

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 16, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Bipole III Land Expropriation– Collective Bargaining Request

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

On November 19th, 2014, the Premier authorized an order-in-council enabling Manitoba Hydro to take valuable and productive farmland for its controversial Bipole III transmission line project without due process of law.

On November 24th, 2014, the minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act signed a confirming order for the province of Manitoba declaring that no notice to landowners is required for the seizure of property.

This waiver of notice represents an attack on rural families and their property rights in a modern democratic society. There was not even an opportunity provided for debate in the Manitoba Legislature. In many cases, the private property seized has been part of a family farm for generations.

Manitoba Hydro has claimed that it has only ever expropriated one landowner in its entire history of operation. The provincial government has now gone ahead and instituted expropriation procedures against more than 200 landowners impacted by Bipole III.

Since November 2013, the Manitoba Bipole III Landowner Committee, MBLC, in association with the Canadian Association of Energy and Pipeline Landowner Associations, CAEPLA, have been trying to engage Manitoba Hydro to negotiate a fair business agreement.

For over 14 months, the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro have acted in bad faith in their dealings with Manitoba landowners or their duly authorized agents. Those actions have denied farmers their right to bargain collectively to protect their property and their businesses from Bipole III.

MBLC, CAEPLA is–has not formed an association to stop the Bipole III project and they are not antidevelopment. MBLC, CAEPLA has simply come together, as a group of people, as Manitobans, to stand up for the property rights and the right to collectively bargain for a fair business agreement that protects the future well-being of their businesses.

MBLC, CAEPLA are duly authorized agents for Manitoba landowners who wish to exercise their freedom to associate and negotiate in good faith.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government immediately direct Manitoba Hydro to engage with MBLC, CAEPLA in order to negotiate a fair business agreement that addresses the many legitimate concerns of farm families affected by the Bipole III transmission line.

And this petition is signed by E. Funk, H. Jodi, K. Karlowsky and many more fine Manitobans.

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

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by B. Stepchuk, H. Melo, A. Chabluk and many other fine Manitobans.

**Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—
Request for Research into Benefits and Costs**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Lac du Bonnet is a recreational area with great natural beauty.

(2) The Winnipeg River is one of the greatest distinguishing cultural and recreational resources in that area.

(3) Manitoba marinas increase recreational access and increase the desirability of properties in their host communities.

(4) The people of Lac du Bonnet overwhelmingly support a public harbourfront marina in Lac du Bonnet.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider collaborating with other levels of government to research the economic benefits and construction costs of a marina in Lac du Bonnet.

This petition is signed by P. Boase, F. Hall, C. Cable and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Province-Wide Long-Term Care—
Review Need and Increase Spaces**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

(2) All trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

(3) By some estimates, Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

(4) The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia-related illnesses who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

(5) The last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River Valley area currently under administration of the Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

(6) Average occupancy rates for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent, with some regions, such as Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

(7) These high occupancy rates are creating the conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the current and continuous aging population and consider increasing the availability of long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

* (13:40)

And this petition is signed by A. Mueller, T. Mueller, D. Vernelsen and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

25th Anniversary of Elijah Harper's Stand Against the Meech Lake Accord

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

This month marks the 25th anniversary of the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord. This historic victory led by the late Elijah Harper, former MLA for Rupertsland, now called Kewatinook, marked a turning point in Canadian history. I rise today in this Chamber knowing that even today there are many people who don't understand the pressures on Elijah to support—who didn't understand the pressures that were on him to support the accord or why he took that stand.

The remaining MLAs who were here at that time include, of course, the members from River East, Elmwood and Thompson. They are also well aware of the threatening phone calls, meetings and threats made against those opposing the accord and supporting Elijah. First Nations were accused of putting the country at risk, that if the accord failed, Canada would break apart. There was little middle ground.

When chiefs came to the Legislature the day it was introduced on June 12, they were blocked from entering. It was a telling symbol of the lack of power indigenous peoples in this province and country had at that time. Chiefs like Louis Stevenson, Joe Guy Wood, Frank Abraham, Andy Anderson, Raymond Swan, amongst others, were treated with great disrespect. Many of those leaders who were stopped that day from entering later became leaders in other walks of life. Ovide Mercredi and Phil Fontaine both later served as the national chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations. OCN Chief Oscar Lathlin became the MLA for The Pas that fall, serving continuously until his death in 2008. Fox Lake Chief Robert Wavey is now Deputy Minister of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. Jackhead Chief Bill Traverse is now AFN regional vice-chief. Many others, such as former chiefs Louis Stevenson,

Joe Guy Wood and Pascal Bighetty, are no longer with us, but their legacy remains strong.

The MLA for St. Johns, then a lawyer advising Elijah, was elected to the Legislature three years after that. Similarly, I journeyed from being an activist and president of the Winnipeg Aboriginal council during the Meech Lake debate, replacing Elijah when he retired from the Legislature in 1993. It is an honour that I carry with me every day.

The defeat of Meech Lake was no simple matter, far from it. It was a coalition of a wide variety of Manitobans and people across the country who stood with us, recognizing that the indigenous peoples, the founders of this country, were not going to simply accept being ignored by a constitutional amendment that didn't even acknowledge our existence.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was the first legacy of the stand against Meech. The outrage against the residential schools soon followed, culminating in the 2008 apology, the Common Experience settlement and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chief Commissioner of the TRC Justice Murray Sinclair held the first national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Winnipeg at The Forks. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report of 1991, which he also co-authored, sat on the shelf until 1999 when the new government was sworn in and implemented the AJIC on—to act on the recommendations.

The Kelowna Accord itself is another example of the legacy of Meech Lake that wouldn't have happened before the Meech Lake defeat. Little tangible results flowed from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Kelowna Accord because of the lack of federal commitment is a loss for the country and both for indigenous and non-indigenous populations. It would be tragic if the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for action is similarly dismissed.

Canadians have learned much over the last—the past 25 years about the poverty, lack of opportunity and injustice that a large percentage of Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Metis people live with. The excuse of ignorance is no longer valid. If governments and businesses fail to take seriously the message of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, will not only repeat the failures of the Meech Lake Accord, it'll condemn another generation to poverty and severely damage the economic potential of this country. We cannot

simply accept the growing number of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we have a—we all have a role to work together to better represent our constituents and those who need our help. As Elijah Harper showed, one individual MLA can make a difference in this province and country. We need to work together in the spirit of reconciliation and commitment to overcome the barriers that Indian, Metis and Inuit people face in this province and across the country.

Earlier today on the back lawn of this Chamber, we also marked Aboriginal Day with speakers including former AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine, Swan Lake Chief Francine Meeches, the Manitoba Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and the music of the Spirit Sands Drum Group and C-Weed. We celebrated the perseverance, the strength and endurance of indigenous peoples who have survived great struggles and losses, from the residential schools system to the '60s scoop that took away Indian, Inuit and Metis children from their families to the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls of this country. We celebrated our collective will to continue as the true founders of this land, Manitou, and pledge to continue our struggle for justice.

Ekosani, miigwech, mahseecho, wopida, hei hei, merci, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you to the co-Deputy Premier for his words today on the 25th anniversary of the Meech Lake Accord's defeat. I'm honoured to stand today to remember, in particular, a quiet and powerful and empowering action that took place in this very Chamber 25 years ago.

Twenty-five years ago, Chief Elijah Harper, at that time the MLA for what was called Rupertsland, took a principled stance against the Meech Lake Accord, symbolically raising an eagle feather to stand up against the exclusion of Aboriginal voices in our country.

This accord, as you remember, Mr. Speaker, required unanimous ratification by both Parliament and all 10 provincial legislatures. And in Manitoba, the first ratification vote was set to take place on June 12th, 1990, and was initially expected to pass without resistance. But Elijah Harper, then the first and only First Nations member of our Legislative Assembly, believed that Aboriginal people had suffered too much, had been excluded too often and

had had their concerns left out of decisions far too many times, including again in the Meech Lake Accord.

* (13:50)

I had the great privilege of meeting Mr. Harper in my time here at the Legislature when he was here, and then, of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and his colleagues are aware, he left here to go to Ottawa, as some of our members do, to serve in a federal capacity and represent his people there. I also had the great privilege of getting to know him better when I went to Ottawa as a Member of Parliament, and he was at that time working with Jane Stewart and her department on treaty lands issues. Mr. Harper continued to represent the views not only of Aboriginal Manitobans but of many like-minded Canadians in the years to come.

The accord itself, following Elijah's stand, went down to defeat as a result of also Newfoundland and Labrador following the example, and the accord ultimately failed. But, Mr. Speaker, I would rather emphasize today Chief Elijah's actions, which demonstrated his commitment to make life better for Aboriginal people in Canada, to raise the profile of what is important to Aboriginal people in Manitoba to the level of national prominence.

He's often remembered for his stance of the Meech Lake Accord debate, but it must be pointed out that he was dedicated to advancing the rights of First Nations people throughout not just his political life but throughout his entire life. Chief Harper was an ardent defender of Aboriginal rights in Canada. He was tireless in his pursuit of equality for all people and for policies that enhance the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada.

In December of 1995, Mr. Harper called for a Sacred Assembly to promote Aboriginal justice through spiritual reconciliation and healing between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples. The Sacred Assembly brought together people from all across Canada and represented the elders, women, youth, political and spiritual leaders in all faiths. And Elijah's Sacred Assembly brought the tragedy of Indian residential schools to the forefront of Canadian society, and for the first time in Canada's history, national leaders of the Presbyterian, Catholic, Anglican and other church groups made formal apologies for the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in residential schools.

The Sacred Assembly also led the Canadian government to declare June 21st as National Aboriginal Day, to recognize Aboriginal people in Canada and to gain more recognition of the role of Aboriginal people in Canada's history. We encourage all Manitobans to recognize and to celebrate the unique contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Metis people here in Manitoba this weekend in celebration of National Aboriginal Day. National Aboriginal Day is an occasion for all Canadians to celebrate the rich contributions that Aboriginal people have made to Canada and, of course, the contributions Aboriginal people will continue to make in building our future. I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to all individuals, groups and organizations who are involved in making this year's Aboriginal Day special as a national holiday. We're proud of the significant work that has been done in years past, and we look forward to experiencing the events and festivities this year and in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, all of us here are very proud of the First Nation, Inuit and Metis people who make up the social and economic fabric of our province and Canada, and we want to ensure that their historical and cultural presence is always remembered, always acknowledged and always appreciated.

Miigwech. Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join others today, standing on Treaty 1 territory and on the homeland of the Metis nation, to recognize the events of 25 years ago. It was an event of major historic importance when the Meech Lake Accord died on June the 23rd after a series of events which involved Elijah Harper standing up and 'delying' leave and making sure that the Meech Lake Accord would not pass here in Manitoba, and, of course, that meant it would not pass in Canada.

It was a recognition of the fact that Aboriginal people, indigenous peoples in Canada, First Nation people, the Metis, the Inuit, have a fundamental and tremendously important role in our country and a recognition of the fact that they should never be forgotten or left behind or omitted as they were, tragically, from the Meech Lake Accord.

It was an important turning point because since then, there have been many legal rulings, including quite a number of Supreme Court rulings, which affirm the rights of Aboriginal people and affirm the fact that Aboriginal people need to, now and moving forward, always be considered in many of the decisions that we make and always need to be consulted in what happens.

It is important that we salute Elijah Harper and the many others, chiefs in particular, who were involved with Elijah, but, of course, there was much more depth than just the chiefs, because there were many others: Phil Fontaine, Raymond Swan, Louis Stevenson, Andy Anderson, Ovide Mercredi, Joe Guy Wood, Pascal Bighetty and so many others. It was, indeed, a coalition; it was indeed a movement, a strong movement of many, many people.

It is interesting that June the 23rd of 1990 was also the date that Jean Chrétien became the leader of the Liberal Party. And Jean Chrétien and Minister Irwin, who was with him, and the rest of the team put forward a number of initiatives, including many new schools in First Nations communities, an initiative to have a look at self-government for First Nations people in Manitoba and, indeed, last year we had the first First Nation—Sioux Valley develop and come forward as a First Nation with a self-government, and although there is still a tremendous amount that is still to do, there has been some steps forward.

We, of course, still have much work to do to complete the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, to attend to the matters which have been brought up in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and in the—dealing with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its report, the executive summary, which came out very recently.

We also have much to do to improve the situation of Aboriginal communities, to improve the situation of Aboriginal children, because today we still have far too many—11,000 children in care, the preponderance of which are First Nation and Metis and some Inuit.

The work goes on, Mr. Speaker. It must go on. It must give us better results and a better relationship among all in Manitoba and in Canada. It must address difficult issues like racism. The efforts of Elijah Harper and so many others which we recognize today must be part of our effort to look back and remember but also a part of our effort to recognize how much there is still to do and how much we are challenged with, as we sit here today as

MLAs, in continuing the work that has begun but must continue and continue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, miigwech, merci, ekosani.

Mr. Speaker: Any further ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, prior to oral questions I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Bruce Harper, fiancée Cora, Holly Harper, Jeff Anderson, Kaye-Leigh Harper-Anderson, Juliette Harper-Anderson and Elijah Harper-Anderson.

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

And also, seated in the public gallery we have with us today Ashley Weber, Gail and Wade Weber, Birehanu Bishaw, Marcella Morales, Jill Pasveer and Raymond Czayko, who are the guests of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us today from Glenboro School 23 grades 5 and 6 students under the direction of Ms. Marilyn Cullen, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome each and every one of you here this afternoon.

* (14:00)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Social Impact Bonds Use in Manitoba

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Naturally, Mr. Speaker, last week we were somewhat disappointed to see the Premier (Mr. Selinger) oppose the idea of Manitobans investing in preventative social programs.

The fact of the matter is that Manitobans are already investing in programs, just, unfortunately, not programs to prevent problems but rather to address problems after they have occurred. They are given no choice; they are forced to do that because under the NDP, Manitobans have to pay some of Canada's highest taxes, and they are tired of paying more and getting less. But what is the return to Manitobans on this massive contribution they make? Canada's highest rate of child poverty, serious, serious problems with youth crime and recidivism.

And now we are assured that at least under this government and this Premier, these problems will continue and perhaps worsen because the Premier thinks he has a monopoly on compassion and he dismisses collaborative approaches that look for solutions.

Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, one half of young offenders reoffend within two years of release, and most of these offenders are young Aboriginal men. Wouldn't it be an excellent idea to establish an innovative partnership program that reduces recidivism? Wouldn't that be an excellent fit for a province facing these problems?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Deputy Premier): What I can tell the members opposite, that the province of Manitoba can rely on this side of the House. We are committed to supporting, providing opportunities for all Manitobans.

We are not about establishing reckless cuts. A half a billion dollars, what would that do to the confidence of Manitobans? What would that do about reducing the rate of poverty?

We are about creating a strong economy, the No. 1 economy, working on creating more jobs. We are seeing those results. We have more work to do, but I have confidence on this side that we will get that work done.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the co-Deputy Premier and the Premier himself seem to believe they have all the answers, but we have 11,000 children in care in our province, which is a modern-day record, and the vast majority of those children are Aboriginal children. And so if the government has all the answers, why are the problems worsening?

Globally, governments are embracing social impact bonds as a collaborative and innovative tool to establish partnerships to prevent problems, to help children stay with their families in their communities rather than be taken out of them and taken away. In Australia, in the United States, in Israel, these countries are engaging in projects that are tackling homelessness, at-risk youth, crime prevention.

Manitoba has social challenges, and we are community-minded people in Manitoba, yet the Premier and his government are letting their closed-minded ideological positions get in the way of excluding our communities from working together on solutions.

Now, how—I'd like the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to explain today: How is excluding our larger community from partnering together to look for solutions anything but a bad idea?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: This side of the House, in 1999, when they took power, they went into the offices. They dusted off the AJI report. They worked together with First Nations, with Metis and with Inuit people and implemented that. What we continue to do is have those relationships. They're strong.

We have much more work to do. It's about building trust, working together and accepting each other. We see that accomplishment happen with devolution. I ask the members opposite: Did they support devolution? No, they didn't. We took the action. We have First Nation-ran authorities. We are working with all of our partners. We're making a difference. We have much more work to do. But I have confidence together we will see those results, those results of healthy families and strong communities.

Mr. Pallister: I genuinely appreciated the statements of the co-Deputy Premier in support of our initiative to give matrimonial property rights to Aboriginal women. It came a month before the Senate finally acted to adopt the bill, but it came a decade after we began that fight. No support whatsoever from the NDP; no support whatsoever from the government while Aboriginal women failed to have the same property rights as everyone else in this country takes for granted. So we don't need lectures from the government on standing up for the rights of Aboriginal people in our country.

We're celebrating Elijah Harper today here, and that's a good thing to celebrate because Elijah understood the importance of collaboration and he understood the importance of working together and joining hands on things that were worthwhile. So we should do the same now. We should learn from those lessons. We should learn from the lessons of the past.

Shutting people out, that's a fearful tactic and not one the government should employ. What are they afraid of? The partners in these programs are credit unions, benevolent individuals, community foundations, charitable societies. These are the things the Premier and his colleagues fear? They don't have a monopoly on—

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

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What the member—what Manitobans should fear are the members opposite and their continued commitment for privatization. We first heard about privatization of the health-care system when he went on the radio and he spoke about the benefits of two-tier health care. What does that do to vulnerable Manitobans? What does that do to our seniors?

He didn't stop there. A few weeks ago, his member from Portage la Prairie unveiled a terrifying—a terrifying—strategy that would privatize child care. What does that do to child care? It'd increase the rates. It puts not-for-profit child-care centres out of business. It does not provide the same quality of service for Manitobans. That's concerning.

And what the members opposite are proposing now are to privatize social issues so that their friends can benefit from investments. Shame on them.

Social Impact Bonds Use in Manitoba

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, why are so many First Nations families terrified of CFS?

Last February, the Manitoba government announced its Social Enterprise Strategy. Its stated goal was to reduce poverty and increase social inclusion, something we can all support, especially as our child poverty rates continue to lead the country.

As a part of that, two of this government's ministers endorsed the use of social impact bonds as a source of investment. Suddenly, a spokesperson for this government is attacking the social impact bonds as a dangerous plan that would divert money away from services.

I ask this government: What has changed?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Deputy Premier): What every member in this House needs to understand is the Social Enterprise Strategy that we co-created with the leaders in the community, with community economic development, we sat at the table, we've come up with many recommendations that are going to address the issues of social enterprise and opportunities across the province.

When the members read the report, the issue around social impact bonds, it was a jurisdictional scan; it's an option that's out there. It is not a recommendation that is in this report. Shame on them for misleading Manitobans.

We'll continue to work with all Manitobans, ensure that we're providing the services that they need in collaboration and co-operation to create opportunities in education, employment and continue to grow the economy.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, it is very clearly a recommendation of this report.

Perhaps this government is not aware of Manitoba's great history of charitable donations and strong charitable foundations. Foundations and local financial institutions like credit unions are the most common social impact investors in Canada.

Could this government explain to us all why tapping into local altruistic funding is a bad way to deal with social problems?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We will continue to work with all of the partners across the province, supporting the not-for-profit organizations. We've done it since 1999. We'll continue to do it.

We have the reduce the red tape reduction strategy, where we provided multi-year funding for 35 not-for-profit organizations. We're expanding that as we speak. We're going to continue to provide them with the necessary supports.

We are not going to provide threat tactics. We are not going to privatize social issues. We're going—continue to work with all of our partners, address the issues by developing good opportunities for them around education, employment, while we continue to grow the economy.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, government support was there for social impact bonds as a means to work on social problems back in February 2015. The PC party announced its support for the concept on June the 9th of 2015. This government reversed its position on social impact bonds on—or on June the 10th, 2015. CUPE joined them in attacking the concept on June 11th, 2015.

*(14:10)

What exactly is this government's position on the use of social impact bonds, and exactly who wrote it for you?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As we continue to work with all of our community partners, we were extremely proud when we rolled out the Social Enterprise Strategy across Manitoba. That strategy highlighted employment opportunities, opportunities around more housing, providing BUILD for—opportunities to

continue to provide reduction in clean energy. Those are the important things that are happening.

As we worked on that and co-created that document, we looked at lots of jurisdictions and what they were doing. We came up with recommendations that address what we want to see happening, support for not-for-profit organizations.

The biggest threat to not-for-profit and for Manitobans are the members across the way who speak about privatizing health care, child care and now the not-for-profit sector.

Income and Sales Taxes Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, Mr. Speaker, according to new reports, there is a steady growth in the tax gap between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The average Manitoba family pays higher taxes to the provincial government than the same family living in Saskatchewan, but the difference is growing. In 2015 the average Manitoba family will pay \$1,700 more in provincial income taxes alone than the same family living in Saskatchewan.

Why, because of this NDP government's financial mismanagement, do Manitoba families have to pay more and more?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I do—I want to thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, it gives me an opportunity to inform the House today of some good news.

I know they don't like good news, but, you know, today the monthly survey of manufacturing came out, and there's, on page 2, an interesting headline: Sales down in every province except Manitoba. Manitoba was the lone province to report an increase in April with sales up 3 per cent. This was the third gain in five months in this province.

We have a plan, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is working.

Mr. Friesen: See, and what the Finance Minister failed to disclose is that since 2009 we are actually ninth in that category, and he knows that.

Mr. Speaker, it's not good news for Manitoba families. The NDP government's steady growth in taxes means that the average Manitoba family has to pay much more PST than families in Saskatchewan.

Now, the NDP broke its word and they raised the provincial sales tax after the last election, but as a

result, the average Manitoba family now pays \$1,800 more in PST than the same family in Saskatchewan. That's \$1,800 less for every Manitoba family: less for mortgage, less for car payments, less for groceries, less for piano lessons.

Why does this government show no relief for hard-working Manitoba families?

Mr. Dewar: Well, the members opposite, they have a fondness for quiz, and so I'll ask my colleagues, all members in this House, a quiz.

Recently, members of the opposite—members of the opposition, including the Liberal member, recently voted against the following, Mr. Speaker: tax cuts for—(a) tax cuts for seniors, (b) tax cuts for volunteer firefighters, (c) tax cuts for caregivers or (d) all of the above. The answer is (d) all of the above.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, we know that their PST hike is the highest income—or the highest tax hike in Manitoba history.

Mr. Speaker, according to new figures, the average Manitoba family's income is 16 per cent higher than in 2009. But the same family's income tax and sales tax of this NDP government has gone up 24 per cent. Taxes are rising faster than income, and as a result of this NDP's high-tax, high-debt, high-spend policies, Manitobans have less money after tax to live, to pay bills, to raise a family, to fund their retirement. Yet the Finance Minister won't even enact the most basic change and index tax brackets to end the bracket creep.

Will the Finance Minister just admit that under this NDP government Manitoba families will continue to pay more and get less?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, the member got that quiz wrong. So I'll give him another one.

Just the other day in this House, that member and every member opposite, including the Liberal member, voted against (a) tax cuts for small business, (b) tax cuts for research and development, (c) tax cuts for the film and video production industry, or (d) all of the above. The answer is all of the above.

Steady Growth Campaign Advertising Costs

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, from a recent FIPPA request, we have learned that the NDP government spent over \$1 million on the

Steady Growth sign campaign. This despite the minister's recent response that the department does not spend much on advertising.

Mr. Speaker, this is a prime example of Manitobans paying more and getting less from this NDP government. Over \$1 million from Manitobans' hard-earned tax dollars went to the NDP's advertising instead of the Healthy Baby program.

Why is this NDP government wasting money on an ad campaign and threatening front-line services?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, sign, sign, everywhere a sign. We have signs marking the construction of core infrastructure around the province.

It may not have dawned on members opposite that when we said we were going to deliver on core infrastructure, it meant two things. It actually meant we would have a lot more construction and, Mr. Speaker, more signs, because we're building more.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, over \$1 million spent on a self-serving NDP ad campaign instead of front-line services.

The NDP insisted on clawing back 4 per cent from non-profits in the fourth quarter last year.

Why is this government wasting \$1 million on signs rather than living up to their promises to Manitobans?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, on a historic day like this, I think it's absolutely ironic that any member opposite would talk about clawbacks.

Because, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition, who I think likes to make out that he's been, you know, best friends with every historic figure that we've seen in this province, I actually knew Elijah Harper very well. And I sat with Elijah Harper in this Chamber when he changed Canadian history, when Aboriginal people in this province changed history.

And what was the response of the Conservative government of the day? For the next nine years, Mr. Speaker, here's what they did. They cut funding for every Aboriginal organization. They cut funding, eliminated it, for friendship centres. They targeted Aboriginal people through clawbacks in terms of social assistance and the snitch line.

So when it comes to this historic day, I thought they might ask a question about Aboriginal people, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the investments we're making, you know, let their record—

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

Mr. Helwer: Well, this NDP minister has a chance to change NDP history. He can tell the truth.

Mr. Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to caution the honourable member for Brandon West. We've tried to have a practice in this House and I've tried very hard to make sure that all honourable members follow the use of parliamentary language in this Chamber.

And I'm going to caution the honourable member for Brandon West to pick and choose his words very carefully when he's posing his question. I want to make sure he doesn't stray over the line on these matters.

Mr. Helwer: The NDP lied to Manitobans about the PST increase and then lied again when they promised that all of it would go to infrastructure. Instead, they've spent over \$1 million on a sign—on signs for a self-serving ad campaign.

Manitobans are tired of the NDP government's broken promises.

Will the minister tell us today: What other services will the government threaten while spending more on signs?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, Elijah Harper also represented a part of this province that has some of the least transportation access.

* (14:20)

And I want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, it's ironic the member opposite is talking about cutting back, because the only thing in the Conservative document that was put out for the vision of northern Manitoba they said they would do differently—this is under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition who served under the Filmon and the Harper government—is to eliminate the East Side Road Authority.

As I stand here today 25 years later, I can say probably the most—one of the proudest things that we are doing to live up to the legacy of Elijah Harper and the Aboriginal people that fought to change Canadian history 25 years ago is building the East Side Road Authority.

We in the NDP support it; they would cut it.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Nursing Overtime Costs

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government got elected on a promise to end what they called, and I quote, the dangerous reliance on nursing overtime.

Can the Minister of Health tell us if her government kept that promise and ended what they called, and I quote, the dangerous reliance on nursing overtime?

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

And I always enjoy the opportunity to talk to Manitobans and to share with them the good things that are happening with nurses in this province with this government, because one of the things that we have done is increased nursing seats. We've hired more nurses. For every nurse that they fired, we've hired over three back. We keep our—we have increased the amount of positions available. We are always looking for more, Mr. Speaker.

And we've negotiated a phenomenal contract with the Manitoba Nurses Union, and part of that includes working out scheduling to make sure that nurses have good working environments so that they can take care of Manitobans the way they want to and the way we want to be taken care of as patients.

Thank you.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the minister refused to answer the question, and, in fact, this NDP government broke that promise and now force or mandate nurses to work overtime even though they said it was a dangerous practice.

Mr. Speaker, nursing overtime in the WRHA has skyrocketed under this NDP government and it has reached an all-time high. Last year, according to freedom of information, the WRHA had to pay out \$9.3 million in nursing overtime.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell Manitobans: Why is there such high overtime costs in the WRHA?

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

And, again, I'd like to remind Manitobans of that contract that was signed with the Manitoba Nurses Union just in April of last year. And, again, it's about

work on optimising the way patient care and long-term supports are put and the sustainability of the system, and that includes work focusing on improving scheduling practices to reduce overtime use and the use of agency nurses, creating a balance of full- and part-time positions and improve work-life balance for nurses.

So, again, we're working hard with nurses to ensure they're—they can provide the care that they want, and we're working with our regional health authorities to make sure that they do the best to make sure that we get the best practice and the best working conditions and the best care conditions for Manitobans.

Mrs. Driedger: The answers by this Minister of Health show that she does not understand this issue. She stands here and talks about work-life balance; you don't have that if you're forced to work overtime.

Mr. Speaker, nursing overtime is soaring in rural Manitoba as well. In the southern RHA, they paid \$2.7 million; Prairie Mountain, \$3.5 million; Interlake, \$1.8 million; northern, \$1.5 million; in total, \$9.5 million in rural Manitoba.

So in Manitoba in all of last year, they paid out \$19 million in nursing overtime in just one year even though they said this was a dangerous practice and they would end it.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to tell us: Why did this NDP government break that promise to end the dangerous reliance on nursing overtime?

Ms. Blady: I can tell you one of the best ways to eliminate nurse overtime is by having more nurses, and we've got 3,700–3,700—more nurses than when members opposite left.

I can remind them, too—I'd like to quote the Winnipeg Free Press from March 12th, 1999. In 1999 the Winnipeg Free Press reported the Conservative government had eliminated 1,100 nursing jobs over the past six years. Health Care in Manitoba reported nurses—Manitoba Nurses Union, April 1998, reported that 1,000 nurses already have been laid off. In 1999, according to our nursing colleges, 1,492 nurses were practising in Manitoba, compared to 15,665 in 1992.

The biggest threat, the biggest challenge that nurses are going to face regarding overtime is going to be if members opposite are the ones that fire them and cause them to strike again.

Altona Health Centre Suspension of Services

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the good folks of Altona are not sharing in this minister's happy thoughts as she put on the record.

The OR in Altona has been closed due to the inability of this Minister of Health to manage her department. This mismanagement has compromised front-line services and timely care in the community.

Can the minister tell us what steps she has taken to reopen the OR in Altona?

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

I'd also like to remind Manitobans that all families deserve access to safe, high-quality care close to home. And we believe that all ERs in Manitoba should be open 100 per cent of the time and that's what we're working towards.

But we recognize that physician recruitment and retention to rural hospitals isn't just an issue here in Manitoba; it's an issue across the country, Mr. Speaker. And I can assure Manitobans as well that, according to CIHI, Manitoba has actually among the best rates in the nation on rural doctor retention.

But we know there is more to do, which is why we've expanded medical seats, which is why we have had the U of M allocate more medical seats for those students with rural roots. Again, a contract with doctors Manitobans—Doctors Manitoba, we're working with doctors and we're working with RHAs to find solutions.

Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, she's not working hard enough.

There are 23 closed ERs in the province of Manitoba that were open when her government took over the government. And now there's a number more that are closed on a rotational basis. This includes the ER in Altona, jeopardizing the services of regional hospital in a—that responds to a large area.

Yet the Minister of Health has no answers. The minister's mismanagement is crippling the vital front-line emergency services.

Why are Manitobans required to pay more and get less?

Ms. Blady: As I've mentioned before, it's about having a good, positive working relationship with doctors, and we done that—we done that.

They cut medical seats down to 70 seats; we've raised them up to 110. We had 109 new doctors last year. I was happy to welcome 107 new doctors this year. We have more rural seats. We have medical students being provided with free tuition if they practise in underserved communities. And we've expanded the number of rural residencies.

Are there challenges? Absolutely. Are we willing to work with the RHAs, the communities and doctors to make sure that we get as many ERs open on a regular basis? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we're working hard to make sure that Manitobans are looked after, and that means working well with doctors.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Minister, this positive relationship she has has really closed 23 ERs. I hope she doesn't work any harder than she is now.

Will she—will this minister guarantee, since she's closed the OR in Altona, will she guarantee that that ER will be open all summer?

Ms. Blady: What I will guarantee Manitobans is that if, for example, if there isn't a physician available at an emergency room, we know that our provincial EMS dispatch centre is made aware and they do adjust the land and air ambulance resources to make the best response time possible.

I will also assure Manitobans that we will continue to work with doctors.

And I will also assure Manitobans that we will not go down the path that members opposite did that led doctors to strike and that did things like, oh, for example, in the central region, cutting over \$8 million from the hospitals and PCHs in the—in central Manitoba, including Morden-Winkler—Morden hospital, Tabor Home, cuts to Portage la Prairie, the area that member opposite represent—the Leader of the Opposition. He had \$1.6 million that he cut to his own Portage hospital and \$1.1 million that he cut to two Portage PCHs.

*(14:30)

So I can assure—

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

Children in Care Human Trafficking Case

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we have recently learned of a 17-year-old girl who is believed to have been exploited by what is alleged to have been a human trafficking ring. This girl was a ward of today's NDP's government in the care of CFS.

Can the minister explain how a child in the care of today's NDP's government ends up in such a terribly risky situation that she could be sexually exploited when she is supposed to be safe in the care of CFS?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I can assure the member opposite and every member in this House that the safety and security of children are paramount. We continue to work with families, to work with communities to provide the children and the youth with the resources they need.

We have made investments and partnerships with not-for-profit organizations working in the front line. We have expanded Ndinawe to 24-7 hours, a youth drop-in centre. We continue to work with StreetReach to ensure that we have people on the front lines, in the communities, on the streets, looking for youth when they go missing. We'll continue those relationships.

We continue working with Winnipeg Police Service and the RCMP as well across the province to ensure the safety of all Manitoban children.

Safety of At-Risk Youth

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister herself has acknowledged that many youth in care are running from the place where they are supposed to be safe, like a group home. In fact, in one interview the minister has said that StreetReach, an organization which searches for children who are missing from CFS, that this organization StreetReach visits crack houses to find these children.

It is my understanding that one aspect of the care of every child in CFS is that they are staying in a place of safety. A crack house is not a place of safety.

Can the minister tell the Chamber how a child in CFS care would end up in a crack house?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What I can assure all members of this House and all Manitobans, that we continue to

make investments in our child-welfare system. We have more than tripled the funding to the child-welfare system. We've hired more child protection workers. We're hiring and working with more foster parents. We have developed supports for families. There are children with complex needs; we need to be able to address those needs. We are out in the communities. We are working with the agencies and the authorities.

What we also need to be doing is preventing these issues from happening, making sure that we have a strong mental health strategy, making sure that we have a good quality education and child care available to all Manitobans. We're going to continue to make those investments to support Manitoba families so they can raise their children in their homes and in their communities so those children can thrive.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it is surely inappropriate for the child and family services system to accept that children in care are exposed to such dangerous activities. The minister has said that children in care, in some places of safety, are able to leave at any hour of the day or night, and some, as the minister herself has acknowledged, end up in unsafe places like crack houses.

How is it that the minister is operating a system in which children in her care, in the care of today's NDP government, are ending up in such unsafe situations, and what is the minister going to do to end this practice, which has likely been going on for the 16 years of her government?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As I said in the previous question—I will repeat it for the member opposite—this government has continued to make investments in child welfare. We have developed strong and meaningful partners with authorities and agencies. We have tripled the funding to child welfare. We have hired more workers. We continue to provide support to foster parents, but we don't stop there.

We continue to work on prevention strategies through Healthy Child Manitoba. We're making investments in prenatal benefits, where we're looking at child-care centres. We're looking to provide education.

We're going to continue to work with our partners. We're going to continue to provide the support when families need it, and we are going to work together to address these issues co-operatively and collaboratively and in a way that does not create

fear, and we will continue to support them, like the member opposite who has continually voted against every one of those initiatives.

Family Doctor Finder Program Update

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it's clear that that side of the House cares about two things: cuts and privatization. When they had the keys to government, they cut the doctor spaces at the U of M and we lost hundreds of doctors from Manitoba.

Our government cares about people. We have increased the doctor spaces at U of M and we have gained over 600 doctors in Manitoba. Our government believes that every Manitoban deserves access to a primary-care facility close to home, and that's why we've introduced Family Doctor Finder to make sure that every Manitoban who wants a primary-care provider can access one.

Can the Minister of Health please give us an update on the Family Doctor Finder program on the—and the exciting progress that we have made here in Manitoba?

Thank you.

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

Again, as the member noted, we do have a record number of doctors practising in Manitoba, and that's allowing more and more Manitobans to have their own family doctor. And we committed that every Manitoban who wanted a family doctor would have access to one, and I'm pleased to report that we're making good progress on fulfilling that promise, because this year 80 to 85 per cent of registrants without a provider were matched within 30 days and two thirds were matched within five days, and I even know of some folks that were matched the same day.

And we've got innovative ways of doing this; both online and phone registration gives people options, and, again, it's about taking an active approach on how we can match up people to a family doctor. And providers are even connecting with folks who have already been matched to find out how we can make the system better and match even more Manitobans with family doctors. And there's even an online—

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

Children in Care Graduation Rates

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, over two thirds of the kids that are in care do not graduate from high school. We know that less than half are even ready for school.

And what has this government done? They've created a task force. What is this task force going to do? They're going to increase communication between education and the child-welfare system.

They needed a report to tell them that communication is key? Really, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the member knows that the well-being of every child in Manitoba is a priority of this government, especially those kids in care. What we're trying to make sure is that when these children are faced with a variety of other challenges, the education system is there for them every step of the way.

And, Mr. Speaker, we appointed a task force led by Tammy Christensen of Ndinawe and by Kevin Lamoureux, who is a well-known instructor at the University of Winnipeg, so that we can find practical solutions, take concrete steps to make sure that when these children enter our schools they have every support available.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, every child counts.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's fair to those children that under this NDP government that they raise one more barrier to the most vulnerable children that we have in this province.

Mr. Speaker, each and every day we see the damning report that comes forward. Again, we have over two thirds of the 11,000-plus kids that are in care that are not graduating from high school, and what we end up seeing—what we get from this minister is spin.

I want to know: What was the date that the minister for Child and Family Services, who is charged to be in care of those 11,000 kids, have actually tabled the discussion with the Education Minister on how come those kids are doing so poorly?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit I had a little of a hard time following that question.

But let's be perfectly clear here. The task force that we've established with Ms. Christensen and Mr. Lamoureux will focus on actions that will increase communication between the education system and the child-welfare system so that we can work together to provide the resources and supports necessary. Secondly, the task force will develop programming to address the particular education needs of children in care and, finally, it will work to identify best practices to make sure that those children have the best supports possible.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's a double standard going on in this House right now, because the Leader of the Opposition has shown two things. He wants to privatize everything in sight and he wants to cut a half a billion dollars from the best—from the budget. The result of that will be to—

* (14:40)

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

Mr. Ewasko: We know that this government has been in charge for 16 years. We've had 16 years of failed policies for our most vulnerable children in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister today, either one of them: When are they going to start making some action 'instard' of standing back and creating task forces in regards to tackling one of our biggest issues here in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've explained what the task force is about. We want to take practical, concrete steps to help those children at every possible turn.

And, Mr. Speaker, the double standard going on in this House, however, is that the Leader of the Opposition and members of their caucus have two things in mind when it comes to the people of Manitoba. They want to privatize everything in sight and they want to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget. As I've said to the opposition over and over again, that's not going to help anybody anywhere any time in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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

Pride of the Prairies

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, yesterday concluded Pride Winnipeg's Pride of the Prairies week of celebration.

Winnipeg Frontrunners' own Wally Mah helped organize the very successful and inaugural Pride Run this year for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and two-spirited people and their allies. People ran, walked and, yes, even sashayed in what was a fun 5K held at Stephen Juba Park.

I was joined by my colleagues the MLAs for Tuxedo, Point Douglas and Assiniboia, as well as the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party. It truly was a non-partisan affair that focused on our common goals as opposed to our partisan divisions.

And as nice as it was to be joined by my colleagues, by friends and neighbours, it was the involvement of, actually, a solitary individual that made me most proud, Mr. Speaker. My nine-year-old son, Jack, who is active in his school's run club, had asked me if he could run in this year's inaugural Pride Run. Not only did he have a great time, but he can tell all his friends at school that he ran faster than four MLAs, beating all of us quite handily.

Of course, there was much more going on this weekend, with events culminating in the annual Pride Parade, Mr. Speaker. Organizers estimated they received a record amount of donations through their sticker program, that an estimated 38,000 people participated and that the official hashtag, Pride Winnipeg, was the top trend in Winnipeg on Sunday. As well, the parade had the most entries in the history of the organization: almost 80, compared to last year's 52.

I, along with my three children, attended the parade, and from the mascots to the music to the message, they enjoyed themselves. What was particularly striking was a comment made by Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman, who told the crowd gathered at the Manitoba Legislature that that gathering would be illegal if held in some 79 countries today. My children were confused that people celebrating who they are could result in imprisonment or even death in 79 countries. Their confusion made me all the more grateful that we live in a country like Canada.

Grand Marshal Shandi Strong shared a powerful message to those attending. She spoke of how each—when—as each milestone is achieved, it becomes a distant memory to the next generation in their fights, and that's a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the organizers and participants of Pride week, congratulations.

Kildonan East Students at Skills Canada

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, students in high school these days are busier than ever. Along with academics, students engage in everything from sports to music to all sorts of extracurricular activities. Most importantly, high school's a time when a lot of students begin to focus on their future.

For Kildonan-East Collegiate students Ashley Weber, Birehanu Bishaw, Marcella Sanchez-Morales and Jill Pasveer, who have joined us in the gallery here today, life after high school is full of opportunities. During their time at school, they have developed impressive skills in automotive, photography, cooking and baking skills respectively. Whether they pursue careers in these trades or simply use these skills in everyday life, all of these students have made impressive achievements in their fields while also maintaining an excellent academic standing.

Back in May, Ashley, Birehanu, Marcella and Jill, after having received gold medals at the provincial competition, travelled to Saskatoon for the Skills Canada national competition. This multi-trade and technology competition allows students and apprentices to demonstrate their skills in the trades and learn about new opportunities available to them. Jill competed in the bakery category, Ashley won gold in automotive painting, Birehanu won silver in photography, and Marcella won bronze in the cooking category. We are so proud of their accomplishments.

These students have accomplished so much with the help of amazing teachers and the facilities available to them at Kildonan-East Collegiate. Our government has focused on building and expanding trades programs at Kildonan-East Collegiate and other high schools like it across the province. With these tools available to them, students can expand their horizons and take advantage of the diverse learning opportunities while still in high school.

Congratulations again to these phenomenal Kildonan-East Collegiate students. I can't wait to see where your talents take you in the years ahead.

Brittni Mowat

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the Year of Sport in Manitoba, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate Brittni Mowat, a talented female hockey goalie from Glenboro, Manitoba.

Just two years ago, I honoured Brittni and her team, the Pembina Valley Hawks, on winning the women's midget under-18 nationals at Charlottetown. Brittni was selected as the all-star goalie of the national event.

Brittni, just 19 years old, recently completed her second year with the Bemidji State Beavers, where she had a stellar sophomore season. She started 33 games for the NCAA Division I school, posting a 19-13-1 record, 1.68 goals-against average and a 0.945 save percentage.

During her freshman year, Brittni broke multiple program goaltending records, such as games played, wins and the goals-against average. In her sophomore year, she set the single-season record of wins by a BSU goaltender with 14. She also posted a single-season record for most shutouts with seven.

Brittni has been named the Western Collegiate Hockey Association women's Defensive Player of the Week twice this past year.

For the first time in the Bemidji State women's hockey team's program, Brittni became the first Beaver to receive the honour of being named to the All-American First Team.

Brittni recently attended the 52-player senior women's team development camp in Hamilton. Brittni continues to work on her conditioning and is hopeful to be called for the August camp.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Brittni, who is in the gallery today with her very proud and supporting parents, Trevor and Gudrun, on her many accomplishments and we wish her well as she vies for a spot on our national team.

Thank you very much.

Ocheikiwi Sipi Cree Dictionary

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, joining us in the gallery today are

representatives from Fisher River Cree Nation: Davin Dumas, Councillor Dion McKay, Melody Dumas and elder Dorothy Crate. They are joining us today as we recognize the launch of Ocheikiwi Sipi Cree Dictionary.

Elders from Fisher River Cree Nation realized that they needed to preserve their language, specifically their local dialect, which is why they released their first Cree dictionary in 2005.

This April, Fisher River Cree Nation celebrated the launch of the second edition of the Ocheikiwi Sipi Cree Dictionary and a smaller Cree phrase book. Both books were part of a collaborative effort between elders of Fisher River, the Fisher River Board of Education and the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre.

The new edition expands on the first to include syllabic writing, which are the symbols for the language. This newest edition is one of the most comprehensive Cree dictionaries in the province.

It's the elders from many different communities and Cree nations who have helped keep the Cree language alive in Manitoba. In particular, this dictionary and phrase book was launched to honour the memory of elders who have passed on.

This Cree dictionary will provide a written reference for students and the community and help bring back the local language. This is critical to fighting back against some of the tragedies of lost culture that our First Nations people have endured here in Canada, and I am honoured that the Fisher River Cree Nation has invited me to join them in celebrating their accomplishments with this statement today.

Congratulations to everyone in Fisher River Cree Nation who contributed the Ocheikiwi Sipi Cree Dictionary. I'm looking forward to a third edition in the future as your language continues to be passed on to future generations.

Ekosani. Thank you.

* (14:50)

Marcus Wiebe—Prairie Farmer of the Future

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw the attention of this House to Mr. Marcus Wiebe from the Winkler area, who was recently recognized as the Prairie Farmer of the Future.

The prairie farmer of the year award is a newly launched initiative that recognizes a prairie farmer of distinction each month, accumulating in a selection for the winner of the year at the end of this year.

The award seeks to honour the initiative, hard work and entrepreneurialism of young farmers who are forging their way into the prairie agricultural industry, and offers a grand prize to be applied to the agricultural endeavours of the winning finalist.

Marcus's selection as the first honoree for 2015 is a testament to his perseverance, vision and hard work. He notes that these prairie values were inculcated early on as he grew up in a farming context surrounded by farm implements and fields and influenced by family members, friends and neighbours who were leaders in agriculture.

Encouragement from family members who had experience in vegetable farming led Marcus to embark on his own vegetable-growing operation. He attended university and has experienced some early success. Marcus, who operates Covenant Growers, has been chosen to supply the celebrated Morden Corn and Apple Festival with its annual corn quota at this year's festival—and he grows the tender, sweet variety for the festival, if anyone was interested to know.

Breaking into the modern agricultural industry as a young farmer is not an easy task with—tends towards corporatization and technology providing challenges for next-generation farmers with little access to capital. However, Marcus has successfully leveraged his education and talent for growing high intensive crops into a competitive advantage. His drive, enthusiasm and dedication represent the very best of the Manitoba farming spirit, and it is this vibrant spirit that will continue to propel agriculture into the future in our province.

Marcus's efforts set an example to others seeking to make their way into agriculture, and his youth and can-do attitude puts him at the forefront of this rapidly changing sector. Marcus's record illustrates that a prairie dream when combined with education and hard work can become a reality.

I congratulate Marcus on receiving the Prairie Farmer of the Future Award and I wish him every success in the years to come. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that concludes members' statements.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I note that we have our honourable Lieutenant Governor in the gallery with guests, and, on behalf of all members, we'd certainly like to welcome you here as we do government business. So thank you for visiting our Legislature and thank you for serving as long and as dedicated as you have [*inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call the following bills for debate on second reading: Bill 3, Bill 8, Bill 12; following that we will call Bill 35 for second reading; following that we'll call Bill 200 for debate on second reading; after that we will call Bill 212 for debate on second reading, and should we have—for second reading—and, should we have time, I'll rise later, and thank you.

Mr. Speaker: We'll call bills in the following sequence: Bill 3 for second reading, followed by Bill 8—for debate on second reading, pardon me—and that following Bill 3 it would be Bill 8 and Bill 12, all for debate on second reading. And then we'll be calling Bill 35 for second reading, and then, following that, we'll be calling Bill 200, debate on second reading, and then followed by Bill 212, if I understand correctly.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 3—The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 3, The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Agassiz.

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise to put a few remarks on the record on Bill 3, The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority Amendment Act.

This is an act, a bill that looks to transfer the jurisdiction operation and maintenance of the Red River Floodway from the current authority—from the

floodway authority back to provincial government. Apparently, the work of that east-side road, Manitoba Floodway Authority pertaining to the floodway authority is not needed anymore. It's—supposedly the job is done, the—and the jurisdiction needs to return to the Province, so the floodway can be operated as it should be going forward, and in times of need we can certainly count on the operations to protect the city of Winnipeg.

The floodway was originally built to bypass the city of Winnipeg, and it's been used many times over the years since it was built. It was built by the Duff Roblin government, and it's affectionately known as Duff's Ditch. And many times over the years it's been used to protect the city of Winnipeg. It was felt a few years ago that, by the government of the day, that some expansion might be needed to address possible higher floods in the future than we faced in the past—

An Honourable Member: On time, under budget.

Mr. Briese: And I hear one of the members opposite talking about on time, under budget. What he's leaving out is the fact that the reason they got it under budget was they took a couple of the original bridges back out of it to get it there.

One of the things that I could never see a need for there was the forced unionization of all the workers there, forced to pay union dues of which—actually inflated the costs of the floodway and the cost of the construction. But, eventually, they did stay on budget, but they did it by cutting back significantly on the work that was to be done to a couple of the bridges over the floodway, and that's the only way they made it that way.

Now, I'm not sure on the east-side road, actually, what the budget even is. We hear figures as high as \$3 billion over something like 20 years, and I'm not absolutely sure what the budget is. It just seems to be that we're going to slide along and do X number of dollars every year for who knows, really, how long.

One of the ways they could have possibly—because we're hearing this about on time and on budget—one of the ways they could have possibly made some impacts on the east-side road would be to actually build the Bipole III line down that side of the lake and in conjunction with that east-side road at a saving of about 1 billion and a half dollars on the construction of the Bipole III line, at least 1 billion and a half dollars on construction of the Bipole III line, that could have went into the costs of the east-side road construction.

The east-side road has a number of good things happening there. It has a number of things that I'm somewhat skeptical about, but, going back to the floodway and the floodway authority, the Red River Floodway has—actually, it has saved billions of dollars over the years in protection of the city of Winnipeg. Most of those were pre-expansion. I'm not sure that the expansion has been used at any level to this point. I don't think it has.

One of the—they talk about the major undertaking and—you know, everybody likes to blow their own horns, I guess, but back in—one of the constant things we hear about is the emergency channel out of Lake St. Martin, Mr. Speaker, where they talk about how quickly they put it in and what a wonderful—how fast they can do this, and only they were that good to do it, I guess. But I think back to when the Z-dike went in. That was a massive undertaking and that, I believe, was in conjunction with the '97 flood, and a massive undertaking done very, very quickly, and it did what it had to do, which was probably protected billions of billions of dollars of damage in the city of Winnipeg by building the Z-dike and getting it in place very quickly.

* (15:00)

On—the taking the floodway authority away from the east-side road—the Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority is absolutely the logical thing to do. I have some problems even along the—having a separate authority for the east-side road. Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation have handled all the roads and highways and things like that in this province for many, many years, and I believe the authority for the east-side road should fall under Manitoba highways—Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation too. I think they have the expertise to do it. I don't think we need a separate entity to do the administration of the east-side road.

You know, I like hearing these comments about on time and on budget. You know, the—I'm not sure—*[interjection]* Well, yes, because they—it is under budget because they cut back on work on a couple of bridges to make sure it did. If they didn't put in the bridges that were originally called for in it so, obviously, it's under budget. You save \$20 million on this bridge and \$30 million on that bridge, yes, maybe you could get it in a budget.

There are still approximately a thousand open and unsettled flood claims from the 2011 and the 2014 floods. But, from the 2011 flood, like, you talk

about timely cleaning up things, and that's ridiculous. We've seen absolute failure from this NDP government in managing Manitoba's lakes and waterways, failure in forecasting and failure in—it seems to me every time there's an issue you have to let it happen and then you react and panic afterwards rather than doing mitigation work to start with.

So thanks to Duff Roblin for sure, and his government of the day. They made some investments and made some moves many years ago that have saved this province huge amounts of pain and suffering, and especially this city, the city of Winnipeg.

You know, we hear all these claims of infrastructure spending and infrastructure commitment. And the floodway would be one of that; the east-side road would be another. But the reality is in the last four or five years the budgeted money in the infrastructure has—the actual spending from the budget is fallen far short, some \$2.2 billion short. Now, once again, \$2.2 billion is a lot of money. Two point two billion dollars of it had actually been spent on infrastructure would have a lot of things in this province looking a lot different today than they are right now, and have a lot more infrastructure in place instead of that money rolling back into general revenues and disappearing. It just goes into a black hole somewhere, and if it's budgeted and spent on highways or on infrastructure, it should be spent on infrastructure. And, if because of conditions or other reasons that can't be dealt with in that particular year, it should roll over into the next year's budget on infrastructure. Then we know what is actually happening in infrastructure and we know what we can anticipate in infrastructure.

Spending over a million dollars putting up signs around the province that they're—*[interjection]* I hear them talking about what steady growth on. You know, who else builds highways in this province except the Province? We don't have to remind the people every time we do—we dump a load of gravel that that's steady growth, you know, like, who else does it? It's the Province that does it. Everybody knows that. You don't have to tell them over and over again. You don't have to spend \$1 million on signs to get that message out there. That \$1 million would do another kilometre of a four-lane highway, in all likelihood.

And now it's a bunch of signs that, you know, I don't know that they're—they're a blight on the landscape, for a starter, but sometime they're going

to have to be—there's going to have to be more money spent to gather them all up and clean them all up and dispose of them. I don't suppose—I'm not sure what's the right way to recycle all those signs. I suppose we'll find out about recycling signs after the next election because I'm sure everybody in here will have a lot of them up. But, you know, that's extra money spent on foolishness. You don't have to remind people that there's actually something going on.

Although I did notice a couple of places where these signs are posted, nothing's happening. There's a sign stuck out there somewhere, and you look all around, and, okay, there's supposed to be something going on. I don't see any jobs; I don't see any growth. Well, there was a couple of dandelions growing, but, you know, outside of that, you know, there—I'm not even sure what the signs were to depict. I expect when they spent the million dollars, they got so many signs they had a few left over and didn't know where to put them. That's about all I can see in some of those locations.

But, anyhow, I know there's others that want to speak to this bill. And, Mr. Speaker, I'll look forward to this bill going forward to committee and any presentations that are made there, and we'll see where it goes from here.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, pleasure to rise today to speak on this bill. I just want to put a couple facts on the record. Like I say, every time after I speak after one of the members of the opposition, I like to correct the record.

I find it interesting that he has a problem with us letting people know where their tax dollars are going in with these signs, considering that his own party has—I guess he's speaking against them now—spent \$69 million last year for the federal action plan signs. I guess that would have built—and in his own view and his own words, how many houses would that have built for Aboriginal people, the housing commitment that they had, where they only built 99 out of 25,000? You know, the member opposite has the biggest double standard that's ever been seen in this House, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I agree with the member opposite, yes, big thanks to Duff Roblin for building that—to building the Floodway, Duff's Ditch. So the member opposite must also think that the 5 per cent PST increase that Duff Roblin implemented, if he calls the dike—the Duff's Ditch visionary, he must agree that the 5 per cent was visionary, much like

our 1 per cent is going to all of the infrastructure around the province, including the emergency outlet in the lake and all of the flood protection. I guess he would have to concede that it's visionary. Or is that one of his double standards?

Is that one of his double standards? Duff's 5 per cent PST was visionary, but our 1 per cent to do the flood mitigation that we're doing is not visionary. That's the double standard that always comes from the members opposite. I find it absolutely hilarious. Every time I hear them speak I get a good chuckle. It's really good, it makes me laugh, because every time that they get up, they put all these double standards on the record.

You know, what was the cost to—what's the cost to these communities about roads? You know, the member opposite wants to talk about, well, you know, what's the cost going to be over the next few years. What's the cost to these communities of not having roads? How much are the roads that go to every one of your communities? How much would those roads be if we just said we wanted to replace them all right now? It'd be in the billions.

We're talking about connecting First Nations communities with roads, so they can experience the same things that the rest of Manitobans enjoy, being able to access the economy and jobs and health care, Mr. Speaker. But, you know, they don't want to talk about that stuff because under their vision those people wouldn't matter. They wouldn't bother with them.

* (15:10)

You know, I also heard him make up numbers on bipole and on the costs and what it would save if it went down the other way and all of that. Well, they have no proof on any of their numbers; they just throw them out there. And, to be honest with you, they wouldn't be able to run bipole down the other side because so many of the communities said that they wouldn't allow it into their communities. The negotiations that went in place took place over years and years; it's been a long time in coming. Back when they were in government, they said that they needed to build another line for the security of the province and the grid. They didn't do it, but they talked about it. What we've done is we've actually undertaken it. We've done the studies; we've got it to the point now where it's starting to be cut and built.

You know, we also—I also heard the member opposite saying that the billions of dollars that the

floodway has saved Manitoba was all saved during pre-expansion time of the floodway. You know, they wouldn't want to take any—they wouldn't want to say that, you know, doubling the floodway was any good because that would just take away from their double standard that, you know, that we actually did something that's going to protect the city for one-in-700-year floods, just like we did after—when we took government in '99. They—in '97, when they were in government and there was a flood, the largest flood in the history of the province, and we saved—Winnipeg was saved by about three inches from the tops of the dikes; it was so—that close that we almost lost a majority of the city, and what did they do after '97 when—after that happened? What did they do? Nothing—nothing. They didn't expand the floodway; they didn't look at expanding the floodway; they didn't do extra flood protection.

We took government in '99 and we flood-protected every community south of Winnipeg to one-in-700-year levels. We undertook the largest earthmoving outside of the original building of the floodway, rebuilding bridges and doubling the floodway all the way through. And, you know, they don't want to give any credit to that. It's that same double standard that we hear over and over from their side. You know, they don't want to talk about the fact that we actually are going to be doing good things with this floodway and the roadside—east road authority, that we're going to be allowing people to have a commute that doesn't involve them flying in or waiting for the ice roads to come in. We're going to allow communities to be connected so they can get the supplies they need, the gasoline and diesel and food supplies. There's been years where the winter roads were not good because of climate change—something else I know the members opposite don't believe in—but because of climate change they couldn't run the winter roads as long as they had to. So those communities had to be actually under emergency and there was supplies that were flown in to them.

So this investment in the winter road is something that's going to help those communities and those people who are Manitobans be connected to the rest of Manitoba, and I hope those people are listening right now because they should realize that there's one government who's doing this, and it's our government. If it was underneath them, under the \$550 million worth of cuts that they're calling for, that East Side Road Authority would just be dissolved, that road wouldn't be built and those

people would be dependent on the winter roads and the fly-in of goods.

You know, we've—we heard the member opposite talk about, you know, the floodway, and he was—he said, oh, he's upset because it came in on time, under budget—\$38 million under budget. You know, I was at the announcement where it came in on time, under budget, and, you know, he didn't seem to care that Senator Plett was there, and Senator Plett was really happy about that announcement. He also didn't seem to—it didn't seem to matter that Minister Glover was there, who was really happy about that \$38 million under budget. You know, because—I'll give credit where credit's due; we did have a cost share with them, Mr. Speaker, and they were very happy. Their federal counterparts were very happy with this project.

The only people who aren't happy with how good Manitoba is doing right now is the opposition. They hate the fact that we're the No. 1 economy and that we have the No. 1 manufacturing growth; we have the No. 1 retail sales, the second lowest unemployment. They hate it. They hate it. They just try to find anything wrong with what we're doing because they just can't stand that Manitoba is doing well, because they want to have their chance to take over government and gut and privatize and cut things that will benefit their friends.

You know, we look at what happened with MTS where Gary Filmon's now reported to have made over \$1 million for his part in privatizing MTS. The former premier privatizing MTS, and he—said to have made over \$1 million, sits on the board, makes all this money. And you know what happened to the ratepayers? They pay more. And all of the shareholders, all of those shareholders which are a select few, Mr. Speaker—the select few in the province who were able to buy those shares—they're doing really well. It's the ratepayers, the average Manitobans who couldn't afford to buy that product that actually are the ones who are getting hurt by the members opposite.

You know, they want to talk about being able to build this province. Well, we are building this province. That's exactly what we're doing: \$700 million-plus this year in infrastructure.

And I heard the member opposite say we didn't spend it all last year. You're right because there wasn't enough people and construction crews to finish the jobs, so we rolled that money over and we're going to continue on and continue building.

That's how good it is, is that people—companies cannot afford to do the job.

And I know they want to talk about public versus private. Those are private companies that are really taking as much work as they can, employing lots of people and doing the work around Manitoba—work in all of their communities, Mr. Speaker. Every one of their communities is having investments done into them and that's employing people all around.

Just like this floodway authority—sorry, the East Side Road Authority is employing people all in these areas. We're looking at employing people—600 jobs for their east-side residents, investing that money in their communities. So we've got more people working in their communities, more economic activity. And then once they're connected through the road grids in Manitoba, there'll be even more activity because then they can move goods and products to and from their community for sale or for import, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what every Manitoban deserves and that's what we're going to give to these people, and we're working very hard to make that happen.

And, you know, we don't have the same vision as them, obviously, because to them it's all about the bottom line. It's all about cutting and making that balance at the cost of everything—at the cost of people being able to access goods and services at a reasonable price and be able to access them at all, because we know that the cost in some of these communities for the goods and services is extremely high, and that's because it has to be flown in or trucked in during the wintertime. And then some of the goods obviously you can't truck in in the wintertime; they won't last 'til summer. So now they're going to be able to bring them in on the roads, Mr. Speaker, and that's going to be—that's a good vision for those communities.

The PCs on the other side of the House, they have no vision for northern Manitoba. The only vision that they have is to undermine Hydro by saying that they don't want to have any sales—they don't want to have any sales to the US. So what happens when that happens, Mr. Speaker? Well, the Americans who are paying for our hydro, paying billions of dollars in contracts, that money dries up and then Manitobans would see our rates skyrocket, just like we see in Ontario. I was talking to one of my friends in Ottawa the other day; they have the same size house as mine—almost to the T the same house as mine. I pay \$135 a month on budget for

hydro and gas, and my friend in Ottawa was telling me that he pays \$500 a month for that same house for the same budget on gas and electricity. The members opposite want to talk about this.

They want to talk about insurance. I just heard one of them saying they want to talk about insurance. Well, they also—the person in Ottawa—my friend in Ottawa spends another \$1,000 a year more to insure his car in Ottawa, because Ontario's private insurance companies costs more money to insure. And because he's got a good driving record, he can—actually, his isn't as high as others. But if you're—if some of the members opposite have children and if their teenage children wanted to drive a car, it could be up to \$8,000 more per year for their child to drive that car. In Manitoba, that's not the case, Mr. Speaker. My child could drive the car when he turns 16. I took him out driving and it didn't cost me \$8,000 more per year to insure that car just like it does in Ontario. That's another example.

One of their members ran on that platform during the last election, that we should privatize Hydro. Well, that would benefit the rich people who own the insurance companies and all that money would leave Manitoba and go to Toronto and New York and to the big insurance companies, and it wouldn't stay right here in Manitoba employing hundreds of Manitobans, keeping that money circulating in our economy. That's their vision for Manitoba and the economy—a downward spiral—a cycle where we sell off everything, privatize it so a few people benefit and get rich and everybody else pays more. The jobs leave the province. Unemployment goes up, so those people—their very friends—would have a high unemployment rate to draw from a cheap labour pool. That is the vision of the opposition. That is exactly what Conservative vision is. They want to have a cheap labour pool. If we have a 10 or 15 per cent unemployment rate, that benefits their buddies who own those companies, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what happens. They hate having this low unemployment rate; 5.2 per cent—it allows mobility in the workplace because people can go and move around, and jobs like these being created by the East Side Road Authority—good paying jobs.

* (15:20)

How about the floodway authority? That was a—those were good paying jobs that were under a contract with the no stoppage of work. They got paid very good—jobs with pension and benefits. They got

paid very well to do that job, and we saw it come on time under budget under our government. And it was the doubling of one of the largest projects ever taken—undertaken in Manitoba and we undertook the second largest project which was doubling it.

Mr. Speaker, and over and over, all we hear from them is talking about cuts. When they were in government, let's see what they did with the road system in Manitoba. They raised the gas tax, but then they slashed funding. So they were actually taking in more money in gas tax than they were spending on the roads when they were in government. They were actually taking in more than they were spending on those roads.

What did they do? They sold off the telephone system and then they used that slush fund to try to buy their way to another election. Luckily, Manitobans didn't like that idea and they got rid of them because they saw the next thing coming down the pike is Manitoba Hydro or MPI, and they didn't want that to happen to Manitoba. Those are two Crown jewels that keep our rates low, because we do have the lowest bundle of home heating and electricity and auto insurance in the entire country. A couple thousand dollars less, what you don't hear when the member opposite rose in question period today talking about how glorious it is in Saskatchewan. I know he's got his Rider jersey on underneath his suit. He talks about how glorious it was in Saskatchewan. He doesn't bring up those facts. He wants to talk about one thing. Their single focus is all about taxes, Mr. Speaker, that's all they can focus on. But they don't focus on the overall picture. That even Manitoba—or even Saskatchewan, sorry—in their budget, they say it's cheaper to live in Manitoba. They don't want to focus on that. In their own budget documents it says it's cheaper to live here because we have cheaper electricity rates. We have cheaper hydro. We have cheaper gas rates. We have cheaper insurance. You know, the members opposite don't like to talk about that. They want to just go one sided. That's that double standard. You don't want to give the overall picture, the big view where it's actually cheaper.

You know, daycare rates, same thing; there's another thing you save on in Manitoba. We invest second in the country for the best daycare in the country outside of Quebec. And we're investing more—12,000 spaces—over 12,000 spaces created, 5,000 more to come. Hundreds in my area are coming up right now, and you know what? Mr. Speaker, that would be stopped in a heartbeat

underneath the opposition, and I know that. And that's why I'm running in the next election, because I know that the members opposite would gut and cut all those child-care spaces, and the private sector would benefit from all of those spaces and the workers would lose their pensions and lose their pay. And how do you attract workers to a low-pay, low-pension job? You don't. You'll have a high turnover and you won't have the quality of worker that you need to have in the daycare environment, which we do have now. We have very high-quality workers.

All the child care in my area, I got to know all of those people, and especially the ones at Waverley Heights where my son went to child care. They are fantastic quality child-care workers. Some of them are still there, and my son is now 20 and they're still there working as child-care workers from the time when my son was little. What does that tell you? It tells you that they're getting paid a fair rate and that they have pensions and benefits so they can work on—for the rest of their lives and end up retiring from that job.

Well, underneath their—the Leader of the Opposition and his vision for private—privatized health—child care, it would all fall apart. All those people would not want to work in those jobs because there wouldn't be anything for them in the future. They wouldn't be able to retire from these—from a minimum-wage job. That's what would be seen because it would be all for profit.

So no vision for steady growth and good jobs. See that, that's the slogan: steady growth and good jobs—because they are good jobs. We have the No. 1 increase in pay across the country in Manitoba. We have the No. 1—let's say it again for the members opposite—No. 1 increase across the country in the rate of pay per week for Manitobans. Manitobans were taking more money home every week than anywhere else in the country. See, that's the part of the Steady Growth, Good Jobs. The growth leads to the good jobs, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that they fail to recognize.

It's all about cuts on that side of the House. It's all about cuts. They don't want to build a strong vibrant North, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that we heard from the members opposite on their northern vision was to stop building Hydro which would then cut thousands of jobs in the North—tens of thousands of jobs in the North, actually. And we would see all of those people who are unemployed up there, they

would be coming down into Winnipeg to look for work, and that would mean it harder for people in the Winnipeg and Brandon areas to find work. But the members opposite don't want to talk about that. They want to close their eyes to the fact that Manitoba Hydro building creates tens of thousands of jobs every year in Manitoba for the next, I think, it's 10 years that these dam constructions are under—these dams are under construction. And the members opposite want to stop that; they want to stop that growth. I don't quite understand how they haven't seen yet that this isn't the way to go.

You know, in 2007 election, the PCs promised that they would cut highway spending in the North and provide more for southern communities. That's in the Brandon Sun, Mr. Speaker. Is that something that we need for Manitoba where we're putting the North as second-class citizens? That's not what we believe on this side of the House. And that's why we've invested in the North. We've created—it was Keewatin Community College in The Pas, it's now UCN, and we also have the UCN campus up in Thompson, two things that didn't exist under the Leader of the Opposition, but, then again, you didn't need the good training for jobs because there were no jobs. The unemployment rate hit almost 10 per cent when the Leader of the Opposition was in power. So you didn't need to have all these people going to university, didn't need to have 53 per cent more enrolment in university since we've come into power, and that's because there are good jobs here. People are working towards good jobs. That's a huge increase in people going to university. Our trades program, I see I think it's somewhere in the neighbourhood of 45 per cent increase in trades. We've tripled the amount of apprentices in the province, and you know why? Because our economy is booming. We are building.

We are building this province. We're building it with roads, we're building it with hydro. And all of that would be at risk with the Leader of the Opposition's plan to just stop hydro in its tracks and to cut \$550 million from the budget. You know what? I had an interesting conversation with somebody this weekend about this, Mr. Speaker. They wanted to talk about the deficit. And I had to point out that Ontario's deficit is over \$8 billion, and the Conservatives, which now aren't in power anymore in BC—or in Alberta, sorry—they tabled a \$5-billion deficit before they left. And all that time, during that, they jacked up prices; things like user fees for health-care cards, they jacked that up. They're

costing every family over \$1,000 a year for their health-care cards.

Well, that's the Leader of the Opposition's vision is to do something like that, to have a two-tiered health-care system. So, if you're one of the people who are in the situation where you're not able to afford to spend \$1,000 on your health-care card, you don't get health care. That is not a vision that we have for Manitoba, and that's why we are moving forward with the east-side road so those people can get quality health care, quality goods and services, and if they get to come back and forth and participate in our economy, and that's what this bill's about, Mr. Speaker, is letting those people have that quality service and that quality of life right here in Manitoba. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on this bill, Bill 3, which would essentially transfer the authority, relative to the Winnipeg floodway, to the Department of Infrastructure and focus the efforts of the East Side Road Authority on the building of the east-side road.

I'm ready to support this legislation certainly based on what I know at the moment. It would be smart to focus the efforts on the East Side Road Authority, which is—needs to be built and the maintenance and operation and the liabilities related to the floodway can now be done conveniently by the—within the department itself.

The NDP, from the start of 1999, were slow to get going on building the east-side road. It was something which, you know, Liberals had been talking about the need to start in 1999, but the NDP decided that they would leave it for about nine years until 2009 when the East Side Road Authority bill was brought in and some efforts and some funding were put in to moving forward along the—on the east-side road.

* (15:30)

Let me talk for a moment about one of the key people here, which is Ernie Gilroy, who's been in charge of both the floodway and now the east-side road building. He was a Liberal who worked very closely with Sharon Carstairs in the '80s and early '90s. He became executive director with Glen Murray and then he got involved in the floodway authority and building the floodway, and did a pretty reasonable job given the constraints and the—of the legislation and the—what was there at the time and

making sure that that moved forward well and got completed.

And all Winnipeggers are certainly very thankful for the extra protection which has resulted from the expansion of the floodway to what's believed to be about a one-in-700-year flood. I think we—it remains to be seen in terms of the impact of climate change and flooding whether, in fact, what was once—or what is now believed to be a one-in-700-year flood may, in fact, be more often than that. And so we need to continue to plan in terms of surface water management, and although we have had an announcement of a strategy, too many elements of that strategy are not in play yet and the government in that area has moved very, very slowly when it should be moving much more quickly.

As far as the east side goes, after a slow start, after waiting about 10 years things have been moving forward. From what I hear, is that the East Side Road Authority under Ernie Gilroy is working pretty well with First Nations communities in increasing employment and involving people in the First Nations communities in the road construction and other elements of the location of the road, and so on. And so certainly supportive of helping, you know, more people on the east side get road access.

I think that it is important that, just as things move forward on road access, there be good planning that is done in terms of long-run employment for people on the east side, as that's an area where certainly it is good to have some increased employment during the road construction. But I believe that the government should be putting in more effort in terms of dealing with long-run employment issues for people on the east side and making communities there sustainable, growing, doing well with lots of opportunities for young people. It's certainly been a situation where too many of the communities on the east side that young people can get for most of the communities that I visited a number of years ago, there was no more than grade 9 in terms of schooling and so that students were—young people were leaving communities, going to places around the province; some, of course, in Winnipeg, but some to many other communities. And I believe that we need to have a vision which encourages more young people and will house more young people to be able to learn and have jobs and prosper in their own community as well as experience and benefit from opportunities around the province.

So I think the effort to build a road is a good one. It, from what I can see, is still going to be many years before it is completed at the rate that things—which—are going. But I sure think that there needs to be more effort in terms of working with the communities beyond the building of the road and building sustainable communities with lots of opportunities for young people. That, while not part of this bill or this act, should certainly be a big concern for members opposite, indeed, for all of us.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this bill going to committee stage and for comments that come at that level.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 3, The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority Amendment Act.

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

Bill 8—The Conservation Officers Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 8, The Conservation Officers Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: It's been denied.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on Bill 8, The Conservation Officers Act. This bill would change the title from natural resource officers to conservation officers. It would create the conservation officer service and would expand the powers of conservation officers to act as peace officers to help fulfill their role in catching poachers using summonses, conducting investigations and testifying in court.

I think the intent of this bill, from what I've seen so far, is reasonable. I look forward to comments coming at committee stage. The one really

significant concern that I have is that, you know, we're expanding the powers of the conservation officers, but will there actually be the resources and the support to get the job done? You know, it is one thing to talk about having conservation officers play a larger, more significant role, but it is another thing to make sure that not only is the legislation there, but the appropriate funding and support is also there.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as I looked at the budget from this year and looked for the increase in support, I had a lot of trouble finding it. You know, I noticed that when it comes, for example, to Parks and Regional Services, which may provide some of this support, that in the Central Region the salaries and employee benefits are going down, the total budget is going down, not up. I noticed in the Eastern Region we have exactly the same situation, that the budget for the Eastern Region is going down and not up. I looked in the Western Region, and the Western Region budget is going down, not up. I looked in the Parks and Protected Spaces budget, and that budget is going down, not up. And so, you know, wondering where on earth the funding is going to be to make sure that the enforcement and make sure that conservation officers are adequately supported to do their job.

You know, I started looking elsewhere. I looked under Environmental Compliance and Enforcement, and the budget there is going down and not up. I looked under Environmental Approvals; the budget there is going down, not up. I looked under Strategic Policy and Coordination; the budget is going down, not up.

So I went elsewhere and looked under, you know, Water Stewardship and biodiversity, Water Science and Management; the budget is going down, not up. I looked under Wildlife and Fisheries; the budget is going down, not up. So I went to Drainage and Water Control Licensing, and the budget went—is going down, not up. I looked at Water Use Licensing, and the budget is going down, not up. And I looked under Forestry and Peatlands Management, which the government has been talking a lot about recently, particularly peatlands. I understand that there was some announcement today and I'm looking forward to understanding the details. And, when I look at the budget for Forestry and Peatlands Management, the budget is going down, not up.

So I was very puzzled to understand that the budget in so many areas of the Department of

Conservation are going down, that I became quite concerned about whether in fact this government is going to be able to have the resources to handle the new power. And maybe the government should provide some evidence that they're actually going to do the job instead of, you know, what's been happening.

* (15:40)

You know, I looked further, you know, even in the Clean Environment Commission, the budget is going down and not up. In Lands, the budget is going down and not up. In Indigenous Relations, the budget is going down and not up. So I don't know who is doing the budgeting and where the money is coming from to actually get this job done, but I think it's, you know, a point that needs to be looked at and maybe the government in its wisdom, or lack of it, should have a careful look at this issue and make sure that there are actually these supports and resources for people to be able to do the job. *[interjection]*—you know, I did.

So, you know, with those few comments, this is a, you know, a significant piece of legislation. But, you know, you really need to be able to carry it through, and when you're going down, not up, it's not always easy. So we look forward to seeing what happens and waiting for more comments at the committee stage. Thank you.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) is a bit of a hard act to follow, but I'll do my best.

Obviously, Bill 8, The Conservation Officers Act, is, I think, is a good piece of legislation taken as a whole. I mean the main thrust that you understand from a—at least a public perspective is actually a title change in terms of how we refer to our natural resource officers as conservation officers, which really is a reflection of how most Manitobans see them today and interact with them today. So it doesn't seem to be a particularly large change in that sense.

But, of course, Mr. Speaker, as noted by the MLA for River Heights, there is a component of the legislation that expands the duties and responsibilities of staff of Manitoba Conservation office. Souris, when they deal with natural resources, obviously fish and wildlife, protected areas, environmental protection as well as other provincial acts prescribed, and as with many things when it comes to this government, they are very good about

expanding or at least giving the illusion of expanded scope for powers and responsibilities but not attaching the requisite resources so that the—those individuals that are, hopefully, in power, in this case conservation officers, have the resources to fulfill those duties.

Now I won't go through the entire laundry list that my colleague the MLA for River Heights just did, with his down, not up, but I'll give a more global perspective, Mr. Speaker, and, since the last election, the budget in its entirety for the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship is down 10 per cent, so down, not up, as my member for—my colleague for Morden-Winkler notes.

I know from—I know in speaking to a number of conservation officers in the province, I think they are looking forward to the committee stage of this bill where they can put their own comments on the record when it comes to the allocation of new duties including public-safety duties, Mr. Speaker, because, really, what they were seeking from this government and long-overdue legislation is clarity, something that the NDP are not particularly good at, and that is clarity, but there are existing within the current legislation a number of grey areas as to the powers of conservation officers—or, sorry, natural resource officers—to use the more current phrase until this legislation is passed.

Say, for example, an individual is speeding through a provincial park. Does a natural resource officer have the authority to essentially pull over that individual and ticket them? More than likely not, Mr. Speaker, but, again, they might. And is it incumbent upon them, I mean, if there is, again, if there is dangerous driving, if there is an impaired driver?

Again, Mr. Speaker, these are grey areas, and grey areas that needed to be clarified, because, obviously, if there is a situation where individuals are engaging in illegal or dangerous behaviour that imperils other individuals enjoying our provincial parks and natural areas, we want to ensure that any actions taken by conservation officers to protect the public good are backed up by the courts and by the legislation of which they are responsible for, so that when they do—when they engage—or sorry, when they act upon their requirements that they have the full force of the legislation behind them and that when, ultimately, they go to court and if they have to testify in court, those charges aren't 'summimarily'—summarily dismissed simply because there is this

grey area. So, hopefully, that will be one of those clarifications that this act achieves.

And I do appreciate the fact that, as well, in terms of the public interest, obviously, if you're going to provide conservation officers increased scope of powers and responsibilities, you want to assure that there is that accountability on the part of conservation officers to the public, and the public being Manitobans or, you know, anyone actually visiting our provincial parks, of which a great number of people do, myself included. I spent a great time with my family at provincial parks, and I know we do a reasonable job as a province—or we can do a lot better, sorry, as a province, in attracting more tourists to our provincial parks. I know my colleague for Arthur-Virden has spoken at great length about this and has challenged the government on a number of these files in terms of how they're handling the tourist file.

You know, we're getting individuals here but I believe the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, if I remember correctly, recently had an event where they highlighted the fact that, I believe, Saskatchewan, budgetarily speaking, has three times the resources—sorry, over two times the resources that they spend on tourists.

And we see, you know, just recently with what's going on with the FIFA Women's World Cup, Mr. Speaker, that those individuals that come to our province—and I've met several of them here in this Legislature, met—my colleagues and I met a family from South Carolina—a mom, dad and their two kids—and they had nothing but positive things to say about their experience here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba as a whole. And they—and I also met three young ladies, actually, on Friday when I was at the Legislature, and helped them take a group photo of them in front of the grand staircase and shared a little bit of history about the building. They were from New York and, anyway, both these two groups of Americans from—the—from New York and from South Carolina both made the same, unsolicited comment about friendly Manitoba, that—how friendly people were to them and how quite striking it was, and it was something that they would take back. But, of course, we as a government, we as a province, need to do more—draw those individuals into our province and into our parks so that they can see those great resources that we have.

Now, obviously, Mr. Speaker, as I was inferring along with these increased responsibilities and scope

of duties, we need to ensure that there is that balance in terms of conservation officers' duty to follow the act. And that's why—I mean, I appreciate the fact that there will be the establishment of a code of conduct that is to be drawn up by the chief conservation officer that will have a mechanism for complaints put forward by the public and includes, obviously, a complaint process.

Now, obviously, I think that our conservation officers deal with or approach the public with a high degree of professionalism day in and day out. But, again, should there be a complaint against one of these individuals, we want to make sure that there is a process, Mr. Speaker, a process that is laid out that individuals can follow and that they know that exists. And, again, it's that kind of consistency, that individuals need to be assured of that exists that give them the reassurance that their complaints will be taken seriously regardless of the outcome of those complaints.

But, unfortunately, like so much that this government does in their legislation, the—sounds good on the surface, but as the legislation notes and just in reference to the code of conduct, so much of this, Mr. Speaker, will be done behind closed doors, not to be debated in this House or in this Chamber but through regulation. And we see this time and time again with this government bringing forward legislation that, again, sounds good on the surface and that we can support, again, on the surface, and that I'm waiting to hear from members of the public to hear their comments. But it's very difficult to make comment when so much of this is noted that the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council will make these regulations.

And, obviously, that's just code for the NDP and their fractured caucus, so I'm not sure which component of their caucus will make these necessary regulations. But, that being said, it's difficult to make comment on regulations that we won't see as MLAs.

*(15:50)

So, with those brief comments, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time, and, again, I look forward to the Bill 8, The Conservation Officers Act, going forward to that committee stage to hear from the public to see if there's any input required, from whether it's members of the public who just enjoy our parks and natural areas or from conservation officers themselves, on ways that this bill may be improved, so that we as legislatures know that the legislation

that we ultimately pass and debate in this House is in the best interests of everyone involved.

So, with those comments, I'll conclude.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this matter?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 8, The Conservation Officers Act.

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

**Bill 12—The Water Protection Amendment Act
(Aquatic Invasive Species)**

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species), standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, long time no see.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species), is a very important piece of legislation. It deals with what is probably the single largest economic environmental threat that our lakes here in Manitoba face currently, and that is with the invasion of zebra mussels.

Now, obviously, this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, deals with far more than zebra mussels. Obviously, it talks about aquatic invasive species, of which there are several. But the most pressing and the one that seems to be most consuming in terms of the media and the public awareness campaign is that of zebra mussels.

And it's quite unfortunate that here we are in June of 2015, Mr. Speaker, and we're only on second reading of this bill, of Bill 12, when, I think it was in 2009 that the Red River basin had witnessed the first documented evidence of zebra mussels found in our watershed.

So, again, we go back to 2009, and zebra mussels had been discovered in the Red River basin, and yet, here we are, six years later, and we're only just at second reading of this legislation. So this government has really, pardon the pun, Mr. Speaker, but missed the boat when it comes to dealing with zebra mussels.

We've seen the devastation that has occurred south of the border, Mr. Speaker, in the state of Minnesota. I believe they have some 113 lakes, I believe, that are currently contaminated or infested with zebra mussels.

We go over to our neighbour in Ontario and the bordering states and the issue that they have with the Great Lakes. And Ontario alone spends upwards of \$91 million annually dealing with the consequences of the zebra mussel infestation.

And, by comparison, here in Manitoba, the NDP have spent \$1 million over the last five years, Mr. Speaker. So they have allocated more on their Steady Growth propaganda on a single basis than they have in a five-year time frame dealing with zebra mussels.

I think, I mean, Mr. Speaker, when you ask any scientist and any individual water biologist who has dealt with zebra mussel infestation, they have made it very clear that once zebra mussels enter a water system, eradication is simply not on, using today's technology or biological devices, in that containment and mitigation is the only option in front of the government.

Now, of course, the government knew this, Mr. Speaker. They were well aware of this fact that this highly invasive species was here to stay. And despite the serious threat to our aquatic systems, they instead decided to, as they often do, to play politics and do those grand gestures that they are so fond of, of closing off in the four affected harbours in Lake Winnipeg and spending upwards of at least, again, probably in excess of half a million dollars, dumping several hundred tons of liquid potash into these lakes, disrupting the fisheries, disrupting individuals' access to these lakes.

And, of course, when it's all said and done, when they dropped the silk curtains, Mr. Speaker, there was the minister of Conservation out on the S.S. Minnow with his, you know, George Bush-esque banner, saying, mission accomplished. When we do know, and departmental briefing notes have confirmed, that almost immediately, that at the same time that the NDP were declaring a mission accomplished and reassuring Manitobans that this half million dollars spent on eradicating zebra mussels had been successful, that zebra mussels had been rediscovered, and, in fact, they were throughout the water system. And it was only this year that the Minister of Conservation had to publicly acknowledge that their efforts were, and, again, I'll

use the minister's own words, the NDP's own words, were an utter failure.

And it's quite unfortunate that the government didn't use those resources, Mr. Speaker, at the time, that half million dollars to actually put in place the systems that they're now talking about under Bill 12.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key components of dealing with the zebra mussel and any aquatic invasive species, but in particular the zebra mussels, is that of containment. With zebra mussels it is those portable decontamination units of which the Province, I believe, has approximately six. Now at \$85,000 a piece, that \$500,000 you could have easily bought another five or six units. And those five or six units could decontaminate literally each hundreds of hundreds of watercraft each and every year. But, again, the government decided to go on the big flashy announcement that they're more interested in flash than substance. So it was an opportunity lost.

Now you see the government scrambling, Mr. Speaker, as they often do because the genie is out of the bottle when it comes to zebra mussels, and so now they're going on a large public awareness campaign, their Don't Move a Mussel campaign, and now they're deploying the decontamination units throughout the province.

But, again, when you only have six decontamination units, and as my colleague, the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) noticed, and as I commented about the 10 per cent overall reduction in the department, you wonder if there is actually the resources to man these decontamination units.

And we only recently just learned, or shared with the minister in this House, an incident just a couple weeks ago here on the Red, Mr. Speaker, that was reported on in the Winnipeg Free Press of a fisher who was out and catching catfish and enjoying our water systems and some of the great opportunities that recreational opportunities that exist within those water systems, and noted that there was a decontamination unit from the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship there. He engaged him, he chatted with him, he said, you know, I'm looking forward to seeing how this process works, how the decontamination process works, when I bring my boat out off the river. And, lo and behold, when they got off the river after 4 p.m., they found the portable decontamination unit had been packed up and departed.

Now, of course, when I brought this to the attention of this government, Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I think his only—his comment was hearsay. Now these individuals were willing to put their comments and write an article about fishing in the Free Press, so I'm not sure if that really qualifies from hearsay, but, again, the member for Kildonan has a law degree and I do not so—but I did grow up watching Matlock, so I'd say we're a close tie.

But you have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, with that one example though and if they aren't many, many more, because how many boats and how many fishers actually leave the water by 4 p.m.? How many boats were actually missed by these portable decontamination units and how often is this occurring on a much larger scale? This is one microcosm and one small example, but I think it speaks, again, to this government's lack of priority when it comes to dealing with this very, again, very aggressive aquatic invasive species. And we have to look, again, we have to think long-term.

Part of the two or I believe it was three decontamination units that the department now has in its possession were actually donated, Mr. Speaker, by Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro, not surprisingly, is very concerned about the impact of the zebra mussels on their infrastructure. I have seen samples, and I'm sure many individuals have seen samples of whether it's intake pipes, or propellers that are coated, quite quickly coated by zebra mussels. In fact a fast fact: a single female zebra mussel can lay a million eggs at a time. So we can see how a system can quickly become overwhelmed due to the rapid proliferation of zebra mussels.

*(16:00)

But, Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that with Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act, that we will now have the resources to deal—or at least the legislation to deal more aggressively with aquatic invasive species, the ability to deal with individuals who attempt to bypass portable decontamination sites, individuals who may receive orders to clean their watercraft equipment, or individuals who may introduce additional invasive species either inadvertently or on purpose—that there will be consequences or methods to deal with those individuals.

But, again, we need to remember, Mr. Speaker, that while individuals under this legislation will have the duty to comply, there is no accompanying commitment by the NDP that their—that this

legislation will have the necessary resources to ensure compliance. Because, again, with only having maybe half a dozen decontamination units for the entire province—and I'm reminded, my colleague earlier was commenting, the MLA for Midland was commenting, about how Manitoba's previous licence plate was land of 100,000 lakes. Now, with 100,000 lakes, you can well imagine that six units—decontamination units—aren't going to go very far.

So, when it comes to zebra mussels, Mr. Speaker, this government is far, far behind the ball. This legislation which we should be debating today would be, in fact—should be amendments to legislation that this government could have and should have introduced back in 2010. There was legislation in a number of jurisdictions south of the border that we could've modelled this after, and, in fact, I know a large part of this legislation was modelled after the state of Minnesota. It's been battling the infestation of zebra mussels for quite some time. But, again, instead, we should be debating amendments and tweaks to that legislation that should've been in place in the last five years.

But, instead, once again, this government has let the zebra out of the barn and we're busy, as a collective, running after it, trying to corral it again. But we know—and scientists and biologists will tell us—that that's simply not possible, Mr. Speaker, so we're left to pick up the pieces, to deal with those consequences and deal with the containment and the mitigation of these invasive species.

So, while I look forward to the committee stage to hearing from members of the public of their ideas, Mr. Speaker, of how this bill could be improved—and I know my colleague for Brandon West has brought forward an option or a suggestion of what they do at the Riding Mountain National Park where every boat that enters that water system has to be correspondingly checked for any zebra mussel or any other invasive species and maybe in the keel or attached to the hull of the boat, but once they've received a clean bill of health, they receive a corresponding piece of paper or sticker or some sort of identification to say that they have been given—or at least their watercraft has been given—this clean bill of health. And so, as long as that watercraft doesn't leave that body of water, they don't have to go through this again.

And, you know, it would be worth something for this government to take a look at, Mr. Speaker, again in terms of resources so that an individual could

show a conservation officer who has one of these decontamination units set up—says, you know, I do, indeed; here is the identification saying that this particular watercraft has been duly inspected and has been cleared of any potential contamination by this invasive species. So, again, that's just one small idea—ID that this government—or, sorry—idea that this government could be working on to enhance this legislation.

But we need to—obviously we need to see this legislation proceed, Mr. Speaker—proceed to that public stage, get that input from the public and see this legislation get passed because, again, as I noted, this legislation is six years overdue, and that rests with the NDP. And the consequences of zebra mussels—the ecological and environmental consequences and the financial consequences of zebra mussels will rest on the NDP not just for years to come but for generations to come.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the hearing from the public, hearing from—and forwarding this bill on to the—to committee stage, to learn more from those concerned individuals about Bill 12. Thank you.

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

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species).

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill 35—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Amendments)

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call for second reading, Bill 35, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Amendments).

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to expand on Bill 35 that creates presumption legislation for those who are diagnosed with PTSD—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. We're just, I believe, introducing the bill for second reading. And so the minister will have to move the motion first.

Ms. Braun: I move, seconded by the Minister for Mineral Resources, that Bill 35, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Amendments); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (présomption relative au trouble de stress post-traumatique et autres modifications), now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: Once again, I'd like to take this opportunity to expand on Bill 35, that creates presumption legislation for those who are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of a traumatic event in the workplace.

The proposed amendments respond to priorities identified in this spring's consultation with labour and employer stakeholders and mental health and health-care professionals and last November's Throne Speech. It also contributes directly to our five-year plan for workplace injury and prevention, addressing workplace mental health.

The proposed amendments would provide that post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, is an occupational injury unless the contrary is proven. PTSD is a psychological condition associated with exposure to certain kinds of traumatic events. While PTSD claims are currently compensable under The Workers Compensation Act, the proposed presumption would enhance timely adjudication and access to treatment. It would help ensure that people with work-related PTSD seek the supports and services they need. It would be a step towards reducing the stigma attached to mental illness.

Presumptive WCB coverage means that when workers are exposed to triggering events and are subsequently diagnosed with a particular illness, it is presumed to have been arisen from their employment, unless the contrary is shown. Presumptive WCB coverage does not mean automatic acceptance. The WCB is still required to do its due diligence in investigating and adjudicating such claims.

Under this government, Manitoba has become a leader in presumption legislation and in 2002, 2005, 2009 and 2011, put in place a presumption for

firefighters and OFC personnel with certain types of cancer and heart injuries.

A number of jurisdictions are now putting in place or examining presumptive coverage related to PSD. Alberta now covers a limited number of occupations, while in Nova Scotia a private member's bill has been put forward to only cover limited occupations. The members opposite also put forward a limited bill at the end of last session.

* (16:10)

Bill 35 on the—under—pardon me—on the other hand, is a truly groundbreaking initiative. It is the broadest PTSD presumption in Canada, and for the first time all employees eligible under Workers Compensation Board will be able to access the presumption, and legislation will be tied to a professional diagnosis, not an occupation.

Research found that 90 per cent of PTSD claims are from occupations outside of professional emergency services, reflecting that occupations like correctional workers, nurses and similar occupations, social workers and retail workers deserve to be protected as well. Proceeding with presumption just for emergency workers would not help a large majority of people suffering from PTSD due to workplace incidents.

In conclusion, this legislation helps Manitobans when they need it most. PTSD is debilitating; it shows itself in many different ways that affects every part of one's life. We want to make sure that Manitobans are protected while at work and they are supported through unforeseen tragedies in their workplace. This government has always had the backs of working Manitobans and we continue to do so.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, it's important that I stand up today and put some words on the record in regards to Bill 35, the workers compensation amendment act, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mr. Speaker, we, as society and lawmakers, must put much more attention to the importance of protecting workers' mental health. In Manitoba we do a fairly good job of protecting their physical health, but we need to pay more attention to workers' mental health, because mental health—if a person does not feel great, they don't produce in the workplace, no different than their physical health.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a mental illness with very serious consequences. It causes frightening symptoms such as re-experiencing a very traumatic event. Many people have vivid nightmares, flashbacks and thoughts of the event that seem to come from nowhere. They often become avoidant of things that may remind them of the event or link to that event.

PTSD can make people feel very startled very easily, have a hard time concentrating, feel irritable and have problems sleeping. They may often feel like something terrible is about to happen to them, even when they are safe. Some people just don't feel like things are right around them. They feel disconnected. But the worst outcome from post-traumatic stress disorder is suicide. Suicide is the most extreme outcome of PTSD, and, sadly, there's also been an increase in the number of first responders' suicides in Canada. Between April and December of 2014, 27 Canadian first responders died by suicide, and already, in 2015, 15 or more of our nations' first responders have tragically taken their own lives.

Although suicide is the most extreme outcome of PTSD, the condition can manifest itself in many different ways: altering lifestyles, severe depression, substance abuse, divorce and the ability not to work.

Bill 205, which was brought forward by my colleague from Charleswood, addressed this issue. But, of course, the NDP government chose—all the members opposite chose to speak it out, but then, a few weeks later, introduced a bill that was very similar. There was nothing that an amendment could not have fixed on the member from Charleswood's bill.

But, no, this government wanted to grandstand. They wanted to grandstand on the lives of first responders and other people. They spoke Bill 205 down, but yet, the day that they announced Bill 35, they had hundreds of people out in front of the Legislature, you know, making this a big deal.

Where was this government when my colleague from Charleswood introduced Bill 205?

Again, this government seems to not care about the people. They only care about what's best for them.

Another example of that is a bill that was introduced about the employer advocate. Now that there's going to be more work done with Workers Compensation; I think there's going to be more

employers looking for somebody to speak to. But, again, they spoke that bill out.

Elder abuse bill: spoke it out as well. The 15th of June was elder abuse week. So I'm just wondering when somebody from the other side is going to bring an elder abuse bill through.

Mr. Speaker, I think this government needs to take a look at what we're—what they're doing. We all agree that this bill, Bill 35, or would've been Bill 205, was a very—is a very important bill because we have not been paying enough attention to the mental health of workers in Manitoba. But it's not fair for somebody to grandstand on somebody else's misfortune. So I would hope that they would take a lesson from this and start working together. They ask us constantly, well, why don't you want to work together? This is a prime example of them not working together.

I know there's others who would like to speak to this bill. I'm looking forward to listening to committee to see what people have to say about it, but I will give the opportunity to my colleagues to say a few words as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I appreciate the opportunity to stand here today and speak to this bill that the NDP have put forward. I would note that I did bring it forward as a private member's bill, and I would also note that the NDP wouldn't make any amendments to my bill in—which would have been relatively simple to do, but instead, what they've done is, I guess, is, you know, somewhat questionable in terms of their motivation. But, having said all of that, I do want to say that this is an important bill. It is something that needs to come forward.

I certainly know that there are many more professions out there other than firefighters, police and paramedics that are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder, and I would note that nurses are at the top of that list of one of the 10 top occupations for psychological injury claims. And, having been in situations in nursing, I'm certainly very aware of situations where nurses have been affected by it. Social workers is another group of professionals that are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder as well as are probation and parole officers and sales clerks in stores, Mr. Speaker. Truck drivers are another group; correctional service officers, paramedics and, apparently, visiting homemakers, housekeepers, related occupations, train engineers, security guards and related occupations. There are a number of

professions out there that are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder.

When I became more fully aware of PTSD, it was at a time, and it was a couple of years ago, where I had met with a firefighter and a paramedic, both who had post-traumatic stress disorder, and I certainly saw the dramatic effect it was having on their lives and on their families' lives. I did a lot of research over the next year and a half before I brought my bill forward. I had a chance to meet with the families and to see how something like PTSD can dramatically affect a family. The fear of suicide is always very high, and we've certainly seen and heard recently about the number of suicides that have occurred across Canada, particularly in the area of paramedics. And we've certainly seen and heard of those instances, and that is why this legislation is important. It is important that it be brought in as soon as possible. I cannot imagine how horrendous it must be for people who have post-traumatic stress disorder to have to try to convince professionals that they do have it, which means reliving the thing that is causing them the stress in the first place. That is why having presumptive legislation is critically important.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that I, at one point, had a minor incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder when I was working in Child Find, where we had a young child abducted by a pedophile in The Pas, and she had been missing for a couple of days. Her body was found a few days later after an intense two or three days of search, of family conversations, of working with the police, and it was probably the most intense experience I've ever had in my life. This little girl's body was found in a garbage dump. She had been abducted by a pedophile who was probably one of the ugliest looking people I had ever seen in my life, and I think I melted down. Had it not been for the police psychologist, you know, willingly accepting me to talk about it, I'm not sure where I might have ended up, but I had somebody that understood post-traumatic stress disorder, could help me through it, and I ended up—I landed on my feet very well. But I can't imagine where we're in a situation in a lot of these other professions where they have nobody to turn to, where it is more of a macho environment where you don't look to seek help.

I knew I needed help, and I, fortunately, was able to have somebody that was willing to help me.

That is why we do need this. But we need more than just the legislation. We also have to look at the prevention. We have to look at how can we help people in these professions work through their own work environments in order to access the kind of care and get on the pathway they need to having, you know, a successful treatment regime and getting on that program. So I appreciate that while this is one step forward, there are still other steps that are needed in this process, and, certainly, you know, part of the challenge with treating people, too, is the length of time it takes to treat people that might end up with a diagnosis. We need to make sure that we have the pathways designed for the people that need it to get on those pathways to have the care that they need and to be in a very, very supportive environment.

So there is more steps that need to be taken, but this is certainly a significant first step. I felt very privileged to be able to meet with those two professionals who were begging for help because the system was failing them, and it wasn't failing them that long ago. And they were looking for help, they were begging for help, and nobody was there giving them help. So, when they came to me, I was like a last-ditch effort for them. And I was disappointed that our health-care system was failing them. And I do feel very privileged to have had the opportunity for them to share with me something that was really, really critical. I feel very privileged that I had the opportunity to push this issue in this Legislature by bringing forward a private member's bill. I think that moved it along on the agenda here in Manitoba. I am somewhat disappointed that the NDP government just didn't make amendments to my legislation. I certainly understand the partisan nature of politics, so I can see why they might not have wanted to do it, but, in the end, I am happy that this legislation is going forward. I think it's the right thing to do for a lot of people who need this kind of support in Manitoba. The issue of and the increased awareness of suicides has really been a wake-up call for everybody across Canada to do something.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly happy to be able to say that I am supportive of the legislation, and I look forward to it moving through committee and coming back here to be passed. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to put a few words on the record with regard to this bill which deals with post-traumatic stress disorder. Certainly, PTSD is a pretty important condition, and I'm supportive of this effort to have PTSD covered

under the Workers Compensation Board for people who develop it in the workplace.

I have a number of comments that I want to make: First of all, that one of the people, one of the scientists who helped us understand about the stress response was a very well-known Canadian scientist based in Montreal called Hans Selye. And Hans Selye, I think, started working in the 1930s and continued through to the 1970s and was very, very active at the end of the '40s and in the '50s and in the '60s. And a lot of his work related to understanding the nature of the stress reaction in animals and in humans and the results of the stress on the human body, and quite a bit of his work related to the hormones and the chemical messengers which are involved in the stress reaction.

PTSD appears to be related to a very significant and high expression of adrenalin, one of the chemicals involved in the stress reaction and maybe related to a depressed level of cortisol, which is another chemical or hormone involved in the stress reaction. And, in part, this may be related to an imbalance, but, certainly, what we know at the moment is that the biochemical messengers in our body have a big impact on the stress response and how these work at the time of the stress and their impact on how we remember those events, not only at the time but subsequently, because one of the problems with post-traumatic stress disorder relates to remembering these events again and again in a very troubling fashion, and that leading then to problems with people working—problems with, as has already been referred to, in the most drastic circumstances, suicides, as a result of PTSD.

So I think it's important to recognize, where we have a Canadian who was very prominent in understanding the stress response, that we should at least recognize that and recognize his contributions. It is interesting that there was, in the 1952 edition of the DSM-I, at that point, which was a diagnosis of gross stress reaction, which is very similar to the modern definition of PTSD. And that was at the time when Hans Selye was doing a tremendous amount of work and pointing out that there was a stress reaction and that this was very important to understand and that it could lead to good responses under some circumstances, but diseases, including things like PTSD, under others.

It was in 1978, quite a number of years later, that the condition was added as post-traumatic stress disorder to the DSM-III, psychiatric diagnoses, and

from then on, we have considered it as a major psychiatric diagnosis. The experience and the development of understanding of PTSD grew out of experience in wars, interestingly, and some of the initial work really came out of the work in the wars on looking at US military veterans who'd been involved in the war in Vietnam in the '60s and early '70s. But it has been, since then, as more understanding has developed and more attention has been paid to understanding its importance in the Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan and in the Iraq War and in other wars and war-related experiences—we've got many countries where we have war-affected children and at-adults because of conflicts, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Congo, et cetera, where this also is clearly a major issue and bears some significant attention.

* (16:30)

It is interesting that, in looking back at before there was a formal diagnosis of PTSD, it had been recognized that there were problems in the reactions of soldiers to the stress of combat that predated—some going back into the 19th century but with different names and not as full descriptions, and the relation between combat and PTSD was really established very early on. It is of interest, for example, that one-tenth of the men mobilized—US servicemen who were mobilized—were hospitalized for mental disturbances between 1942 and 1945 before, you know, the modern understanding of PTSD in the same ways.

And it was also found that in the Second World War that, after 35 days of uninterrupted combat, 98 per cent of US servicemen manifested some level of psychiatric disturbances. So this clearly has been understood for a long time, but it wasn't really put together in the current form adequately until the late '70s and early '80s. And one of the things that has happened is the understanding that post-traumatic 'stess'—stress disorder extends far beyond what happens in combat, that those individuals who have witnessed very traumatic events, and here we are talking about circumstances where policemen and firemen, paramedics and others who may be witnessing traumatic events can have a development of PTSD.

But it goes beyond that, and the exposure and witnessing of trauma, domestic trauma of rape and sexual molestation and a whole variety of traumas, and one of the things that is emerging in the understanding, for example, of children who are in

Child and Family Services is that a post-traumatic stress disorder is a significant condition which needs to be looked for and attended to, and sometimes the stress results from the abuse, which was a problem. Sometimes the stress appears to relate from the removal of a child from its family and because that can actually be very, very, traumatic to a child and the conditions in which the child is removed, so that there are, you know, broad implications for understanding—a better understanding of PTSD and making sure that we are doing a better job of addressing it.

It would seem, hopefully, that we have easy answers to early diagnosis, to prevention of problems with PTSD and to effective treatment for somebody who has PTSD. But, you know, although we clearly have psychiatric and psychological approaches which have been shown to be effective, it is not always as simple as one might like, and this is clearly an area where as we move forward here in applying a PTSD diagnosis in this fashion to people who've been in the workplace that we need to make sure that we are an ongoing fashion and for our purposes here in Manitoba engaged in ongoing research so that, as we move forward, we are improving the diagnosis, we are using the best possible prevention treatment because that's clearly really vital if we're going to be able to move forward.

And it should be noted that some of the things which were—have been proposed for treatment, that some of them have not had as—have been found to be effective. And so, you know, it is, I would suggest pretty important that as we move forward that we're actually using evidence not only in the sense of being able to understand when somebody has PTSD, but we are using evidence in terms of the best approaches to initial exposure to a major trauma to help people, and also in terms of treating people after the fact, after PTSD has developed.

So I would hope that the Department of Health and the Department of Labour in Manitoba would get together and work on making sure that we actually have the research base so that we can move this forward in a very strong, evidence-based, science-based approach. And, although, you know, it's easy to say that, it's not always easy to make sure that that actually happens.

And clearly, as I've said there are affective approaches, you know, one being cognitive behavioural therapy which has been found to be quite useful. But, at the same time, we need to make

sure that what we are using, both in terms of prevention and treatment, is indeed effective so that we can have the best possible results.

And, although this bill deals with the situation of people who are in the workplace, you know, hopefully what is learned from looking at and helping people in the workplace can be applied in other areas where we have post-traumatic stress disorder coming out of children, for example, who have had traumas in childhood which may not be related, work-related, and that also can help in the way we approach and look forward and work forward in terms of addressing the needs of people in Manitoba, children as well as adults.

So I look forward to this bill moving forward, I look forward to it moving forward and getting more comments in the committee stage. I think it is valuable. As I said, I think that the approach that we use needs to be evidence-based so that we are using this approach strongly as we've done for other medical criteria for firefighters, but we're also using this approach strongly in terms of how we prevent and treat people who have been exposed to stresses, who may be at risk of developing PTSD, and also how we treat people effectively with PTSD when it has been developed in its full-blown form.

So I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to this bill moving forward and, hopefully, becoming law soon. Thank you.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I just want—

Mr. Speaker: Oh, wait a minute. Sorry. I should canvass the House first to make sure there's no other members of the House that wish to debate before the minister closes debate.

No further debate?

The honourable minister—my apologies to the Minister of Health. I've misunderstood that she was the sponsor of the bill. I should have looked at my notes here.

The honourable Minister of Health, to continue the debate.

Ms. Blady: I'm flattered by the fact that you thought I was the one sponsoring the bill, but, no, I merely seconded the bill and I do look forward to the passage of this bill and I just wanted to put a few brief words on the record.

I think what I am most proud of is the fact that, again, this first-in-Canada legislation would apply to all workers eligible under Workers Compensation and wouldn't be limited only to some occupations because we do realize that workplace 'trama'—trauma can occur in any type of industry. And it is the first time that presumptive legislation will be tied to the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder or post-traumatic stress injury rather than to occupation and that that will streamline the process for victims to get coverage and it removes the need to prove a workplace link which can often mean reliving the traumatic event. And, again, it builds on a previous commitment to bring forward legislation for firefighters and paramedics and others suffering from PTSD.

* (16:40)

This is so significant on so many levels, and for me the connection is not just, again, with those that the original legislation was meant to look at, but the fact that it's been expanded so broadly, and the fact that it also includes work to help ensure and builds on our legacy of ensuring safe workplaces, because if there are things that can be done in a preventative manner, that is even better. But, for those that do encounter and do suffer through a post-traumatic stress injury, the ability to support them and recognize things is very important, especially considering the nature of this kind of an injury.

I know of one friend of mine who, as a front-line responder, went through his entire career witnessing various traumatic events, not realizing that his ability to compartmentalize, to get him through additional traumatic events, meant that he was unaware of his own PTSD diagnosis until his retirement. And it was in retiring that literally the psychological defences went down and the actual experiences and the injury part were something that he felt to suffer.

So, again, I really want to see this legislation move forward. I know that it's part of a larger strategy towards health and mental health and well-being. And I appreciate the previous speaker mentioning the wonderful role of cognitive behavioural therapy in terms of what that can do for folks that suffer from a variety of mental health issues, but, specifically, PTSD, the valuable role that it plays.

The other part that I want to sort of take a few moments to talk about is the valuable role of service animals to those who live with PTSD. And today and in the past few days we've spoken a lot of

Elijah Harper, and I don't know how many people realize that Elijah Harper is connected to this issue.

And it comes down to a wonderful gentleman in our province, George Leonard, who I had the opportunity to speak with at the—from MSAR, Manitoba Search and Rescue, and he trains service animals and he trains a lot of animals that relate to, especially those that live with PTSD. And I had a wonderful conversation with him at the Ball for the Brave, the fundraising event that was done by compassionate companions and Cvet's Pets, with my friend Chris Cvetkovic and the work that they do. And he gave me some of background to the work of MSAR and the legacy. And it turns out that the legacy of MSAR actually has to do with the conversation that George had with his friend Elijah and a few other leaders in the local indigenous community. And it was from that moment on, and that conversation, that George started his work that would, again, you know, allow him to do the work that he now does. So I just would like to thank George and thank Elijah for the work that they do because, in response to this bill, they have also left a legacy, and I look forward to this bill being able to look after many people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 35, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Amendments).

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: I'll now proceed to call Bill 200, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

I believe it's standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Municipal Government (Mr. Caldwell).

Is there leave for this this matter to remain standing in the minister's name?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied. Is there any further debate?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, Mr. Speaker, briefly I want to commend the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) for bringing forward this bill in honour of, not just his communities, although I do think he did it with the best interest of his region and the communities that are affected involved. I know that he has been a long-time promoter not only of this bill but other issues within his community.

I am glad to see that this bill is moving to committee and, I expect, will form part of the conditional agreement that this House was informed of last week, Mr. Speaker, along with a few other things.

I hope that there'll be a great celebration if this bill passes to recognize the mosasaur as one of the emblems of Manitoba. We had the opportunity, of course, in the Legislature to have Suzy the mosasaur, and I know that—I think all members probably saw the display and were amazed by it. I know that there were many school kids who came and had the chance to look at it. And, you know, I'm sure they went home and said that they saw a relic in the Legislature and, hopefully, they explained to their parents that it wasn't politicians, Mr. Speaker, that it was actually a true relic in the Legislature.

But that was great. It was great to have that display here, Mr. Speaker, and I think that it benefited all of us. And, in many ways, I think it sort of put a very—a visual to this bill that the member for Morden-Winkler has brought forward. I've not had the opportunity yet to visit the display in Morden. I hope I'll get an invitation soon from my colleague. I'd love to be able to visit and I'm sure that there are other members who will want to visit as well.

But I think that it's a good thing that this bill is going to be proceeding to committee and hopefully will pass and receive royal assent as part of the larger agreement that we've brought forward here. And we look forward to it going to committee and, no doubt, hearing the praises of those who are busy promoting this in Morden throughout Manitoba and promoting it throughout Canada.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter? House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 200, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

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

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 212—The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Gift Card Inactivity Fees)

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call Bill 212, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Gift Card Inactivity Fees).

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen), that Bill 212, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Gift Card Inactivity Fees); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur (frais d'inactivité applicables aux cartes-cadeaux), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. I'll give a little bit of history and then the reason why this bill is good for consumers in Manitoba.

Gift cards have been growing in popularity for a long time. They're good for the, I suppose, the time constraint. They're good for people who may have family members or friends where they're not sure what to buy. They're actually a very handy way—almost like giving people cash and the ability to use them as they see fit.

Before 2006, retailers and shopping centres often imposed conditions on gift cards. Often there'd be an expiry date within a certain amount of time or fees that would be payable if the cards weren't used up by that particular date. And late in 2006, our government introduced changes to The Consumer Protection Act. The bill would preclude expiry dates.

The reasoning at the time the bill was introduced, I think, Mr. Speaker, is very sound. We heard from a number of unsuspecting Manitobans who may have been saving a gift card while they tried to save up other money to make a major purchase only to find the card had lost its value.

Others had misplaced cards, found them after it was too late, and the gift card that had been given to them suddenly had no value. So the bill passed late in 2006 and took effect early in 2007, and it provided that there would not be expiry dates on cards that Manitoba consumers purchased, and that's a good thing.

However, the bill that was passed did allow for inactivity fees to be set by regulation, and that allowed certain sellers of cards—basically shopping centres—to charge an inactivity fee in certain situations. And the regulation, as it now stands, provides that after one year of inactivity, multiple sellers or shopping centres can charge a fee of \$2.50 per month or \$30 a year for the privilege of holding onto consumers' money. And, at that time, in 2007, we heard that most gift cards were in the range of \$50 to \$100. I don't expect that has changed much since then, so you can see, Mr. Speaker, it's not too long before a card that was held onto by someone for two years before being used would have been greatly reduced or even had the value of that card wiped out.

* (16:50)

This bill, quite simply, would eliminate those inactivity fees. It would put shopping centre retail gift cards on a level playing field with the many other gift cards offered by hundreds of retailers in Manitoba you can see not only in those retailers but at places like grocery stores where you see entire racks of gift cards being offered.

Now, of course, we know that these records now being kept are now electronic. I don't believe there'll be any shopping centre clerks whose job is to handwrite the use that's being made of those gift cards. So there will be no detriment to shopping centres. We know that shopping centres with multiple retail stores are really no different than retailers who may have dozens or even hundreds of different locations across the province or across the country. So, certainly, there's nothing onerous about allowing shopping centres to hold onto Manitoba consumers' money indefinitely. We just think it's a bit excessive to allow them to charge fees for the privilege of doing that.

Of course, this would still allow conditions and fees on cards which are given away; it's only cards for which consumers are paying consideration that would be impacted. It would still allow fees to be charged to replace a lost or stolen card and also fees to be charged to customize cards for consumers who think that's what they want to do.

Quite simply, it puts shopping centres on a level playing field with other retailers. It gives Manitobans, both those who buy cards and give cards to others and also those who receive cards, confidence that their money will be protected.

So, for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to pass this bill on to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking leave of the House to ask the member who introduced the bill a question.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the member for Steinbach to ask a question of the sponsor of the bill? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member bringing forward the bill and his explanation. I have a question regarding, from an accounting perspective, how the individual malls account for a gift card that can't be reduced in value. Does it simply stay on their books for an extended period of time as a receivable or as a payable? And how do they ultimately account for something that somebody might not be using but that they can't discount in any other fashion?

Mr. Swan: I thank the member for Steinbach for the question, and I understand, assuming that the rules are clarified, this process will actually become a normal part of the functioning of the Legislature, which, I think, is a positive thing.

I can tell the member for Steinbach that this bill will simply bring shopping centre gift cards in line with the practice that's already been the case since 2007. Other retailers have had to account for money that they've received but have not yet paid out, so I expect that shopping centres will take advice from their accountants on what the proper accounting procedure should be and what the ultimate tax treatment would be.

I would point out that if shopping centres do happen to come to committee and tell us that they find this onerous, I would certainly welcome shopping centres stepping up and asking that they then be allowed to return the unused money to Manitoba consumers.

So it's a reasonable question. I think that other retailers in Manitoba have had no difficulty in

getting the proper advice, and I expect that shopping centres will be able to get similar advice from professionals.

Mr. Goertzen: Along a similar vein, I know that the current legislation has been now in existence for some time. Has the minister heard feedback from retailers about how it's worked, whether it's caused a hardship in terms of preparing financial statements and what to do with cards that haven't been expired or been used by those who've received them?

Mr. Swan: Yes, thank you. I do know anecdotally that the use of gift cards in Manitoba, and I expect elsewhere, has continued to grow. Immediately upon introducing the bill, I did call Lanny McInnes at the Retail Council of Canada, Manitoba division. I explained to him what the bill was intended to accomplish and we had a good conversation. I don't expect that the Retail Council of Canada, on behalf of its members, will have anything negative to say about the bill at committee.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate or questions on the bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 212, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Gift Card Inactivity Fees).

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

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business. I'd

like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, June 18th, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 3, Bill 8, Bill 12, Bill 35, Bill 200 and Bill 212.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, June the 18th, 2015, at 6 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 3, The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Conservation Officers Act; Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species); Bill 35, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Amendments); Bill 200, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act); and Bill 212, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Gift Card Inactivity Fees).

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if there's leave of the House to call it 5 o'clock.

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

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m.–1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

CORRIGENDUM

On June 11, 2015, page 1867, second column, first paragraph, should have read:

Independent members can select one private members' bill and will not be required to have a seconder to introduce one private members' bill per session.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 16, 2015

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		Swan	1925
		Goertzen	1926

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

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