, why would they go to the wall, year after year, to support that national disgrace, Canada's Senate?

Mr. Goertzen: Actually, you know, the national disgrace of the NDP is making the Senate look pretty good, actually, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the Premier's up to his old tricks again. He said about Crocus, trust me, Crocus is strong. He fired a bunch of civil servants after saying the whistleblower protection act would protect them. He said Manitoba's on track, no, ahead of schedule, to balance the budget by 2014. And he said he was going to do all of this without raising taxes.

Why doesn't he just admit that this is a government that can't be trusted now, it can't be trusted in the future and never trusted again?

Mr. Mackintosh: Time for a new horn.

Why don't they join members on this side and let's get rid of that Senate?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, you're already joining us and helping us try to get rid of the NDP, so why not, Mr. Speaker? You know, we convinced seven of their members to try to get rid of the NDP; we only need a few more.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this government, when they don't like something, they just try to change the law. Crocus was falling apart, so the Premier (Mr. Selinger), then the Finance minister, tried to change the law. They couldn't balance the budget, so they tried to change the law. Didn't want to have a PST referendum, so they changed the law.

The fact of the matter is, we don't need to change the law; we need to change the government.

Mr. Mackintosh: I've got some lozenges here for you. Here, it'll be okay in the morning.

But, actually, Manitobans have serious questions, Mr. Speaker, about whether the Canadian appointed Senate is supporting the members opposite in the last election campaign. There are very serious issues facing Canada. There's a \$92-million boondoggle that the members opposite want to go to the wall for and protect that Canadian Senate. Why don't they get with it? Why don't they get with Canadians and let's get rid of this old albatross?

Children in Care Graduation Rates

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, two years ago I exposed the fact that children—many children in CFS group homes are not going to school. My concerns for the education of children in care are not new.

Today the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy has released a study which reveals the shocking truth, that under this government only 33 per cent of children in care are graduating from high school.

Why has today's NDP government been ignoring the fact that 67 per cent of the children that they are directly responsible for, that's in the care of government, why are they—have that—they've been ignoring the fact that 67 per cent of these children have been failing to graduate from high school—

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

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I actually appreciate getting a question. We just had three rants and now we've got actually a question that focuses on an important matter of public policy, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased the Minister for Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum) commissioned this study for the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy—look forward to the recommendations—has immediately followed up with a task force, with a good—with one of the co-leaders of the task force is what we call the good Kevin Lamoureux—he never was a member of the Legislature—and the other member of the task force, leading the task force, is Tammy Christensen from Ndinawe. They have direct experience in working with young people.

As the member knows, we've extended the mandate for Child and Family Services to provide protection and support for people up to—into their mid-20s, Mr. Speaker, and one of the things we want them to do is to be able to complete high school and go on to post-secondary education. We've worked very closely with institutions like the University of Winnipeg to have tuition waivers. We're seeing good results in high schools and alternative programs being offered in Brandon, in the inner city, in the North End of Winnipeg. The Brighter Futures program is doing a tremendous amount to help young people at risk of completing school complete school. We're getting very good results there.

This task force will take us—

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

Mr. Gerrard: After 16 years, to have only 33 per cent graduating from high school is appalling. It is a shame that this Premier and his government have done so little for so long for the children who are wards of the government.

Today's NDP are the acting parents for these children, and education is one of the most valuable gifts that can be given to a child. What parent would not even know if their children are going to school?

Two years ago, when I raised—and I asked the Premier what proportion of children in care, in group homes, are actually going to school, the Premier didn't know the answer. The Premier's had two years since this to get the basic answer.

I ask the Premier: What proportion of children in care, and particularly those in group homes, are actually going to school?

Mr. Selinger: This is a good question, unlike what we've seen from the members of the opposition who just do three rants and then a round of applause for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

This question was one that we commissioned the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy to follow up on. They've brought back their recommendations. They brought back information about the success rates. Members need to know that our graduation rate in public schools has gone from 71 per cent to 87 per cent. This report was commissioned specifically to look at an at-risk group, and as a result of that report, a very good task force has been put in place with people that have direct experience teaching people to succeed at the high school and post-secondary level.

And we are going to follow up with more supports and more results that will enhance many of the things that are already going on in our high schools, in our junior high schools, in our Brighter Futures programs, where we work with students all year round, after school, in the weekends, on summer holidays, to help them complete school, get supports they need to earn incomes and bursaries which will allow them to go on to post-secondary education.

We can do more. Eighty-seven per cent is a dramatic improvement. We can take it even further.

Child Apprehensions

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, 16 years and still only 33 per cent; 16 years and two years after I asked the question and still no answer.

Mr. Speaker, in my work with children in care, I've found them to be very bright and intelligent. One might say that they have to be extra clever to survive the CFS system under this government. The study shows that children in CFS care are suffering under today's NDP. The problem is that today's NDP government is a bad parent, and as the minister herself said, today's NDP have not designed group homes for raising children.

Why, then, is today's NDP continuing to apprehend so many children and put them in care?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I do actually appreciate the question from the member. It's a thoughtful question, unlike what we've seen from the opposition who continue to go on their ideological rant to privatize. They now want to privatize daycare.

In our daycare system, we have put curriculum in the daycare system called early childhood learning. We have early childhood development programs that start with home visiting and healthy

visits to young families to help them get off to a good start.

We've reduced class sizes in K to 3 to around an average of 20 students. We've added 300 teachers in the K-to-3 area to help young people succeed.

And this report that was commissioned by the minister from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy is focusing in on a high-risk group, a group that we are now providing more services to well into their 20s. We think that we can increase their ability to graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education.

I only wish the member opposite, when he was in the federal government, hadn't cut education programs at the post-secondary level 38 per cent.

* (14:30)

Investors Group Field Manitoba Tourism and Sport

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, we know that during their time in government it was called the no-growth '90s and, actually, PC stands for privatization and cuts.

In our time in government we've invested, and what I saw today was I saw an extra 15-minute drive on my way in to work while I followed hundreds of American vehicles coming in to enjoy FIFA World Cup at our world-class stadium.

Can the minister tell us about the investments to our stadium that are bringing in millions and millions of dollars to the Manitoba economy?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Mr. Speaker, our government listened when fans told us it was time for a new facility and new stadium. And now we see thousands of tourists flocking to see our FIFA World Cup soccer. And we'll also see more coming into Manitoba, as far as tourism is concerned, to see the Grey Cup.

But, Mr. Speaker, aside from all of these events, AC/DC concerts, Beyoncé and so on, an important piece of this is also amateur sport. Our youth will be able to use the facility. It's good for amateur sport, not only soccer but other events, also the Bisons football team at the university. This is an important, important investment for this province and for the city.

And also—and, Mr. Speaker, I wish members opposite would, certainly, you know, take their

opposition hat off just for one moment, and their blinders, and take a look at what great investment it is for the hotels and for restaurants and for the province of Manitoba for tourism overall. Get on board.

ER Services Government Record

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg ERs are in crisis with the longest ER waits in Canada.

When asked in Estimates yesterday how she plans to fix these long ER waits, this Minister of Health said that they would be fixed if everybody would think happy thoughts. She said it's all about neuroplasticity.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health please explain to the many people who are forced to wait for ER care how happy thoughts and neuroplasticity is going to fix long ER waits?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question, and I apologize for having introduced a subject that she clearly doesn't quite understand, because what we—I was talking about was building relationships. And in terms of our ER flows and our strategies, it is about working with those folks on the front lines.

Mr. Speaker, we have a track record and so do they. Their track record is about tearing down. They tear down by tearing down our medical complement by cutting back on medical seats, by firing doctors and nurses. We build up by bringing up medical seats from 70 to 110.

So what I was talking about, to clarify for all Manitobans, that it's about working on building positive relationships. And as with capital investment, as with training, as with—

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

Mrs. Driedger: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure positive relationships are really going to fix our ER crisis.

Mr. Speaker, there is an ER crisis and there are also regions in Manitoba—there are regions in Manitoba that are experiencing a critical doctor shortage. Because of that, two dozen rural ERs are closed.

When asked in Estimates yesterday how she was going to address this issue, this Minister of Health

said that she's still waiting for a, and I quote, "magic health-care wand."

I would like to ask her: Since last evening, did she find that wand?

Ms. Blady: Again, I'd like to clarify for members opposite the fact that there in fact isn't a magic wand. It is about working together with front-line professionals. It's about hard work and rolling up your sleeves.

And that's the kind of work that we do, whether it's about the nine new IMGs that will be coming out on July 1st into rural areas, whether it's about the increased number of seats that we have.

Again, members opposite tear down, whether it's tearing down the health-care system itself—the one thing the member opposite doesn't quite understand is that when she does nothing but criticize the system, that's a direct criticism of hundreds of health-care professionals who work in our system, who do their best, and they hear nothing but criticism from our—about their work from the member opposite.

Again, they tear down the health-care system; we build it up with good relationships.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, our criticisms are levelled at this government who is failing Manitoba patients. There is no leadership.

Mr. Speaker, the responses that were given yesterday by this Minister of Health to critical challenges in the health-care system, challenges that they are failing to fix, were absurd and unbelievable and show that she is in way over her head.

Mr. Speaker, as somebody commented on Twitter last night: Is she the Health Minister or the tooth fairy?

Perhaps she can tell us today: When is she going to bring out the pixie dust to fix the health-care challenges?

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

I find it—again, it's problematic that she doesn't take this seriously and is making light of some various health-care issues because, again, members opposite have no plan for how to improve health care. Their plan is a reckless half-billion-dollar cut to the provincial budget.

We've been working with Doctors Manitoba to come up with an amazing mandate that they are on board with. We have been working with them and, in fact, in terms of things I put on the record yesterday, I actually spoke at length about the wonderful improvements at the Grace emergency department and the increase in three different metrics in the past from March to December of '14. So, again, progress is being made and it's about good relationships.

Again, they tear down things; we build them up, including a-building up good relationships with all of our health-care providers to ensure that Manitobans get the best care possible.

Bipole III Transmission Line Farmland Acquisition

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): So much for happy thoughts, I guess.

Mr. Speaker, I table pictures for the Minister of Agriculture of the 66-metre right-of-way of farmland his NDP government has expropriated from working Manitoba farm families. As can be clearly seen in the picture, the land has been left idle, as the ownership is now in the hands of the NDP government.

So what does the Minister of Agriculture plan to do with this farmland, and how much is this going to cost Manitoba taxpayers?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): I'm sure the member opposite is quite familiar when Manitoba Hydro went—first met with the landowners and the opportunity to talk about an easement right and an opportunity to have the 'operty'.

I don't think it takes much to imagine that Bipole III's not the first line's going to be constructed. We got Bipole II, we got Bipole I that exists in the province of Manitoba. You can drive down any municipal road, Mr. Speaker, and see hydro poles along the farmers' fields that are continuing to be cultivated.

The only difference is the member opposite chooses not to sit back and take a common-sense approach of what the problem is when we talk about, well, this could've been used agriculturally only if the wishes encroaching from the other side did not occur for it not to happen. That's my opinion on it.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for members' statements.

Darryl Toews

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to draw the attention of this House to Morden Collegiate history teacher, Darryl Toews, whose diligence in research uncovered the names of three long-forgotten World War I veterans and led to the addition of their names to Morden's community cenotaph.

Darryl says he discovered the names while doing research here at the legislative reading room in preparation for his high school Canadian history class. On finding that three veterans of the war had been overlooked when the cenotaph was originally unveiled in 1921, Darryl engaged his class in a collective effort to uncover more information about the lives of these individuals and to search for other veterans whose names may have been left off the monument. He reports that his class has since identified several other names to be added to the cenotaph.

Darryl's efforts have galvanized a wide-spread interest in the community and the province in the lives of men and women who have paid the ultimate price in the service of our country. The names of Private Arthur Bailey, Private Gavin Bell and Captain Elmer Dickinson were added to the cenotaph in Morden on September 26th, 2014, in a ceremony with a parade, a biographical background of their names to be added, remarks by dignitaries and the playing of the last post.

Darryl's efforts deserve to be lauded. Not only has he gone above and beyond his role as a history teacher to stimulate general—genuine interest in the stories of our local and national past, but he has assisted the community in remembering those who went abroad to defend the values of freedom, justice, human rights and democracy.

For Darryl and his students, this recent undertaking means much more than simply the addition of names on the cenotaph. It is about bringing these names to life, telling their stories and ensuring that the commitment, loyalty and sacrifice of our local servicemen and women are properly recognized and honoured.

The Canadian Legion Branch 11 recognized the fine work of Darryl Toews and invited him to attend

the annual Remembrance Day banquet where he gave the keynote address.

It is my pleasure to recognize Darryl Toews for his important work in the classroom and connecting subject matter with real world issues. I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Thank you.

* (14:40)

Manitoba Wildlife Federation

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Joining us in the gallery today are Brian Strauman and Brent Kellett from Manitoba Wildlife Federation. The MWF is dedicated to the conservation of wildlife and animal habitats throughout the province.

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation was established in 1944 and is the province oldest and largest conservation effort. The organization is made up of over 14,000 members from 100 affiliate groups across the province. The MWF has played an active role in conservation efforts in Manitoba through educational workshops and advocacy work.

The Wildlife Federation has done some amazing work in Kirkfield Park. In the 1990s they began a long-term project for Sturgeon Creek. They started by enhancing and creating new spawning habitats for fish along the creek bed and in 2001 they expanded their project to add a fish ladder at Grant's Old Mill. These ladders allow more fish to more easily to make it upstream during mating season.

The Wildlife Federation recently built an observation platform at Grant's Old Mill, which gives people the opportunity to watch the different species of fish travel up the fish ladder to their hatcheries upstream. They are currently working on setting up an outdoor classroom at the site to have classes teaching young people and families about how to preserve natural habitats and how to fish.

Because of all their great work, the fish population has exploded in Sturgeon Creek. This fishing spot is MWF's best kept secret. Rob Olson, the managing director at MWF, has talked about his regular fishing trips to the creek with his son, and how they will catch many fish in an evening.

And just a few weeks ago, I was in the area for our annual Sturgeon Creek cleanup and witnessed children and families fishing in the creek myself.

The MWF truly deserves to be commended for their contribution they've made to our community.

And thank you to Manitoba Wildlife Federation for their work on the Sturgeon Creek project and for helping families learn more about wildlife in our province and our community. Thank you, guys.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Special Olympics Awareness Week

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House again this year to celebrate Special Olympics Awareness Week in Manitoba this June 8th through 14th.

I would like to welcome our guest from Special Olympics Manitoba who are here in the gallery with us today: SOM board Chair Larry Chornoboy; SOM staff members Simon Munday, Jennifer Campbell, Carolyn Langtry, Steven Dreger and Katherine Cheyne; SOM athletes David Cheyne, David Robinson and Kristjana Petterson; and parents, Sandi Robinson and Yvonne Petterson; and a special welcome to Jill Mattson who joins us today from Special Olympics Alberta. Welcome to all of you and thank you for being here today.

It was my honour to present private member's Bill 209 two years ago which received royal assent to proclaim that in each year the second week of June is to be known throughout Manitoba as Special Olympics Awareness Week.

Special Olympics Manitoba's mission statement is to enrich the lives of Manitobans with an intellectual disability through active participation in sport. The programs that are offered by SOM are athlete-centred. Each athlete is placed in a program which best matches their individual talents, and all receive the guidance of a certified coach. The overall goal is for each athlete to have the opportunity to become all they can be physically, mentally, socially and emotionally in order to become accepted, respected and productive members of society.

As part of Special Olympic Manitoba's awareness strategy, I have to recognize their dedication to their community outreach throughout our province. Yesterday the Accept with No Exception campaign contest kicked off in Manitoba schools to challenge students to spread the message of inclusion and respect in sport participation. Schools were encouraged to support awareness by organizing assemblies and sporting events as well as promotions by way of announcements and social media outlets. This endeavour has proven to have engaged thousands of Manitobans in SOM spirit of

competition and community cohesiveness. The school contest winner will be announced this Friday.

Many other activities are planned this week to celebrate and bring recognition to SOM. This includes media events, law enforcement torch runs, a barbecue, a bud, spud and boogie fundraising social, as well as a bocce event with MLAs and athletes on the legislative grounds this afternoon at 3:30. The full calendar of this week's activities can be found on the SOM website.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House join me in recognizing all the athletes of Special Olympics Manitoba and to thank the coaches, volunteers and family members who support these incredible athletes and the organization.

Thank you very much.

John Melnick—Baseball Hall of Fame

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, if you ever need an extra player for a baseball game, I know just the person you should call. This past weekend, St. Norbert resident, John Melnick, was inducted into the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame. John has had an exceptional baseball career here in Manitoba and I'm pleased to welcome him and his family and friends to the Legislature today.

John has had an outstanding pitching career with the St. Boniface Legionnaires from 1971 to 1973. John helped his team capture the provincial title in 1973, winning the final game, 4-1. For the next season, John went to play for the St. Boniface Native Sons, where he played until 1978.

John's other career highlight came in 1978 while playing a provincial tournament in Carberry. Despite a torn rotor cuff, he pitched two 9-inning games and hit a home run. It was certainly tough but he played through to the end and the team won both games.

John's dedication and hard work earned him a spot on Manitoba's all-star team. That team headed off to Nanaimo, British Columbia, where they won the western Canadian championship title.

While his playing career has now ended, John's love of baseball never will. For John, baseball is a great game that brings people together and cuts across all barriers. For this John credits one of his baseball heroes, Jackie Robinson. Despite facing horrible racial slurs and other taunts because of the colour of his skin, Jackie Robinson became the first African-American to play in the major leagues in

modern history. Ultimately, John took to heart that any determined and dedicated individual can play baseball at an elite level.

Congratulations to John Melnick on an outstanding baseball career here in Manitoba. I'm sure many aspiring baseball players will enjoy reading your story in the Hall of Fame. Congratulations.

Helping Our World Pursue Equality

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, we all know what hope means, but for approximately 100 students from Neepawa Area Collegiate it stands for Helping Our World Pursue Equality.

This group was first organized four years ago with just 32 students wanting to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. HOPE's goal is to educate others while learning to serve others before themselves. The group has been a success for the past four years and has been able to provide monetary assistance to several Free the Children projects. The students meet weekly to plan and organize a variety of fundraising events and volunteer activities. The students have organized local food and toy drives, community breakfasts, talent shows, assisted with meal delivery to seniors and volunteered with spring cleanup in the community and local parks. The senior students of the group have also volunteered at Siloam Mission and Winnipeg Harvest.

Through the fundraising volunteer effort—and volunteer efforts of the group, HOPE have been able to raise enough funds to fulfill several project goals. In the first year HOPE provided \$5,000 to the Clean Water project and in the second year provided another \$5,000 to the health pillar. In third and fourth years—in the third and fourth year, the group supported education and contributed a total \$10,000 for a school in Kenya, Africa. In the last four years, two students have won Me to We trips, six volunteered on the trips and travelled to Kenya or Ecuador to assist with building schools. This summer two students will travel to India and China with Free the Children organization. The HOPE group members and staff advisers can be proud of their hard work and contribution in making a difference in the lives of the less fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the House join me in congratulating those students along with the teachers, who take time out of their schedule for Helping Our World Pursue Equality. We wish HOPE

members and staff advisers all the best and continued success.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave to enter the names of those students and advisers on the record.

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

Recorded Student Names: Cora Baker, Jenna Beaumont, Kirstyn Bell, Dillon Birch, Katelyn Birch, Mitchie Cabaungan, Ben Cox, Allison Curle, Lara Denbow, Karissa Ellis, Nickolas Eu, Phia Guarin, Maddison Kilburn, Bryce Kwiatkowski, Olivia Na, Robyn Newsome, Rebecca Lynn Pedersen, Brooklyn Perrett, Meagan Rossnagel, Mackenzie Shastko, Declan Smith, Brendan Strelczik, Charlie Strelczik, Sophia Unico, Brandt Young, Kayla Alday, Tricia Deguzman, Hayley Gibson, Josie Pedersen, Dillan Unger, Jade Baxter, Frances Bonafe, Claire Brister, Bea Cubacub, Alpa Duque, Kara Ellis, Siri Freeman, Braden Gillies, Rylee Gluska, Kailyn Hanke, Ryan Huynh, Denby Kozak, Cindy Kwok, Sadie McIntosh, Delanie Newsome, Judee Paguirigan, Ben Perrett, Ben Rainka, Andrea Rivera, Kaylyn Roe, Elisha Tariq, Jodi Anderson, Kylie Birch, Vicky Elgert, Dasha Chekhovsky, Cherish Epp, Jessica Gibson, Jesse Jones, Yuri Song, Kennedy Baker, Jesse Elder, Emma Gerrard, Kassia Hollier, Reese Jones, Sydney McLaughlin, Kelsey Perrett, Will Rainka, Michelle Pottinger, Landon Young, Bethany Bertholet, Robyn Birch, Bain de koning, Lina Gordon, Danielle Hanke, Josh Jackson, Kaylynn MacDiarmid, Samantha Nickart, Hailey Rannie, Emma Salmon, Samantha Salmon, Brooke Anderson, Brook de koning, Shelby Gillies, Morgan Graham, Eva Kwok, Ffion Lewis, Amandine Polain, Dariane Roe, Nikki Tomoniko, Logan Young.

Staff Advisers: Marcy Whelpton, Amy Spring, Charlene Vandenbosch, Katharine Kingdon, Michelle Young.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes member statements.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, orders of the day, government business.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered on the next sitting Tuesday, will be put forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). The title of the resolution is Support for a Strong Public Child-Care System.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private members' resolution to be considered at the next sitting, Tuesday, will be one brought forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge, and the title of the resolution is Support for a Strong Public Child-Care System.

For the information of the House.

* (14:50)

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Speaker: Now, as previously agreed, we'll move to the Opposition Day Motion.

As previously announced, the motion before the House, that this Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to request the Auditor General conduct a comprehensive audit of the Investors Group Field construction project, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to request the Auditor General conduct a comprehensive audit of the Investors Group Field construction project.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I rise today to speak to this Opposition Day motion that the provincial government request the Auditor General's office to conduct a comprehensive audit of the Investors Group Field construction project and any future or ongoing repairs. And we've called for this before, Mr. Speaker. This is very important, if the government is concerned about transparency and accountability when it comes to this issue, that they would support this today. So I urge all members to support this Opposition Day motion.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are passionate about our professional sports teams. The Blue Bombers, the Winnipeg Jets, the Goldeyes and even the return of the Manitoba Moose all excite the imaginations and the inhabitants throughout the province. It's also

a very exciting time for sport in Manitoba, as we are one of the many Canadian cities to be hosting the FIFA Women's World Cup, which will be a source of pride for our city as thousands of international visitors flock to Winnipeg to take part in the many festivities being offered throughout the city.

Yet, however passionate Manitobans might be for the sports in this province, this is no reason to hide or misrepresent facts that surround such important projects like Investors Group Field. Going as far back as 2008, the planning and construction story of the stadium, including its costs and design features, have been long filled with mystery, confusion and inconsistencies.

Originally started as a private sector driven initiative by Creswin Properties at a cost of \$115 million, over the years, Investors Group Field has morphed into a publicly funded facility via triple B stadium, which consists of the Province of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Football Club. With a price tag now pegged at approximately \$100 million more than originally projected and climbing, there are serious concerns regarding the use and accountability of taxpayers' funds.

Indeed, Manitobans are continuing to pay more and get less with NDP-administered projects. The timelines and cost overruns of this stadium appear to, by definition, meet the quintessential essence of a normal NDP project: prolonged delays, well over budget and, as was referenced by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) himself, resulting in litigation. Manitobans deserve to know how the funds to administer and construct the stadium are—were used. That is why an investigative audit is necessary by the Auditor General's office to ensure that no wrongdoing has occurred and that public funds have been used appropriately.

It has also been alleged by third parties that there are serious concerns and accusations Investors Group Field was rushed and used as an election prop to boost the NDP's image in the run-up to the 2011 provincial election. This would be a serious abuse of both the public's trust and the use of taxpayers' dollars. It is also unfortunate that it has the potential to add to the NDP's election violation record, such as was the case with the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) and the birthing centre, and the member for Fort Richmond (Ms. Irvin-Ross), when the publicized Status of Women event during a

by-election, and, of course, Mr. Speaker, we cannot forget about the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) own falsified election return.

Mr. Speaker, it's imperative that the AG—that the Auditor General investigate this matter to get to the bottom of what really transpired.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's important to—in order to fully understand the current situation surrounding Investors Group Field, it's imperative we understand the beginning and how this project first began to take shape as a private sector driven initiative. The cost of the original plan was to be no more than \$115 million, with 80 per cent of the funding proportions coming from the private sector while the remaining 20 per cent would be public. The NDP were supportive of the plan and promised \$15 million to be matched by the federal government while the City would provide the same tax breaks that were previously provided and the U of M would donate the land for its construction. However, Mr. Speaker, there is speculation that due to NDP mismanagement and much delay by the government since the sod-turning event in May 2010 caused the project's cost to rise rapidly and jeopardize the project's viability.

November 2010, it became apparent that delays in construction starts had caused the project's cost to rise to \$190 million, with Manitoba taxpayers left to foot the bill. Mr. Speaker, as a result of NDP mismanagement, Manitoba's new stadium went from a private to a public venture and taxpayers were about to inherit any and all problems that existed with the project. And this was due to a new funding module that would see the Province provide the lion's share via loans and grants to the BBB Stadium.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to go on—you know, at this point, the goal was still to have a stadium open for the 2012 season, and in 2011 there was much fanfare and celebration regarding Winnipeg's long-time memories with the Bombers playing at the Canada Inn Stadium. Unfortunately, these celebrations were short-lived and it became apparent that further delays and problems with construction would prevent the Bombers from moving into their new home. First—the first kickoff at Investors Group Field would not take place until 2013 and the BBB Stadium would require a \$10-million bank loan to upgrade already-existing stadium amenities.

It wouldn't take long for Investors Group Field's next unfortunate milestone, though—September,

2013, when it became clear that there were problems with the facility, such as cracks appearing in the concrete throughout the stadium, including the concourses, and other serious missing design elements with the press box. See, Mr. Speaker, the original dine–design had no enclosure for those who reported on the game. This was such an oversight that an additional \$350,000 was spent to fix the issue in order to help secure the hosting of the Grey Cup game in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, third-party allegations suggest that the NDP government was aware of this issue at the time and was in a position to prevent this from happening, and yet they refused to do this and pushed the project ahead anyways, which is extremely unfortunate.

Now, when it comes to the rushing of the–the allegations that the NDP government rushed the project forward, Mr. Speaker, we look at the former chief administrator of the city who came forward and made numerous accusations against the NDP's lack of planning and attention to details. He said, and I quote: We knew the plans had problems that needed to be fixed and addressed. We had two choices. We could stop with the hole half-dug and re-evaluate what we were doing, or we could keep going. And the message was keep going.

Mr. Speaker, the former city CEO went on to claim that presentations to the board raised many concerns over the stadium's design. He said, and I quote: That was presented to the Bombers' board and the message was to keep going. The decision came from one place–keep going. The decision didn't come from me. There was an election coming in 16 months, a provincial election. End quote.

So, obvious serious allegations from the former CEO of the city, Mr. Speaker, and further allegations of rushed orders came as–in a response, a statement of defense from the construction contractors, with respect to the lawsuit filed by the Government of Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, the PCs agree that Manitobans deserve a stadium that they paid for which still has not been delivered under the provincial government. This is partly due to the government's deliberate lack of transparency, and we do not have a clear understanding of how the project was administered, nor how the funds were spent on the construction. This is not accountability to taxpayers.

Indeed, the contractor claimed, in a statement of defence, that the stadium project was influenced by political and financial factors originating from the Province of Manitoba and that the project was being built too fast and too cheap. The statement of defence said, and I quote: The budget established for the project was lower than that of most comparable projects. The timeline was established for the project was shorter than that applied to most comparable projects. These decisions were made in accordance with the political and financial requirements of the plaintiff shareholder, the Province of Manitoba. End quote.

So, again, very serious allegations coming from third parties with respect to the government rushing this project.

Mr. Speaker, there was more than one allegation has been made that the NDP wanted an election prop for the 2011 provincial election. That is why we have formally asked the Auditor General to investigate this matter. We have heard excuses from the NDP regarding concerns that the stadium's construction which have also, at times, been contradictory. When asked about the cracks in the stadium's concrete, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) indicated that, and I quote: It doesn't sound significant.

* (15:00)

Yet the current chair of BBB states the opposite. He said, and I quote: The problems are extensive. We do not–we do expect it to be into the millions, and further added, depending on what the contractors find below the surface, Mr. Speaker. This could be very serious.

We have seen time and time again that this government has been willing to go to the extreme measures for self-promotion, even breaking the law in some cases. We have mentioned the incident involving the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), then a Cabinet minister hosting a media event at a birthing centre in the middle of an election or the NDP taking advantage of a Status of Women event during the 2014 by-election, and even the Premier falsifying his own election return. If these allegations of rushing Investors Group Field are indeed true, this would, indeed, prove the NDP's level of desperation and just how far they're willing to go in order to get re-elected.

Mr. Speaker, these are very serious allegations. I think if the–

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

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): I just want to put a couple of comments on the record with regard to the issue at hand.

And let me just say, first of all, our government was asked a number of years ago to seriously take a look at a new football stadium, a new facility for the city of Winnipeg and for the province of Manitoba. The old Canad Inns Stadium was 50 years of age or approximately that and needed a lot of work—approximately \$50 million or more. And what we were advised was that do you put money, good money after old, and the answer soon became, no, you certainly should be taking a look at a new facility, a new stadium. And that's exactly what took place.

So, Mr. Speaker, you have a number of events that have already taken place at Investors Group stadium and many more to come. We certainly look forward to the FIFA games that are taking place now and the excitement that's generated and the economic benefits that that's generated for the city of Winnipeg, but not only for the city of Winnipeg but outside the Perimeter. As I mentioned during question period, there are hotels and hotel space that have been taken up as far as Brandon, as far north as Gimli and as far south as Emerson and Winkler and Morden and throughout the Capital Region as well and Selkirk and other communities. The restaurants are booming; they're absolutely packed. You can't get into restaurants in Winnipeg anywhere.

And what it's doing overall is highlighting the fact of what we really have in Manitoba other than FIFA itself and soccer taking place. Our visitors, our guests to our province and to our city, our capital city, are now seeing for themselves not only the Museum for Human Rights, the Journey to Churchill exhibit at the Assiniboine zoo, but many, many other real gems that we have in the city.

We have the new Alt Hotel, for example, with a great bar and lounge and restaurant. And just on that note, the culinary tourism that is taking place in Manitoba—and that's one thing. A lot of Manitobans don't realize the great eating experience one can have in Manitoba with the cultural diversity that we have in the city of Winnipeg, but also in Manitoba. Bar none, the best restaurants you can find anywhere are located in Winnipeg or in Manitoba, and this is just

something that our guests and tourists coming to Manitoba can see for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, in question period I also mentioned the true benefits of Investors Group stadium. It's not just for the Bombers; it's not just for professional sports or professional entertainers. It's also for amateur sport. Amateur sport is very, very important in this province for us, and I believe for all. And you take a look at the Bisons and—University of Manitoba football team have done very well over the last number of years. Also, amateur sport has taken place within Investors Group stadium.

They have a beautiful facility, a world-class facility that—yes, are we happy about the cracks that have developed in the stadium? No. I won't use the language in the Chamber, with respect, that I may have used amongst my friends or some of my neighbours. But let me just say that I was perturbed. I was annoyed. I was not very pleased to find out that the work that was done was not done according to what was paid for, and the courts will determine that. It's before the courts now, so I'm not going to go into a lot of detail with regard to that, but the courts will decide fault if we want to use that language.

So, Mr. Speaker, I feel that what I need to do today is put on the record the importance of this infrastructure and this investment to Manitoba. Members opposite—you know, I shouldn't tell the opposition, maybe, on how they should conduct themselves, but Manitobans don't expect the opposition to oppose everything. When something good comes along that's good for the benefit of all Manitobans, like the Manitoba—like the MTS Centre, members opposite were on the record voting against the MTS Centre. This is for the benefit—but, you know, when it came time to cut the ribbon and sip some champagne and eat a few pieces of cheese, they were right at the front of the line, you know, and yet, they opposed it, it's on the record, of opposing the MTS Centre.

We wouldn't have had the Moose in the International Hockey League, the American Hockey League. We wouldn't have the Jets, Mr. Speaker. These are legacy projects. Investors stadium will last 50 years and it'll be a stadium that we'll all be proud of.

And yet members opposite opposed it, taking cheap shots at my colleagues in the Chamber with regard to things that they feel that were untoward. That's not becoming. It's not becoming of the member from Tuxedo or—at all. You know, it's not.

Because those kinds of accusations and shots that are taken at each other, I believe, reflect badly on the Chamber as a whole, on all of us.

And so, if one wants to debate whether or not the stadium is a good investment or not, that's fine. But personal shots at individuals, I believe, is not becoming of individuals in this Chamber. And it's—and certainly reflects badly on all of us.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, we might have differing views on whether or not you want to privatize health care, home care, daycare. That's their view. That's fine. They're entitled to that. But I would ask that personal shots should not be taken at members in this Chamber and make your arguments on whatever point you want.

But I did—I certainly—I was certainly dismayed and shocked to hear the member opposite taking individual shots, not only at the Premier (Mr. Selinger) but at others in this Chamber. I don't think it's becoming of her, quite frankly, and I hope that all of us—and I'll try—I will also try to restrain my comments with regard to individuals here as well.

So Mr. Speaker, I know I only have a few minutes left, and there's others who wish to speak to this. So maybe what I would like to do is I would conclude by just saying a couple of things with regard to the economics related to Investors Group stadium.

Many others, not members of the government, not myself or—and any others on this side of the House, have made comments about what Investors Group stadium has done, but many outside of this building have commented on the greatness of the facility and the kind of attractions that are going to be garnered as a result of this beautiful facility.

Investors Group Field has been good for Manitoba's economy. FIFA is bringing in great revenues for all different sectors, whether it be restaurants, hotels, and the expectation is it's going to be upwards of anywhere from 10 million to 15 million for the businesses in Manitoba.

Canadian border services, increased traffic, close to 5,000 vehicles have lined up south of the border wanting to come across. These are our friends and neighbours and citizens from the United States coming here to watch FIFA games.

So, Mr. Speaker, not only have the hoteliers and restaurateurs made comments about how great this is

and how great FIFA is for their business and tourism, but also the Grey Cup will also—Chuck Davidson from the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce said there could be anywhere up to \$100 million brought in to the province of Manitoba as a result of the Grey Cup this fall, \$100 million. And this is something that would not have taken place had we not had Investors stadium.

I mean, so, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say and conclude by making a couple of comments to where the opposition sit. This government is a government of vision. It's a government that wishes to build, whether it's hospitals, daycares, personal-care homes and critical infrastructure, whether it's roads, bridges and including investing in buildings like the MTS Centre and Investors Group stadium.

* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, at today's Grey Cup event where the Premier spoke, the mayor spoke and others spoke after them praising their vision with regard to putting Manitoba dollars and investing those dollars into facilities like Investors Group stadium. You have David Asper and many others who have commented that it took some real vision and real intestinal fortitude on behalf of the Premier to have a vision looking forward on what the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba needed as far as a larger facility that could host events like we are seeing in FIFA and Grey Cup.

We've got facilities like the Convention Centre expansion. We mentioned the Museum for Human Rights, the Journey to Churchill; all of these have been investments that the Province of Manitoba is truly proud of making to ensure that tourism—

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

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Today we have a debate about a government that has attempted to build projects, and has, by and large, missed its mark in most cases. It's not that governments don't build. It's not that governments don't involve themselves in construction projects or in projects generally. It's that we have a government that can't seem to ever get a budget right.

And I'd like to take members back—and this is less of a project and more of a case and point—and that was the Crocus fund. The Crocus fund was an investment fund that the government knew was in trouble. And they had members opposite go onto the shop floors and tell working men and women to

invest in the Crocus fund, put their hard-earned dollars into a fund, invest their RRSPs, their pension monies in a fund that even the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger)—who happened to be the Finance Minister at the time—knew categorically that the Crocus fund was in trouble. And what did they do? They sold their own Manitobans on a fund that went bankrupt, taking 60,000 investor's money with it. That is the kind of money management we get from this government.

Should we talk about the floodway? They prided themselves on being on budget by cutting bridges. There was a bridge over the floodway, Dugald Road, that was in such bad shape that had we had a severe flood could have been seriously compromised and probably would have fallen because of the pressure against it. Happened to be that the Honourable Vic Toews looked at the situation and the federal government actually funded that bridge so that it could be rebuilt, and rightfully so. The only reason why the floodway came on budget, Mr. Speaker, is because they cut bridges.

Another example is Wuskwatim dam. We all remember that one. Eight hundred million dollars is what they suggested the price would be, and the price kept going up. The Wuskwatim dam kept going up in price, and in price—the final bill for the Wuskwatim dam ended up being not \$800 million, but \$1.6 billion. And by their own admission—by their own admission—it won't make money for 30 years. That is when the NDP start building. The taxpayers and the ratepayers end up footing the bill.

Should we talk about Bipole III? There are more stories and more lines and more spin that had to be pitched overboard by Bipole III that the cost now is so enormous that they keep running back to the Public Utilities Board and asking for increases.

It is this government's mismanagement that we see a 4 per cent increase, 4 per cent increase, 4 per cent increase and it goes on and on and on. But remember, Mr. Speaker, that if you're doing your math, it is 4 per cent on top of 4 per cent, and then the next year it's 4 per cent on top of that, and it compounds. What we are seeing is compound increases because of the mismanagement like the projects of Wuskwatim and Bipole III, and yet they go out day after day after day and talk about these projects and never mention that the public will have to pay bitterly for these projects and the cost overruns.

Shall we talk about something closer to home for the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen)? They built an addition onto the Steinbach hospital, the emergency ward with one little fly in the ointment, that those individuals who have accessibility issues can't reach the doors. And I would say to the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), maybe he should get out of this Cabinet, his former Cabinet office, and maybe he should get out of his car and go drive there.

I had the opportunity to view it the other day because it seemed to me so incredulous that the government actually pay money for an emergency exit that people couldn't access, and it's actually true that this NDP government so bungled the project, so got it wrong that they built an emergency department that can't be accessed by those with mobility issues. It's the most incredulous thing to see that the ramp is built so poorly that people have to stand at the bottom of the ramp and hope that somebody comes by and shows mercy. They have to hope that somebody comes by and helps them. If you are in trouble and you're not ambulatory, meaning that you're not brought in by an ambulance, if you actually get yourself there you'll need some substantial help to get you to the doors.

It's these kinds of projects that Manitobans are worried about. For instance, you—the Jockey Club, here's another great project in the province of Manitoba, brings a lot of tourism dollars, has a great industry, it's fun to go and watch and they run a very good program. Only this government could botch it so bad that they would end up in court. We have no idea what the settlement was because nobody's allowed to talk, but we know that the government ended up having to settle because they knew they had no case, and, Mr. Speaker, there, again, is an NDP government that shows it can't manage.

Now on to the stadium. The stadium was initially going to be, I understand, 110 to 120 million dollars. That was the initial project. Mr. Speaker, all kinds of truckloads of soil were hauled out. There was a photo op for the member for St. Boniface. It was rushed, it was hurried, the stadium, in fact, I believe it was last session we ended up getting up and shaming the government into finally paying the last of the subcontractors, mom and pop operations that were going and taking investments out to keep their government afloat, and finally we got the government shamed into paying those subtrades—*[interjection]* And I know the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) thinks that this is a joke because she sits on her cushy pension and she gets a good

paycheque—those individuals work hard. They work very hard for their money and they were not being paid and it was a troubling thing to see.

Mr. Matt Wiebe, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, now we have a stadium that is going to need even more repairs. In fact, members opposite built a stadium that they forgot that it snows in winter and they forgot that it melts in spring, and the first spring it all got flooded and they spent all kinds of money on the stadium, never coming clean who actually paid for those repairs. We had one minister say one time it was going to be the insurance companies, then it was going to be—insurance companies indicated it wasn't their responsibility and it went on and on and on. Only this NDP government could build the stadium that wasn't built for a climate where there's snow in winter and it melts in spring. Only this NDP government could've botched it that bad.

Now we fast-forward to today and we find out that, again, like with almost every other project, this NDP government is in court. This is the sweet-spot government for law firms. This is what law firms dream about, a government that can only botch and mismanage stuff so badly that they all end up in court. This is a government made for law firms; they're always being sued in court.

Now we've got the developers saying one thing, we've got the architects another thing, we've got the government saying, by and large, 36 other things and if one thing that came out of the civil war within the NDP is, it was that the taxpayers paid a bitter price for that because the government wasn't watching what was going on, and that's when this lawsuit happened.

* (15:20)

The NDP should come clean on what this is going to cost us. The NDP should come clean on who's responsible. The government should be taking an active role in this. Instead, they push it off to other organizations, and it's in the end—in the end there's only going to be one group that's going to pay for it and that is the taxpayers of Manitoba, just like it was the taxpayers, the people of Manitoba, who paid the price for Crocus fund, the same group of people who paid the price for Wuskwatim, the same group of people who paid the price for the floodway having bridges cancelled, the same group who paid the price for the Steinbach hospital, Bipole III, Jockey Club and for the stadium, and the list goes on and on. And

this government should come clean on what it's going to cost the taxpayers because we know in the end it's always the taxpayer that pays the brunt when this NDP government starts building and botching projects.

Thank you.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government): It's always a pleasure to listen to the semi-coherent sophistry of the member from Springfield.

This is the year of sport in the province of—in province of Manitoba and the—[interjection]—all right—the year of sport in the province of Manitoba, and I think it's appropriate with the beginning of the Women's World Cup this week, Mr. Speaker, with tens of thousands of sports enthusiasts visiting the province and tens of millions of dollars in revenue being generated because of the FIFA World Cup being held in the province of Manitoba, specifically at Investors Group Field, it would serve all of us well in this Chamber to recognize that the considerable investment made in Investors Group Field is the reason that we are experiencing such an economic boom associated with the FIFA World Cup. As well, we've got the Grey Cup being hosted in Manitoba at the Investors Group Field this year, again, underscoring the importance of the Investors Group Field stadium and the investment that was made in that facility by this government.

And I just want to put a couple of facts on the record with regard to the construction of recreational and sport infrastructure in the province of Manitoba, and I'm going to do it briefly, Mr. Speaker, but we'll start in 1997 when the province of Manitoba and city of Winnipeg lost the Winnipeg Jets. When members opposite had their hand on the tiller of power in this province, they lost the NHL team; they lost the Winnipeg Jets. When we were elected as government in '99, one of the major initiatives that we undertook was to regain the Winnipeg Jets. The members opposite lost the Jets. They weren't capable of keeping the Jets in the province of Manitoba. They weren't capable of managing the economy that was sufficient for the NHL to look at this as a viable market. And, in 1999, we began work on the MTS Centre with community partners with a specific business plan of bringing the Jets back. Every single debate that we had on the MTS Centre—and you can look it up in Hansard; it's part of the history of this province right now—the members opposite in '97 lost the Jets. They were incapable of creating an

economy that would attract an NHL market. And when our government came into office in '99 we made the restoration of the NHL in this province a priority. We made the creation of a business plan that would include an NHL-calibre arena as a central part of that business plan a priority of this government.

Mr. Speaker, we delivered that arena against the opposition of members opposite. Every budget vote, every debate on that arena was viewed with hostility by members opposite. It's no wonder they lost the Jets in the first place. They were opposed to the creation of the NHL arena, the MTS Centre that is the home to the Winnipeg Jets. So being opposed and trying to undermine Investors Group stadium is no surprise. The members opposite were incompetent to manage an economy that would sustain an NHL franchise in this province. They were incompetent to build an arena to attract the NHL Jets back. They fought tooth and nail to prevent that arena from being constructed. So we're revisiting history with the Investors Group Field. When we've got the FIFA World Cup and the eyes of the world on the province of Manitoba in a world-class stadium, when we've got the Grey Cup being hosted in Winnipeg this fall, when we've got a world-class stadium that was built by this government and opposed tooth and nail through the whole process by members opposite, they're still trying to destroy the Investors Group Field; they're still trying to destroy the credibility of the city of Winnipeg; they're still trying to destroy the credibility of Manitoba as they've done daily since 1997.

And this fall—and I'll just bring it back to my constituency in Brandon for a minute before I sit down, because we've got a major piece of recreational sports infrastructure in Brandon called the Keystone Centre. Every single investment in that centre, Mr. Speaker, that we've been making since we've been in office, the hosting of the Memorial Cup for the—Canada's World Junior Championship, the hosting of the Arabian horse show, the International Arabian Horse Show, the creation of the Agricultural Centre of Excellence, a \$50-million investment in the Keystone Centre, all of these things have been undermined and opposed by members opposite.

The members opposite have nothing to offer Manitoba but doom, gloom and naysaying, and when they do it, they put our economy at risk and they put our province at risk each and every day here. They lost the Jets; they couldn't build a hockey rink. This government brought the Jets back; we've built the

hockey rink. We've built Investors Group stadium. We've built the Keystone Centre. We're going to continue to build this province, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite can try all they want to continue killing the economy in this province and continue undermining investment in this province, but that's all they're good for, is undermining investment, destroying investment, undermining the economy. This is the government that builds. The opposition, as they've done for decades, are only good for undermining opportunities in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and put a few words on the record with respect to the motion brought by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

And I have to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, you know, listening to the previous speaker—I should say the one just before the previous speaker—listening to the minister responsible, the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux)—just absurd to think that the minister would spend his time on this important motion—and the first thing he does is blame the opposition party. He stands up and he blames the opposition party, and he says, you know, like, how dare they raise criticisms about the fact that they're \$100 million over budget on a project that began with a commitment from the provincial government to spend \$15 million in a partnership deal with the feds. Now they're \$100 million over budget and the member for Dawson Trail feigns indignation, and he indicates how dare the opposition ask questions about value for money.

Now, when he's done blaming the opposition, he then sets his sights on the contractor and basically makes clear that the lawsuit will go where the lawsuit will go, and that the contractor should've done a better job. And we all know how that defence has gone so far, with respect to a contractor—a contractor that has to perform the work in accordance with the will of the client.

I can still recall when my wife and I built our very first home, and we were in negotiations with the—with our contractor at that time. And we had a different idea about what would be the flooring in the home and what the subfloor would consist of. And we weren't the most experienced home builders, but we had some ideas. And the contractor made very clear to us, we were the client, we were paying the bills. He would not advise for us to proceed in that

direction and in that way, and that it, based on his expert opinion, he would advise otherwise. And we had something in mind. Now eventually we deferred to his position and we understood that, you know, really we probably would've been better off—we were better off to follow his advice.

Now, in the same way on a grander scale, on this project, the contractor on this project made very clear, time and time again, that the client was calling important shots with respect to the way and the method and the degree of finish and structural issues—those were all issues on which the contractor commented, but at the end of the day, the client is picking up the tab. The client will pay the bill. And so the product—the product that has been rendered was consistent with the will of the client. In this particular case, that client was largely the provincial government who came to control more and more and more of this project.

I appreciate the comments that were put on the record this afternoon by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and the member for Springfield—oh, the member for—*[interjection]*—St. Paul (Mr. Schuler). And I have to say that they were just right on the mark, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they were talking about what this issue really is about.

* (15:30)

This issue that we're bringing today isn't about the excitement that takes place whenever someone goes into Investors Group Field. I mean my—we have all—I think many of us have had a chance to be at events that are there. I remember seeing the U2 concert in the older stadium, you know, and I have not had a chance to see a concert at the new stadium, but I can assure you those are two different facilities. That's not the issue. And neither is the issue the fact that we are welcoming FIFA Women's World Cup this week to Winnipeg. Those are wonderful things for our province.

The issue here, though, is about management and mismanagement. The issue here is about the inability of the NDP party to get it right when it comes to forecasts, targets and then meeting those targets, and this on the day when we spend considerable time in question period going to exactly this issue of forecasts. This government with the most pathetic record of any government in Canada at the provincial level in terms of matching expenditures to estimates—*[interjection]* And I can hear the member at the back of the room for Gimli

guffaw, and yet I will tell him that his party has the worst record in all of Canada when it comes to cumulative overspending even though revenues have been greater than projected, even so under this NDP government expenditures have outstripped those increased revenues so that this government has the very unfortunate record of being that provincial government that simply cannot get it right.

Well, if no one took notice and there were no consequences, I guess then this would be a different kind of debate. But it has consequences. Manitobans depend on front-line services that are strong. And, when this government cannot meet its budget, when it continues to be a government that pushes more and more into deficits and more and more into debt, debt that now stands in the province at \$36.3 billion, up from just over \$18 billion only seven years ago, that is frightening to Manitobans.

Now, beyond that, it is not just Manitobans who notice. It is not just Manitobans who are left holding the bag. I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talked today about Moody's Investors Service, DBRS and other bond-rating agencies, they have skin in this game. They care a great deal about the intentions of this government when it comes to paying down debt, when it comes to getting back on track, and they are expressing concern again and again. Saying, again, in a press release of—from May the 1st, the day after this government tabled its budget, that they have grave concerns about this government's lack of interest, lack of enthusiasm to return the budget to balance.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this issue of mismanagement is seen profoundly in issues like the STARS contract where this government awarded, without a tendering process, a \$120-million contract to the first company that came along when Manitoba companies were saying give us a chance, allow us to issue a—allow us to render a submission. That chance was not afforded to them. As a result, we pay far, far more in the province of Manitoba for the STARS air ambulance service.

Now, do we need an air ambulance service in this province? Absolutely. Absolutely. We need that service and areas like my own depend on it. The issue is not the service; it is the mismanagement and the way the government moved quickly.

Now, why would they have done that? Why would they have gone around the process? Why would they have done that in a way that the Auditor

General later on said broke every rule in the book when it came to tendering?

They did it because partisan and political interests outstripped the interest of the ratepayer, of the taxpayer, of Manitobans. They wanted a backdrop for the election. They wanted a shiny red helicopter behind their election ads; they wanted to be seen in that shot. In the same manner, they wanted the stadium to be the backdrop. They wanted the get 'er done slogan to be the backdrop of the 2011 election campaign.

Why else would they rush the process? Why else would they hijack the process and come to be the principal player in this process that was originally driven by the private sector? Why else would they go to war with the contracting company now? Why else would they invite these lawsuits? Why else would they impugn the name the integrity of a company that has done work for this province and in the private sector for years and years? The only plausible explanation in this case, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that once again political interests are outstripping the other interests, and I would want to keep these comments on the record.

This original pledge of the NDP government was to spend \$15 million to be matched by the federal government and the city would provide tax breaks that were previously provided and the U of M would donate the land, and we had, in effect, the beginnings of what looked to be a good partnership. Well, after that, we know there was a huge shift of intent by this government, and the cost, over a very small space of time, was rising, was escalating, and we know that because of the process that was rushed, because of the construction itself that was rushed, now Manitobans are left with questions.

These are the questions that we are raising in this motion that we bring today, questions that deserve an answer, questions that are not being answered by this minister. This minister used his time today to obfuscate, to go around the issue, to talk about other things, but he did not go to the fundamental questions that Manitobans want answered. How much more will Manitobans spend as a result of this mismanagement?

And that is why, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we urge the government to request the Auditor General to conduct a comprehensive audit on the IG field construction project.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): It's kind of feeling like Groundhog Day in here again. All we hear from the other side of the House is cuts, cuts, cuts and how terrible things are in Manitoba, when the actual truth is that we have the highest retail sales, the second lowest unemployment rate. We got more cranes dotting the sky than ever, more building going on. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's all negative from their side of the floor.

They want to talk about the stadium. Yes, we're not happy that this has happened with the stadium, but we have an independent—the courts are going to decide. They would see—they would interfere with the court case, that's what the Leader of the Opposition would do, he would interfere with the court case, because the Auditor General has said, let's let it alone until the courts decide. They would interfere with the court case. You know, that's what we would see from the Leader of the Opposition. He would step in and interfere with the court case. We're going to let the courts decide, Mr. Speaker. We—of course we didn't want to have any of these issues with the stadium, but the courts are going to decide and they're going to look at it. But right now in the meantime, what do we have? We have a world-class facility.

The front page of the paper today, Winnipeg is welcoming the world. We are seeing \$13 million worth of benefit from the FIFA World Cup. Chuck Davidson from the chamber of commerce says \$100 million from the Grey Cup. Mr. Speaker, the amount of money coming into Manitoba that we're going to all benefit from is astounding, and this wouldn't have happened underneath the opposition because they vote down everything. They never build a thing. All they do is whine and complain.

The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) is talking about issues with broken laws. Well, maybe she shouldn't have sold those MTS shares and broke the law. I mean, that could be something that she might have wanted to look at doing, Mr. Speaker. She has issues with broken laws, maybe they should stop using the Senate to fund their election campaigns.

Are they going to now declare Senator Plett's expenses when they're declaring their election expenses? Is that what they're going to do? They're going to bring Senator Plett's expenses forward? All of that money that the Senate has been using to help them get elected, they don't want to talk about that, Mr. Speaker. We hear them chirping from across the

floor. They don't want to talk about those kind of broken laws. They don't want to talk about the Senate. They don't want to talk about all the laws being broken right now by their senators on their side of the floor. They don't want to talk against that. They don't want to talk about the senators who come out and help them on their campaigns. They don't want to declare that either. I'm sure if we had people helping us on our side, they would want us to declare that.

But the double standard is absolutely astounding in this House, Mr. Speaker. We see it time and time again from the Leader of the Opposition who keeps throwing out the double standard, one set of rules for him and another set of rules for the rest of us.

The Leader of the Opposition says we should push the Auditor General to do something that the Auditor General says we're going to leave it in the hands of the courts, and once the courts decide, maybe at that point the Auditor General will step in and still—and do an audit then. You know what, Mr. Speaker? That's fine. We're okay with that on this side of the House. We're going to allow the courts to decide, and if that doesn't satisfy the public, we're going to have the Auditor General do an audit and the Auditor General can help find out where that money went, because we're all about transparency—all about transparency.

* (15:40)

The other side of the House is the one, they want to—*[interjection]* I hear them chirping over there right now. They're the ones who had two set of books. They were the ones who found out they had two sets of books, one are true books and then the other books that they didn't have to declare. *[interjection]* Oh, yes, Mr. Speaker, we hear them chirping really loud on the other side of the House.

The member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) said something on the record that I just can't believe. But, I mean, the captains of destruction, the masters of industry over there, they tend to say things and they don't think about them. He said that Hydro will lose money on these dams for 30 years. But did you know a dam is good for 100 years? So that means 70 per cent of the dam's time in operation it will make money. I'm willing to bet that any company in this province would say, if they were making money, 70 per cent of the time of their operation was all profit, they would be going wow, what a great thing to do. But the members opposite have such a

short-sighted vision they can't see that we need to build hydro—and yes it costs to build it. Just like a mortgage on your home, it costs for the first 30 years but then it's an asset—and for 70 more years it's going to generate hydro. But the member for St. Paul can't seem to grasp it.

But it doesn't surprise me, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite have never built a thing, never. They don't build things. They just destroy them and let them crumble. You know, they want to talk about big game, about oh how they're the captains of industry and they can build things and they would never have cost overruns.

Well, let's talk about how their federal counterparts built the Ottawa hospital with a P3, and it went \$200 million over budget. Oh, oh, the Conservative party can manage money—\$200 million over budget. They talk a big game, but they can't figure it out because they've never built a thing.

We will take no direction from them on how to build anything in this province because they've never built a thing. We still wouldn't have the Jets here, we wouldn't have the MTS Centre, we wouldn't have the Moose coming back, nothing would be happening here.

Under the no-growth '90s things were dark downtown. There was nobody down there. Now we see a revitalized downtown. We see new University of Winnipeg investments. We see the MTS Centre. We've seen absolute revitalization of our downtown. It's experiencing a renaissance. But, of course, underneath them, they wouldn't do a thing, Mr. Speaker, because they are the party of cuts. PC stands for progressive cuts or, actually, maybe, privatization and cuts; that could be what PC stands for.

You know, he wanted—the member for St. Paul wanted to talk about courts. Well, his federal masters keep going to the Supreme Court and they keep getting slammed down. So it's not uncommon for government to go to court. We're going to court to take this to court to see what happens with it. Mr. Speaker, it's not uncommon. I mean, their party tends to challenge everything to the Supreme Court that actually would benefit Canadians and they want to take that apart, but it's a good thing that the Supreme Court exists because it's actually, you know, stopped them on a bunch of things. And when—their federal counterparts went to the Supreme Court and lost a bunch of challenges over the last little while. So it's

not unusual for a government to have to take things to court.

You know, I want to turn to a more positive note. I look at the stadium. I went, I was by there yesterday. I saw the hundreds of people gathered in the common grounds there outside the stadium. They were so excited to be going to watch World Cup soccer, Mr. Speaker. There was hundreds of people out there smiling and ready to go, and they were ready to get inside there into a world-class facility to watch the World Cup. And you know, here we have quotes from people. This was on CTV News June 9th, 2015: Sarah Lagos of Saint Paul, Minnesota, said, honestly, I'm just in awe of the setup. We have someone saying that—from how about our own Gary Lawless, Winnipeg Free Press: it was a day to remember for Winnipeg. The football stadium dressed up as soccer grounds came across nicely and introduced to the global fans of this game was very sharp.

Now, we also talk about—we want to talk about the economic boom to the province. Canadian Border Services Agency said that 10,650 travelers and 3,980 cars came up from Emerson over the weekend because we're seeing significant traffic to the World Cup event. Once again, without our investments that wouldn't be happening in our economy. And all that money that they Americans are bringing up here spending, every single hotel in the city is booked solid, every restaurant is busy, that wouldn't be happening. It would be the no-growth '90s all over again. It would be Groundhog Day all over again underneath that party if they were in power.

The member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) wants to show the double standards, how rich is it that we negotiated a non-stop agreement to build a floodway, do a record investment, double the size of the floodway, and we did it under budget, but then he complains about doing it. They talk about what we—oh, well, you guys didn't build it? Nope, it is the federal government who did all that. Actually it wasn't. We negotiated the labour agreement deal; we brought it in under budget because we were in charge of that project.

The PCs, all we hear from them is whining, whining all the time. Privatization and complain party, that's what PC stands for. Privatization and complain, that's all they want to do. The member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) wants to complain about STARS. How much is a life worth? How much

is one life worth? I bet you that those people whose lives were saved by STARS would think that that helicopter is worth every dime of investment, like we do on this side of the House. They want to complain all the time about everything. They can't have it both ways. The Leader of the Opposition has a double standard: one set of rules apply to him; the other set of rules don't apply. That's all he ever does.

The Leader of the Opposition went on record saying that he was proud to be part of the Harper government. Well, the Harper government built 99 of 25,000 needed houses for Aboriginal people on reserves in this country and—[interjection] Oh, yes, they balanced the budget. But did they really balance the budget when you only built 99 of 25,000 homes? That's because their party has no idea how to build. It's all about cuts. It's all about slashing. If they were in power, nobody in this problem—province would benefit. We wouldn't have the World Cup, we would not have the world-class stadium and we wouldn't be having the Grey Cup coming later this year.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm so happy to say that we built a stadium and we are bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into Manitoba in tourism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure to rise today and put a few words on the record on the Opposition Day motion, audit of the Investors Group Field, brought forward by my colleague, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

It gives me great pleasure to stand up and put a few words on the record, and especially by following the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), Mr. Acting Speaker, because it—once again, I am thankful that in their leadership race and as we've seen throughout the day, over the last few days, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has actually broken yet another promise, and the Premier had actually promised all of us in this great House to not allow the member for St. Norbert to stand up again and speak.

And, unfortunately, we have to listen to this on a day-to-day basis, and the crowing, and it would've been interesting if the member from St. Norbert actually would've stood up and mentioned, put it on record of which leader of his party he was actually supporting. And maybe—again, maybe that's our good fortune, all of Manitobans' good fortune, because obviously the Premier was very much aware of who he was supporting and that is why the member sits

on the backbench and does not have his hands on any of the controls for any of the departments. And so, when he stands and starts attacking other members of this House, I would think that it would be very wise as a new member, much like myself, class of 2011, to sit back and maybe be aware of his surroundings and be a little more respectful of the people in this Chamber.

He also mentioned—he mentioned the member from Morden-Winkler, who's also a—in the class of 2011, and mentioned the STARS helicopter. Well, the point that the member from Morden-Winkler is putting on the record is the fact that he's upset with the untendered contracts. Now, we know that this government has not been in the game for actually tendering out contracts and getting either the best bid or whatever else on certain projects. They like to support their contractors by giving them sole-source contracting and making deals on the side. And so that's sort of an introduction into why I'm standing up today to put a few words on the record in regards to this audit.

It also—listening to the member from St. Norbert, is we're very glad to hear on this side of the House that the member from St. Norbert's calling for an audit as well. He's in support of this Opposition Day motion calling for an audit on Investors field, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (15:50)

So that's the point. The point is, today, to bring forward to Manitobans that we're asking for an audit, a comprehensive audit, of Investors Group Field construction project and any other future or ongoing repairs that are—is going to be seen with this project.

Manitobans are passionate about our professional sports teams: the Blue Bombers, the Winnipeg Jets, the Goldeyes, and even the return of the Manitoba Moose, all excite the imaginations of the inhabitants throughout the province, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I know that my two boys, they're very avid hockey players and they grew up watching the Manitoba Moose, and being able to recite each and every player on the Moose team. So they're thrilled to see the Manitoba Moose back and they'll be able to attend a few more games than we are right now, Mr. Acting Speaker. We've subscribed to the Jets channel and watch—try to watch as many Jets games as we possibly can as well.

It's also a very exciting time for sport in Manitoba, as we are one of the many Canadian cities to be hosting the FIFA Women's World Cup which will be a source of pride for our city, as thousands of international visitors flock to Winnipeg to take part in the many festivities being offered throughout the city.

Yet, however passionate Manitobans might be for sports in this province, this is no reason to hide or misrepresent the facts that surround such important projects like Investors Group Field. Going as far back as 2008, the planning and construction story of the stadium, including its cost and design features, has been long filled with mystery, confusion and inconsistencies. Originally started as a private-sector-driven initiative by Creswin Properties at a cost of \$115 million, over the years, Investors Group Field has morphed into a publicly-funded facility via BBB Stadium Inc. which consists of the provincial government, the City of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Football Club, with a price tag now pegged at approximately \$100 million more than originally projected and climbing. There are serious concerns regarding the use and accountability of taxpayers' funds, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Indeed, Manitobans are continuing to pay more and get let less with this NDP-administered projects. The timelines and cost overruns of this stadium appear to, by definition, meet the quintessential essence of a normal NDP project: prolonged delays, well over budget and, as was referenced by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), resulting in litigation.

I know that the member from St. Norbert had put on the record that being in lawsuits and having the time with government agencies is a normal practice being in—being sued one way or another, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it seems more and more that we see that it is not common practice throughout the great country of ours, but only here in Manitoba, where we see the governing body being in court more times than we'd like to actually name.

Manitobans deserve to know how the funds to administer and construct the stadium were used. That is why an investigative audit is necessary for the Auditor General's office to ensure that no wrongdoing has occurred and that public funds have been used appropriately. It has also been alleged by third parties that there are serious concerns and accusations Investors Group Field was rushed and used as an elections prop to boast the—boost the

NDP's image in the run up to the 2011 provincial election.

A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending the Play On! ball hockey tournament which was held on the streets in front of Investors Group Field. And so my two boys and myself, we made a walk up the front steps and took a look through the gates which were bound and made sure that nobody was going in to potentially take pictures or whatever else, and a passerby—I'm not going to say whether it was on the inside of the gate or on the outside of the gate. I had asked how the renovations and the water was impeding anything future going on in the stadium, and they said that just recently they were able to get the majority of the water out that had actually melted and had leaked in and had compiled inside the stadium, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Now, it's another example of a serious abuse of both the public's trust and the use of the taxpayers' dollars. Mr. Acting Speaker, Manitobans are tired of the NDP broken promises and want a change for the better.

We do have a list, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I did want to go over a few of the construction-issue examples. And it is quite extensive so I am going to just name a few. So, obviously, I've already mentioned some of the water issues, but some drainage and moisture issues: they're having ponding on the concourse; drainpipe connection failures; water infiltration in private suites, video boards and into the building itself.

Some of the concrete issues: extensive concourse slab cracking; weight restrictions in all the concourse areas due to slab design and composition; heating and insulation issues; suites incapable of being heated to 10°C all year—that's interesting considering where we live, in this great province of Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker; insufficient weatherproofing and insulation; failure to enclose a crawl space; no heat in mechanical, electrical, sprinkler and concession areas; and no weather-stripping on doors.

Access issues—I know that the member from St. Paul had mentioned—and I know that the member from St. Norbert really appreciated the member from St. Paul's comments and repeated that quite extensively, but the member from St. Paul—and on the list we have inadequate entrance gate design, no means of getting concertgoers on and off the field, lack of handicap-accessible doors, no ladders to roof canopy hatches.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it is very concerning that these public funds are being spent willy-nilly by this government and so that is why I'm going to give the opportunity for others to speak to this very important issue. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker (Matt Wiebe): Before recognizing the honourable member, I'd like to draw members' attention to the loge on my right, where we have the former member from Swan River, Rosann Wowchuk. Welcome here.

* * *

Mr. Peter Bjornson (Gimli): It's great to see our former member here today to be part of this debate, and as she probably knows, I will be a former member myself prior to the writ being dropped, as I've decided not to run again. So I'm feeling a little nostalgic, so I'll talk a bit about that nostalgia.

It's like September—or, pardon me—let's start with January 5th, 1978, Winnipeg Jets beat the Russian national team 5-3 in the old Winnipeg arena. September 23rd, 1978, my first concert at the Winnipeg Convention Centre; it was Trooper and A Foot in Coldwater and the ticket was \$6.95. That was fabulous. And in 1981, that was my first season ticket to see the—the first time I bought season tickets as a young entrepreneur. I bought season tickets and attended the Bombers. I think they went 11 and five that year only to lose to BC in the western final. I think they lost 15-11 or something like that; it was a heartbreaker. But that was the first of many years of season tickets. That was at Canad Inns.

And what does this have to do with the debate today? Well, we're the government that is completely reinventing the Convention Centre, working with the federal government and the City of Winnipeg. We're the government that has rebuilt the MTS Centre with the supports that we've provided. And we're the government that built the new Investors Group stadium, and great memories now with my son Kieran attending a first hockey game at the MTS Centre when he and I were able to attend our first hockey game there; great memories with my son Dane, who will be performing at many events, I suspect, in time, at the gala dinners—he's already done a few at the Convention Centre; great memories that my daughter Iris and I will have after we attend our games that we've got tickets for at the FIFA World Cup women's soccer competition. And the common denominator is we're the government

that built. We have built all of these, working in partnership with private partners, working with government partners, we've built these incredible facilities.

And, you know, the one thing, as I'm reflecting on 12 years in this Chamber—the one thing I'm not going to miss is the sound of fingernails running down the chalkboard that is the speeches of many of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, because, quite frankly, the negativity that comes with just about every time some of those members step up to the plate, it just—I'm not going to miss that, quite frankly. Waldorf and Statler were not just crusty muppets in *The Muppet Show*. Hoop and Holler is not just a spot along the dikes in the Assiniboine. At any rate, I digress.

* (16:00)

But, you know, let's talk about the things that Tories say. And this particular debate, no surprises about silly things that Tories say. The member from St. Paul actually said that we attempted to build projects—attempted to build. Attempted to build. He—you know, that's rather fascinating when you consider all the projects that we have built and have completed in this province that have generated great jobs throughout the province of Manitoba, and I'll look at my own constituency. I had the pleasure of being in St. Andrews to open up another daycare in Manitoba—[*interjection*] Thank you very much. Now, the members opposite don't—have said they're not going to put any capital in; they're not going to build any more public spaces. They want to privatize daycare. But I was in St. Andrews opening up a new daycare; that's the second one in three years that we've opened up in my area. In fact, Rivercrest, which is in West St. Paul which I used to represent, is another daycare that we developed as government, and I was very pleased that we opened up that facility as well—two daycares in less than three years in my constituency and former constituency.

Then, of course, the Sigurbjorg Stefansson school, a brand new school; the waste water treatment plant, state-of-the-art, fantastic facility; the new hospital in Gimli, which was an incredible hospital, a wonderful facility; and then, of course, the dialysis unit that we've put in there. And I'd love—[*interjection*] Well, actually, the member from Lakeside says how's that working. I tell you, it's working right now for those who have—are being served. Now, the member from Lakeside should remember that during the election in 2011 when we

promised to bring the dialysis unit to Gimli, the opposition—[*interjection*] Now listen carefully, Mr.—member from Lakeside. You should know this because what happened after we announced that, the campaign manager for their team came up and said, why are you wasting money building a dialysis unit in Gimli. We don't need this. He says it was never said. Ask my mom; she was at the announcement; she heard it, and I invite you to ask my mom. She will tell you—she will tell you.

And that's what we do. We build; they ignore the needs of the community, Mr. Acting Speaker. So for them to suggest that they know how to build—well, what did they build? They cancelled all health capital when they were in office. They built two casinos—two casinos—and how much did it cost? About \$60 million more than the budget. And then they say outrageous things about the floodway, which is worth repeating, the fact that we had a labour agreement in place with the floodway that generated opportunities for First Nations employees and employers, and it was on budget—in fact, under budget when the floodway expansion was built.

So they say outrageous things, and I'm glad there's Hansard because people will see the outrageous things that members say, and I'm glad I had an opportunity to yet again remind the members about that ridiculous statement when my mom and I were accosted by the opposition on the dialysis unit. It was absolutely disgusting. You see silly things during elections, but I was absolutely appalled by that, Mr. Speaker, and I know how important that particular unit was for the individual who is now part of that program, who was in tears when we opened up that unit. Now, he says, how's it working now? Well, if you wouldn't have cut so many nursing positions, we'd have the capacity to be doing dialysis full time in the dialysis unit.

But, you know what? And, again, what they do, when positions are lost at health centres, they cut the position. As our Health Minister said, when our positions are vacant, we keep the money on the table. We have to train more and create more capacity. But unlike members opposite, that dialysis unit is not a waste of time in the community of Gimli. It's not a waste of money in the community of Gimli. It's the type of health care that the people in Gimli deserve and we're going to work hard to make sure that it is used to the fullest potential, but members opposite—cut, cut, cut.

So back to the Investors Group Field, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just amazed. I actually turned it on to American cable to watch the coverage, and the things they were saying about Winnipeg as a host in the facility. They were commenting on how it was such a wonderful facility, how it was great to see so many fans there. I met some of those American fans, in fact, because when I was in Gimli on the weekend I happened to have a conversation with people with Florida licence plates. They couldn't find a hotel room in Winnipeg because of what's been going on with the FIFA World Cup. They rented a condominium in Gimli, and we had a great conversation. They were so impressed by everything that they've seen here in Manitoba. They said it's their first time out of the country; they will come back. They were really impressed by what we had to offer, driving all the way up from Florida just to watch the soccer game.

But then we talked about the Human Rights Museum. We talked about all the other amenities. They said, we heard that the Churchill exhibit is really something, that we have to see it at the zoo. And, of course, who built that? Oh, yes, that would be us. That would be this side of the House. We build—we build—Mr. Speaker. We see the value of that. We see the number of jobs that that creates, and the member opposite at one time stood up and said that—I believe the Leader of the Opposition did say that government infrastructure programs don't create jobs.

But then you go back into all the budget speeches that they gave when they were in office, and they talked about all the great jobs that were being created by government infrastructure. So it's really, really fascinating that members opposite can be so duplicitous time and time again about what is happening in this province of Manitoba with what is happening with the record investments that we're putting into our communities.

So, you know, again, I talked about the memories that I had in those facilities, and I'm looking forward to the memories that my children will have in the facilities that we have built as a government, and I've been very happy to share many of those memories with them. And, of course, there are many memories that are being made this week with the FIFA World Cup, and I'm really looking forward to those games that I'll be attending next week with my daughter.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, if members opposite would quit scratching their nails down the chalkboard and being so negative about what is going on in this province, if members opposite would actually take note of what's been happening in this province, if members opposite heard the Swedish team talk about our airport and how impressed they were when they arrived—and I know that's primarily a federal responsibility, but they only invested that money in Winnipeg in the airport because things are growing in Manitoba.

For the first time in ages, there are no hotel rooms available in Winnipeg. And I think maybe the Pan Am Games was the last time that was the case. And they are saying that there're virtually no hotel rooms available in—throughout the city of Winnipeg, so the impact is huge. And one thing that the members should know is that since 1999 there's been a whole lot of new hotel rooms added to the city of Winnipeg, because they see how this economy is growing in Manitoba; they see the benefit of a Human Rights Museum, of an Investors Group stadium, of the Journey to Churchill, of the Jets and the MTS Centre, and all the things that we're doing to invest in Manitoba—

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

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the motion that the provincial government requests the Auditor General's office to conduct a comprehensive audit of the Investors Group Field construction project and any future or ongoing repairs because we know that it's just not over, because what Manitobans want to know is—about this government is what did you know and when did you know it? That's what we need to have out there, Mr. Speaker.

We look back at the press releases time and time again and the announcements, and I look back a year ago and it said, stadium dispute resolved. Well, not quite. I think there's a—been a couple of lawsuits since then, and the government does seem to enjoy being in court. Maybe that's part of their job creation; they love employing lawyers. They—you know, lawyers do a great job for this government, and I know one of the 'premier' Finance ministers had stables of lawyers to defend him. But that's what they seem to like to do; that's government job creation, employing lawyers to defend the government against the multiple lawsuits that this particular NDP has gotten into.

So what Manitobans really want to know, as I said, is what did this government know and when did they know it? How did they compromise the construction of the stadium, Mr. Speaker? Because, obviously, when we look at the construction, amazing facility has amazing events, but there's some problems out there with the construction. Apparently, we do have this thing that's called winter—comes once a year. It always seems to be a surprise when we get it here. It's obviously a surprise to members opposite. And with winter does come freezing temperatures. Now, sometimes we get freezing temperatures in June, too, as we did this year, but those are things that we do have to defend against and we do need to build structures that can withstand that and plan for it.

Now, obviously, something didn't quite go right with the stadium project. The builders are saying, you know, they had the plans in place, but there was political interference. And who did that political interference come from? That's what Manitobans want to know. Was it rushed because there was an election in the offing? Was it rushed because the NDP government needed another photo op, something that they could say that they were doing to make things look better on their own behalf?

And then when I look back at how it was all put together, could we possibly have a more complex financing operation than was structured for this stadium? So we're going to lend some money to this group and then they're going to lend it to that group, and maybe you'll pay them back, but maybe you won't. It looks as—you lended to the University of Manitoba who lends it to the football club, and then the football club is going to pay them back but, on the university books, it might show up as a bad debt—doubtful debt. So what does that say about how we're going to get paid back?

*(16:10)

And then there was something about, yes, we're going to rebuild the old stadium into retail and the taxes on that are going to go to pay the debt over here. But then, you know, well, Target shut down their operations so those taxes are less. So maybe we'll have to—I don't know what we're going to do there; how is that all going to work? Can we make this possibly even more complex? Follow the money—follow the money—that's the key. Who knows about what happened here?

So Manitobans, as I said, they want to know what did you know and when did you know it, and that's what an audit will bring out, Mr. Speaker. The lawsuits will be out there. They'll carry on. I'm sure we haven't seen the last lawsuit in connection with the stadium. I'm sure there will be more because this government just can't seem to stay away from those. They attract them, and it's just one of those very, very strange things.

And we look at the management of projects under this government. Under the NDP government, I just can't believe how bad they are at managing projects. I look at the infrastructure projects around Manitoba. First of all, they underspent by almost \$2.3 billion over the last five years, but still they managed to overspend on projects. When we first talked about a highway bypass in Brandon, Mr. Speaker, it was, well, some 16 years ago, I believe, and we talked about this bypass after the bridge had been built. And Manitoba Highways told us, you know, the bypass is going to cost \$12 million from the bridge to No. 1 Highway. And we were so shocked by that amount because—then they also said, if you want a diamond interchange, not a cloverleaf, just a diamond interchange, it was going to be, yes, another, well, four, eight, maybe \$12 million as well.

So we were so shocked by the first \$12 million, nobody said anything. We'll just keep it a level crossing, and then what happens? It opened—let me think now, 16, 15 years after it started, so last year. And the last number I saw on the sign was somewhere around \$48 million. So, even if I allow for inflation on the \$12 million, I can come up with \$16 million that it should've cost. But the mismanagement of the NDP is so bad that it ballooned to \$48 million not only over budget, but years overdue, and then what happens? We have a rainfall and it gets flooded because they didn't build it—design it correctly. The government had a problem here where it's a low spot, and the water all pooled into the bottom of the underpass and they had to close it for days. That section of that bypass was closed for days because of a rain event. So the planning is just—inability of this government planning is just astounding.

And then I hear members opposite get up and slam the private sector time after time. It's easy for this government to spend government money; it's much more difficult when you're spending your own dollars, Mr. Speaker.

I listened to the MLA for Brandon East talk about building the Keystone Centre. There were a lot of other people that were involved in building the Keystone Centre. It's sad that he does not give due where the due is warranted. There's a lot of private sector money that went into that. There is a lot of money that went in from me personally, from our company, from our associated companies into the Keystone Centre, and the time and effort of the volunteers to make that facility the one that we celebrate today in Brandon that brings in the events. And we celebrate those events like we did just last week with the summer fair, one of the highest attendances ever, the Travellers' Day Parade, 60th annual parade rain free. Can you imagine 60 years in a row that that parade has got on with all the volunteers, celebrated by the people of Brandon and yet again rain free. This year we looked a little dangerous with the forecast leading up to it. Friday night poured overnight, but the skies cleared off and we had a beautiful day for that parade.

So, then, when I see the government that slams the private sector, they slam the companies that are involved in the construction of Investors Group Field and they just can't take any responsibility for their own actions.

So that's why, Mr. Speaker, we think it's very important. I'm pleased to see the MLA from St. Norbert is onside now, siding with us to bring the auditor in to look at this dispute and look at what happened here because, in the end, Manitobans want an operation of a facility that they can be proud of, and, well, they're proud pretty much of the facility, they'd like to know what happened in its construction and why were there problems. Was it a political football that was kicked around by this NDP government made, that they tried to celebrate a success that they weren't the ones that were all behind it, but they look to do that.

So going back to it, as I said, Manitobans want to know of this government and of this Premier (Mr. Selinger), what did you know and when did you know it? Come clean so that Manitobans can know. If you meddled in the development of the field, tell us, we want to know that, because it looks like you did and there's a suspicion there. But this government likes to hide things time after time. And if there's something that can be hidden, it seems like this government just loves to do that.

So we look at this group that they put together and, as I said, can it be more complex, I hardly doubt

it. There were lots of people that were involved in the development, all well-meaning and they all intended for this to move ahead.

And then we do have the MLA for Dawson Trail talking about the problems saying, you know, he was extremely disappointed. Well, I would think so. I would think he'd be extremely disappointed, and to be on the receiving end of lawsuits, that is another thing that should be a target and should be ringing alarm bells, Mr. Speaker. But for this government it's just business as usual and the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation said the same thing, lawsuits are just cost of doing business for this government, it's what they expect to do time and again. So Manitobans want to know what did you know, and when did you know it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and talk about this very important opposition day motion about auditing the Investors Group Field. And it's always, you know, interesting when you listen to members opposite, and any time you point out legitimate concerns, concerns that not only do we have as an official opposition in fulfilling our role in holding the government accountable for the decisions that they make on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba, but concerns by, obviously, newspaper columnists, by editorial reports, by Manitobans, by architects, by engineers and, not surprisingly, as we've heard from a number of comments from colleagues of mine, from lawyers as well.

But heaven forbid, Mr. Speaker, that you point out legitimate concerns, legitimate architectural concerns with a project that was green lit and funded by the Province of Manitoba, by the NDP government, that was rushed through by the same government all for a very political reason. But if you mention any concern of share any of those concerns, and very valid concerns about some of the architectural shortcomings, suddenly you're against mom, apple pie and FIFA World Cup.

I listened to the minister for—the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), and as he pulled out his thesaurus, Mr. Speaker, and shared some of the many, many verbiages that he shared with us to express his outrage at the shortcomings and the architectural and structural shortcomings of the facility, and the minister was clearly, clearly concerned and shared that concern, and yet, I don't recall members opposite attacking his comments in

the way that they attack our comments. And, again, we are simply doing our job.

And it's always interesting when members opposite start a public project, and we've heard many referenced, and whether it was the—my colleague mentioning the floodway and the fact that the only reason that project came in on time and under budget was the fact that the government simply did not do the bridge expansions; two bridges from that—two promised bridges from that project. What was that famous quote that I always enjoyed from today's NDP: A promise made is a promise kept, Mr. Speaker, but I guess not when it comes to those two bridges.

* (16:20)

Now I don't recall, and if it did get mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, I will apologize, but I'll check Hansard and appropriately apologize down the road, but I don't believe anyone made reference to the cost of the Manitoba Hydro building. And I believe that the original cost of that Hydro project—and it was a solid cost—and I believe that was \$75 million—was the cost of the new building that the NDP decided that they wanted built downtown. I mean, I'm not—again—the issue isn't with the building.

I've been to the Manitoba Hydro building. It's a lovely, lovely building. I understand it's won many awards for its energy efficiency. And friends of mine that work for Manitoba Hydro are very complimentary of the new building.

But what the—what members opposite don't mention is the fact that that \$75-million estimate for the construction of that project, of that new Hydro's HQ, never materialized, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it wasn't \$100 million; it wasn't 125; it wasn't even 150. It didn't even double. I believe the final cost of that project was almost \$185 million, so more than double the original cost estimate.

So, again, there's a long track record of members opposite using political means and political pressure to force projects through, that instead of requiring a sense of review and reasonableness to make sure that taxpayers are served appropriately, rush these projects through and, again, at the expense, at the end of the day, of taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

But, I mean, this is an individual in a group of individuals—taxpayers that the members opposite and the NDP clearly don't care about. And so they simply will say, you know, well, you're against the Jets or

the Moose or whatnot about this that and the other thing, and they won't mention, you know, the fact that just this past winter when—or when the—before the project even opened up and we realized that, you know what, there's no access to the field. I mean, again, this isn't this—I would hardly call that an amenity, or something of an add-on, but yet, under the—today's NDP, it was indeed something that was missing and that they failed in all their reviews to note that it was missing.

In a closed press box, Mr. Speaker, and again, they had to go cap in hand to the private sector. And, again, it's always funny that the members opposite are very, very critical towards the private sector in, as this somehow evil entity that exists out there, but yet they went cap in hand to the private sector and begged them to help them fund an enclosed private—or enclosed press box so that we could actually bid on the 2015 Grey Cup. And it's a bid that obviously we won and we'll be looking forward to it and we'll see if the Bombers have a more successful season.

You know, and I've been to that stadium, Mr. Speaker, and yes, is it a lovely stadium? Absolutely. My son was very fortunate in his first year of baseball; as part of their community service, they actually have younger teams come in and have a scrimmage and meet some of the players, actually go down on the field, and they reserve a section of the stadium off for parents and family members to watch their children. And so my son at the time was 9 years old, and I mean he was quite in awe of being on the same field that the Bombers were on.

But again, Mr. Speaker, our comments today are not—again, they're—we don't take issue with the entertainment being offered there in terms of music entertainment; we don't take issue with the sports being offered there in terms of the Blue Bombers, or the Bison.

What we do take issue, Mr. Speaker, is with the cost of the facility; the fact that there's very clearly been suggestions made that this government interfered with the project, an interference that cost dearly. This project cost dearly the taxpayer, in terms of who will ultimately bear the cost of this project and will cost Manitobans long term here. Like, it, again, it adds to the credibility, or in the case of the NDP government, a lack of credibility when it comes to large-scale projects like this.

But, again, the Minister of Infrastructure—Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation says, you know, lawsuits, at least under their government, is

just business as usual when it comes to these large projects. And I'm guessing now they simply just work that into the original cost estimates, the gaggle of lawyers that's going to be required when they're promptly sued after the—10 minutes after the ribbon cutting, because that seems to be the way it is with this government. Mr. Speaker, that—and moments after the ribbon is cut, I mean, cut it—cut—the lawyers come out and the lawsuits are filed. And, of course, it's our tax dollars, ironically enough, that are being used to defend the very government whose decisions resulted in the original lawsuit. So it's almost a—it's almost of a bit of a Möbius loop, Mr. Speaker, and you're not really sure where it begins or ends, but I can tell you it begins and ends on the opposite side of this Chamber.

So I would urge all members of this House, Mr. Speaker, to take a look of this motion, this Opposition Day motion, put aside their petty politics and take a look at the finances, the construction costs, and let the Auditor General do their job.

I mean, the minister earlier—or the government earlier got some very distressing education—damning education information when it comes to the almost 11,000-plus children under care of Child and Family Services, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, the minister and the government were very quick to strike a task force to study that.

This information is not new, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the issues that surround Investors Group Field. I mean, if they're—if the members opposite are concerned about—somehow about the competency of the Auditor General, if they're concerned about the impartiality of the Auditor General, if they're concerned about the resources the Auditor General has under their command, then they're welcome to put those comments on the public record and state that they don't trust the Auditor General to make an independent assessment of the facts or they don't believe that the Auditor General can offer an impartial judgment on the set of facts.

But we on this side of the House, we have faith in the Auditor General, we trust the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker, and we are asking the Auditor General to look into this matter on behalf of Manitoba taxpayers so that we do have this information. And that's all we're asking for; we're asking for a review. We don't want to prejudge that review. We want to make sure that the Auditor General has the ability to make that determination and share that information with Manitobans, because that is their job, and I

would think that accountability and transparency should be part of the job of members across the way.

And, with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I rise today to speak to the opposition motion brought forward by my colleague from Tuxedo. This motion asks the provincial government request the Auditor General's office to conduct a comprehensive audit of the Investors Group Field construction project and any future or ongoing repairs. I hope all the members opposite will support us with this motion.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are passionate about their sports teams, of which I am one. Manitobans deserve state-of-the-art facilities for their teams to play out of. It's important not only for Manitobans, but for our youth. It's—gives them to look—something to look forward to, I mean, when they have an NHL hockey team here to go and watch, they have a professional football team and even baseball.

Having raised four boys, I know how important sports is, and sports has always played an important part of our lives. With this new stadium, it's given Winnipeg the opportunity to host the women's—the FIFA Women's World Cup. It's something great for the city.

You know, I've—I'm extremely proud of what we have in Manitoba here, our sports teams and everything that Manitoba has to offer from border to border. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm like most other Manitobans. I want value for my investment dollar. Every Manitoban that I know, including some of the members opposite, if they decided to build a new house and they went to see a builder and they signed the contract for \$400,000 to build this home, if the contractor came back after the building was built and presented them an invoice for \$800,000 and the building had some flaws in it, I'm sure that not one of them would be wanting to pay that bill without finding out what was going on. And that's just what Manitobans are about. We want value for our money.

And we know that the old stadium was showing wear and needed to be replaced, but sitting here and listening to members opposite, especially the members from St. Norbert and Brandon East, they seem to be a little bit confused about what's happening here. This motion is not about the stadium; it's not about what's happening in Manitoba. It's the fact that Manitobans—

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

The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 28(14), I'm—must interrupt the debate to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please signify by nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: Opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Recorded vote, please—

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion.

Does the House wish to have the motion reread?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a yes.

The motion reads as follows: That the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to request the Auditor General conduct a comprehensive audit of the Investors Group Field construction project.

Division

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

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Martin, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Nays

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wiebe, Wight.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 18, Nays 30.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 9, 2015

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