

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Daryl Reid  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 3, 2015

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS  
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 16—The Children's Advocate Act**

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services):** It is my pleasure to introduce Bill 16. Oh—I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Mr. Chief), that Bill 16, The Children's Advocate Act; Loi sur le protecteur des enfants, be introduced for the first—be read for the first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Mr. Speaker, in response to recommendations made by Commissioner Ted Hughes, this bill introduces independent, stand-alone legislation for the Manitoba Children's Advocate.

This bill supports our commitment to strengthening supports for Manitoba children. Mr. Speaker, as recommended by Commissioner Hughes, this bill includes provisions that significantly expand the advocacy mandate of the Children's Advocate to include a broad range of publicly funded services provided to children and vulnerable adults aged 18 to 21. It also extends the child death review and investigation mandate of the Children's Advocate by allowing the advocate to review and investigate child deaths and serious injuries of children involved in the youth justice, mental health and addiction services for children.

In addition to Child and Family Services, the Children's Advocate may also review and investigate a serious injury or death of a young adult who is a former permanent ward and who is receiving transitional child and family services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

**Bill 201—The New Motor Vehicle  
Buyers' Rights Act**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I move, seconded by the member for—from St. Norbert, that Bill 201, The New Motor Vehicle Buyers' Rights Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, this Bill 201 enhances the rights of purchasers of new motor vehicles. Under this bill's key provisions, if a vehicle needs to be repaired under the warranty period four or more times or is out of service for 20 days, the purchaser can make a claim under the bill's provisions.

If the manufacturer is in breach of the bill's provisions, the purchaser can demand return of the vehicle or demand a replacement vehicle or full refund minus a deduction for kilometres driven. All US states have similar laws protecting new car buyers. This bill would be the first of its kind in Canada.

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

Further introduction of bills?

**Bill 17—The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act**

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Braun), that Bill 17, The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Allum:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce Bill 17, The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act.

Our government knows that teachers dedicate their lives to educate our kids, and we've been proud to work with them to make smaller—classes smaller, protect funding for our schools and make sure every child has the best opportunities.

I'm proud to introduce legislation that recognizes the Manitoba Teachers' Society as the official voice for teachers in our province and ensures that their members have control over their society, not government. Our government will always work with

teachers to make our education system stronger, and I'm proud to have worked on this important legislation with Norm Gould, president of MTS. I'd like to thank Norm for coming to the gallery today, along with members of his executive, local presidents and classroom teachers.

I look forward to seeing this bill passed into law and to many, many, many more years of collaboration and partnership with the teachers of Manitoba.

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

Now, I want to welcome our guests to the gallery here this afternoon, but I want to caution you, please, there's not to be any participation in the activities of the Chamber, and that includes applause. So I'm asking you for your co-operation in that regard.

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, committee reports?

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** Thank you—oh—

**Mr. Speaker:** No committee reports?

#### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll move on with tabling of reports.

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the financial statements of Red River College, year ended June 30th, 2015.

I'm also pleased to table the Assiniboine Community College annual report for 2014-2015.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Text Book Bureau, Special Operating Agency, Annual Report 2014/2015.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports?

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following report from the Department of Labour and Immigration: Office of the Fire Commissioner 2014-2015.

**Hon. Flor Marcelino (Acting Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Second Quarter Report 2015-2016, for the Department of

Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Quarterly Financial Report for the six months ended September 30, 2015, for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports?

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

##### National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of all women who have died as a result of violence in our province, our country and beyond. This weekend, we will commemorate Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Every year on December 6th, we honour the women who were murdered at École Polytechnique in 1989 just for being women. We also acknowledge Manitoba girls and women killed by acts of violence in our province over the past year. And sadly, as the issue of murdered and missing women is never far from our minds, we recognize and honour these mothers, sisters, aunties, cousins and friends.

We know that violence is well known—is a well-known reality for many Manitoban women and comes in many forms. It can happen in any family, affects women of all ages, cultures, sexual orientation, income levels, religions, professions and abilities. This is a serious social problem that impacts us all: women, men, children, neighbourhoods, workplaces and communities.

Tomorrow morning, I will join my sisters and brothers at the annual sunrise memorial held at the Legislative Building, hosted by the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council. It will be an opportunity to reflect on the tragedy of the Montreal massacre and to also remember the Manitoba women whose lives have been tragically ended by the acts of violence. Sadly, this year we will be commemorating 10 women who died as a result of violence in our province in the past year.

I encourage all Manitobans to let December 6th not only be a day of reflection and remembrance but a day for everyone to do their part in ending violence

against women. Today and every day, let us all continue to raise awareness.

\* (13:40)

Let's educate ourselves and others: boys, girls, women and men. Let's encourage kindness, support and understanding and teach our children that violence is not okay. I encourage everyone to listen and act. When you witness an act of sexual violence or harassment, speak up. Be an ally. Stop violence against women in our communities. We know that even the smallest actions by an individual can make a difference. Be more than a bystander.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that, following the statements of my colleagues, we observe a moment of silence to honour the women who lost their lives 26 years ago and to remember and honour the 10 Manitoba women and girls who lost their lives to gender-based violence this past year.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, today we recognize the importance of December 6th, the national day of remembrance and action to end violence against women. Established by Parliament in 1991, this day marks a tragic anniversary of the 1989 shooting at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal where 14 young women were gunned down. They were murdered just because they were women.

Twenty-six years later we continue to see violence against women, against men, against girls and boys, and for this reason, December 6th is not just about the Montreal massacre; it is about all Canadians who continue to be affected by gender-based violence and is a day of action to do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, this day also creates a special opportunity to raise awareness of the harm gender inequality and gender-based violence cause women and girls across Manitoba, across Canada, and across the world. Violence against women is an especially pertinent and upsetting one here in Manitoba. We have one of the worst records when it comes to violent crimes against women. At nearly double the national average, we have the absolute worst rate per capita of sexual assault compared to any other province.

There were 1,413 reported sexual assaults in Manitoba in 2014, and Winnipeg was tied for the second highest rate amongst major cities.

According to the Winnipeg Police Service's annual statistical report, there were over 686 sexual assaults committed in the city in 2014 and 45 youth crime sexual assaults. The estimated number is even higher when unreported assaults are considered.

The abhorrent reality of violence against women and girls in Manitoba made national headlines last year following the tragic death of CSF ward Tina Fontaine, whose body was pulled from the Red River, and then the aggravated sexual assault and attempted murder on 16-year-old Rinelle Harper, who was left for dead on the riverbank but miraculously survived.

The list of violence against women in Manitoba goes on, Mr. Speaker. This past spring there was the shocking event of the 15-year-old Aboriginal girl in CFS care who was found severely beaten and sexually assaulted in a parkade in downtown Winnipeg. Earlier this fall Selena Keeper became a victim of violence. Selena was a young mother who was found brutally beaten and later succumbed to her injuries in hospital. Selena was denied a protection order against her killer, who was a former boyfriend.

Camille Runke became another victim of violence against women when her ex-husband shot and killed her outside her St. Boniface workplace also this fall. The protection order she had against this man unfortunately did not stop this tragedy from happening.

Mr. Speaker, poverty, racism, and social injustice make our Aboriginal population here in Manitoba especially vulnerable to gender-based violence. Indeed, Aboriginal women are much more likely than anyone else to be victims of violent crime.

We in the PC caucus acknowledge that violence to and exploitation of women and girls, especially those who are Aboriginal in Manitoba and throughout Canada, is a crisis that needs immediate attention and action.

Today, in support of December 6th, the national day of remembrance and action to end violence against women, we must look forward and find ways to improve prevention and ensure supports are available in Manitoba. As a province we can and must do better so that everyone in our province is safe and cared for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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 in this Chamber to speak to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada, a day first established in 1991 following the murders of 14 young women at L'École Polytechnique de Montréal in 1989, a school that I visited in the mid-1990s. These women died because they were women.

In Manitoba we are all too aware of the 10 Manitoba women and girls who lost their lives to gender-based violence this last year and particularly of the number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and the need to end these tragedies which have occurred and to continue to occur in spite of efforts to date.

Decreasing, indeed, ending violence against women is a goal which I believe we all share. It is one reason that Rana Bokhari and I have been active in promoting improved education to reduce family violence. But I also want to take a moment to say thanks to my sister-in-law, Nikki Gerrard, who is a psychologist and who co-edited a book titled *Intimate Partner Violence* to which Manitoban Jane Ursel contributed a chapter.

Nikki has been a mentor to me in this area—many long conversations at our homes and at a cabin. She's helped me to understand the nature and the causes of family violence and helping me to look at positive measures to reduce all family violence and, in particular, violence against women. Thank you, Nikki.

As we move forward, it is important that we have a larger vision of a violence-free society. That vision helps us to imagine a better future and to put in place the actions that will lead toward this better future.

Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to observe a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Members will please rise.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

Are there further ministerial statements?

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll move on to members' statements.

### International Day of Persons with Disabilities

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, our province has a vibrant community of disability activists who are working to create an accessible Manitoba for everyone. Today we celebrate the UN's international day of people with disability and pay tribute to those who are helping eliminate the stigma attached to certain disabilities.

Our government's vision for Manitoba is to create a fully inclusive province. One of the ways we're doing that is by connecting all Manitobans of all abilities in—to jobs and training opportunities. Last year, we launched the Transforming Futures program at Red River College to provide hands-on learning in career exploration and essential skills for people with intellectual disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we are also supporting projects that help people with disabilities live in rural and northern communities find good jobs. We've also launched a campaign to encourage employers to hire Manitobans based on what they can do, not what they can't.

This October, I was able to meet a few Manitobans with disabilities who work at the Southwood Golf and Country Club: Rick Rannu, Dustin How and Nolin Vincent were connected to the club general manager, Jeff Scott, through employment organization SCE LifeWorks. They showed myself and LifeWorks president, Oly Backstrom, around their workplace and chatted with us about the skills they are learning. Mr. Speaker, today we have Dustin, Oly and Jeff joining us in the gallery. Welcome.

Our government supports the good work LifeWorks does and partnered with them to create the Project SEARCH program to provide training and placements for high school students with disabilities. The program is the first of its kind in Canada and aims to give students more opportunities and support to find work once they leave school.

We want to make sure that Manitoba buildings and services are fully accessible for all employees. Our Accessibility for Manitobans Act sets out long-term plans for fully accessible province. It includes regulations that all government departments, large

organizations, municipalities and universities must have an accessibility plan by next year.

\* (13:50)

This legislation will make our province an inclusive, supportive home for hundreds of Manitobans who live with disabilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Andy Thiessen**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw the attention of the House to Andy Thiessen, who recently celebrated a 20-year anniversary as fire chief of Morden Fire and Rescue.

Andy has been involved in firefighting for over 30 years. The first four years of his career were spent with the Killarney fire department, and the last 27 have been with the Morden Fire and Rescue, the last 20 serving as chief.

Firefighting started out as a way to become a part of the community for Andy. His interest in the career started in high school when a part-time job had him working across the street from the Morden fire hall, and when the siren would sound, he would go to the window to see which way the trucks were heading.

Over the years he has seen many changes and improvements to the firefighting profession, from new training techniques, methods to fight fires and especially in the equipment that is used today.

This is a hazardous occupation, and that can make it potentially difficult to recruit new volunteers. Being a volunteer firefighter is a major commitment in both time and effort and comes with hazards. But fortunately for Chief Andy and the Morden Fire Department, it's not the case in the city of Morden.

I recently attended the annual volunteer firefighter dinner in the city of Morden where Andy accepted a gift for his long-time service and remarked that he has the special honour now of serving on the firefighting crew with his son, CJ, who recently joined.

Andy has been involved in numerous committees, fundraising efforts and the instruction of the Level I firefighting course at the Morden fire hall. He was instrumental in the process of securing the new fire hall, which the department moved into in 2007. He served as the president of the Manitoba

Association of Fire Chiefs, he is a member of the City of Morden's health and safety committee and he makes classroom visits to local schools during Fire Prevention Week.

He was also present on the day in 2013 here at the Legislature when the licence plate was unveiled, the specialty volunteer firefighter plate, which was a result of the hard work of the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) in the private member's bill that he brought.

It is my privilege to congratulate Chief Andy on this remarkable milestone, thank him for the many years of committed service he has given to the citizens of the City of Morden and the surrounding community.

Thank you.

#### **Indo-Canadian Community**

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure for me to welcome some very important members from the Indo-Canadian community of Manitoba. They are social builders who dedicate their services to an enormous community. Some of them are here with us in the gallery.

Manitoba is home of over 35,000 Indo-Canadians, including some people from the West Indies whose roots are in India. As an ideal symbol of Canada's image in the world, Manitoba is a true multicultural mosaic reflecting Canadian values and emerging new culture. I am proud to be part of these two organizations who reflect my personal ideals and beliefs to build a better world.

Dr. Raj Pandey Hindu Centre on St. Anne's Road is a marvellous architectural design and a beautiful showcase of Hinduism, an ancient religion with the scriptures as old as 7,000 years. The Punjab Cultural Centre on King Edward Street reflects the true values of the colourful region of Punjab in India and the home of several gurus of Sikhism and eminent scholars.

Building these two centres would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of countless groups and volunteers. Weekly donations in these centres range anywhere from two to five thousand dollars. People from across Canada pitched in to build the Punjab Cultural Centre. Volunteers raised tens of thousands of dollars in Vancouver, Toronto and across Alberta.

These two magnificent cultural centres help the growing Indo-Canadian community promote our

culture, heritage and language. They connect young people of Winnipeg's diverse multicultural community by making them feel welcome and home.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote seva, the words of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. It says: I slept and dreamt that life was a joy. I woke up and saw that life was service. I acted, and behold, service is the joy.

I thank all the members of the community to keep building our community and help build a wonderful society, Manitoba and a great country.

I feel very honoured to be part of [inaudible] and the community.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha).

**Mr. Jha:** I ask for leave to include the list of people in the—in those two communities that I would like to mention they are the donors and executives.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave has been requested to include the names in Hansard for today. Is that agreed? [Agreed]

Thank the honourable member for Radisson.

*Hindu Society of Manitoba: Dr. Raj Pandey, Dr. Daya Gupta, Mr. Ramanbhai Patel, Dr. R.C. Patel, Drs. Narendra and Madhuri Jain, Drs. Krishnamurti and Ganga Dakshinamurti, Mr. Ashok and Anu Dilawari, Mr. Pankaj Master, Mr. Cyril Sankar, Dr. P.S. Dhruvarajan, Dr. S.N. Parikh, Dr. Babu Hegdekar, Mr. Prabodh Patel, Mr. Raman Patel, Mr. Vir Bharati, Mr. Has Mukh Pandya, Dr. Shib Biswas (Late), Dr. Aruna Mathur, Mr. Rajinder Goyal, Mr. Prem Bhalla, Dr. Jagdish Khattar, Dr. R. Venkataraman, Mr. Vic Goomansingh (Late), Mr. Dilip Waghrey, Dr. Suresh Bhatt, Dr. Kedar Tandon (Late), Mr. Nityanand Sharma, Mr. Virendra Bhayana, Dr. Dadvir Jayas, Mr. Pawan Bansal, Mr. Swatanter Parbhakar, Mr. Om. Kaushal (Late), Mr. Baldave. K. Sharma, Mr. Satish Bharaj, Mr. Ashok Prashar, Mr. Bhadresh Bhatt, Mr. Bharat Narotam, Mrs. Sumita Biswas, Mr. Ravi Chibba, Mr. Anil Jindal, Dr. A.T. Balachandra, Capt. Narendra Mathur, Ms. Tara Sampat, Mr. Hari Maniram, Mr. Pawas Verma, Dr. Krishan Sadana, Mr. Piara Lal Sharma (Late), Mr. Surinder Goyal, Mr. Ashok Chopra, Ms. Geeta Kaushal, Mr. Sudhir Kumar, Mr. Sushil Sharma*

*Punjab Cultural Centre: Mr. Amarjeet S. Warraich, Mr. Sukhdarshan Kaila, Mrs. Tej Bains, Dr. G.B. Singh, Dr. Davinder Reshia, Mr. Gurmukh S. Sroay, Mr. Harkamal Saggi, Mr. Baljit Sidhu, Mr. Gurpinder Toor, Mr. Paramjit S. Gill, Mr. Surjit S. Cheema, Mr. Nishan S. Warraich, Mr. Rajinder Rihal, Mr. Inderjeet S. Clair (Late), Mr. Gurmeet Gill (Late), Mr. Partap S. Phangureh (Late), Mr. Harbhajan S. Gossal, Mr. Paul S. Clair, Mrs. Taran Malik, Mrs. Ranjit Dhalla, Dr. Niranjana S. Dhalla, Dr. and Mrs. Sarabjeet S. Marva (Ontario), Dr. Guizar S. Cheema (British Columbia), Mr. Rajinder S. Grewal*

### Tax Increases

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, on December the 12th, 2011, just before the last provincial election, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said, and I quote: Our plan is a 5-year plan to ensure we have future prosperity without any tax increases and we'll deliver on that. End of quote.

Again, on September the 23rd, 2011, less than two weeks later, the Premier said, and I quote: Ridiculous idea that we're not going to—that we're going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense; everybody knows that. End of quote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if we fast-forward to just seven months after the election, when they introduced their first budget, this NDP government imposed the largest tax increase on Manitobans in modern history, including the tax on gasoline, vehicle registration and broadening the PST to include spa treatments, pedicures, manicures, facials, haircuts and insurance including property and group life insurance.

If that wasn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, in their second budget, on April the 16th, 2013, the NDP topped the 2012 tax increase with the introduction of a 14 per cent increase in the PST, raising it from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. Manitobans were outraged and presenter after presenter at committee spoke against the betrayal of this Premier and his NDP colleagues. Their voices were ignored.

By October 27th of 2014, several members of the NDP Cabinet woke up. They asked the Premier to resign. These members were the minister of Finance, the minister of Jobs and the Economy, minister of Justice, minister of Health, minister of Municipal Government. They cited the PST hike, saying the Premier, and I quote, broke their trust.



Mr. Speaker, one month later these five Cabinet ministers called on the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to tender his resignation. Many of his colleagues agree with Manitobans when they say they feel betrayed by this Premier. Manitobans can no longer afford to pay more while continuing to get less. This clearly demonstrates the NDP government has—*is* broken and has lost the trust of Manitobans.

Thank you.

### **TEDxKildonan Conference**

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** We can learn a lot from Manitoba's young people. They have the energy, ideas and determination to drive our province forward. Grade 10 student Cole Lazarek is bringing young people's ideas to the table. He has teamed up with his brother Luke as well as friends James Pither and Jorge Cabral to host the TEDxKildonan conference this Saturday.

TEDx is an independently organized, non-profit offshoot of the global conference series TED Talks.

Inspired by the theme *Imagine*, Cole and his teams have asked speakers to present what they imagine for Manitoba's future. Talks include a lesson on how to find fulfillment in one's career by Joseph Darcel, a spoken-word poem from the perspective of a bully by Jayda Hope, a talk from Todd Scott on how to harness creativity and much more.

Another speaker, Kris Moroski, lives in my constituency of Rossmere and is a high school teacher at River East Collegiate. He has regularly presented to the Manitoba Teachers' Society on how traditional school structures have failed to evolve as technology advances. Kris brings his talk to TEDx with a focus on how we can reshape schools to meet the demands of the new world.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to welcome Cole, James and Kris to the Chamber today. TEDx has been a labour of love for everyone involved. The majority of Cole's leadership team is under 23, and he strongly believes that leadership is not defined by age, rather by passion, hard work and the ability to motivate others.

The earlier that young people are provided with opportunities to contribute, the greater the benefits to both themselves and society. Events like TEDxKildonan are a reminder to people in leadership roles to value the perspective of our youth

and give them every chance to imprint this perspective on the world.

I'm so proud of young people like Cole and James who are inspiring Manitoba youth to think about our province's potential. Along with all members of the Legislature, I wish Cole and his team the best of luck at their event.

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** That concludes members' statements.

### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** And just prior to oral questions, I have guests I'd like to introduce.

We have, seated in the public gallery today, from Henry G. Izatt Middle School, we have 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Jon Green and Jordan Nelson. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister).

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

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Provincial Election 2016 Election Date**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The best of the season to you, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that Santa keeps his promises to good boys and girls and the Grinch breaks his promises. And when the Grinch breaks his promises what he's doing is actually hurting hope.

Now, the Selinger government is acting a bit Grinch-like and has been for some time, Mr. Speaker. They promised Manitoba seniors better quality health care, and they got instead longer waits and painful taxi trips. And they promised Manitoba families better protection for vulnerable children, and instead they gave them motel care and exploding caseloads. They promised young people better education, and we rank 10th out of 10 across the country. They promised better financial security to all working Manitobans, and they doubled their debt and got them a credit downgrade. And they promised more respect to the people of this province and gave them blacked-out documents, favours to political friends, higher taxes, and stole away their right to vote. This is pretty Grinch-like.

Now, the promises that Manitobans expect will be kept are the promises the government makes, but they've had their hope broken.

So I want to ask the Premier this: Will he promise that the next provincial election will be held on April 19th, 2016?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite because what I can promise him, the next election won't involve the vote rigging that he did when he was in in 1995, that's for sure. We've changed the laws in Manitoba. We've changed the laws in Manitoba so that's not possible.

And another thing that we've done, Mr. Speaker, and have delivered on is we've banned corporate and union donations in the province of Manitoba so that the wealthy friends of the Leader of the Opposition can't run this province.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? This was a historic week in Manitoba. We saw the placing in this Legislature a document for custom care of indigenous people in their communities, something they've been waiting for a long time. It builds on the partnership we have with indigenous peoples.

And I can tell you there are other historic things happening in this province, which I will be happy to enumerate in the next question, Mr. Speaker.

#### **NDP Leadership Convention Leadership Results**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Broken so many promises he doesn't want to make any more, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Santa makes a list and checks it twice and tries to find out who's naughty and nice. And the Premier has such a long naughty list this year, Mr. Speaker.

I seriously doubt there'll be presents for those rebels that rebelled against his leadership, not even parting gifts. The MLA for Flin Flon, that's not a titanic decision, Mr. Speaker. Crossing out half his caucus from his gift list is something he's got to do.

He no longer has any friends in the federal NDP party; that relationship is over. Anna Rothney already got her secret payout, so she's not going to get a gift, that's for sure.

Government lawyers have been repeatedly paid; they've already got their gift: the PST lawsuit, the Jockey Club lawsuit, the flood protesters lawsuit, the

stadium lawsuit. Litigation is a gift that just keeps on giving, Mr. Speaker.

But the biggest gift of the year was given to the Premier, and that was given on March the 8th, when the MLA for St. Boniface hung onto his leadership by a thread.

So let me ask him this: What is he planning on giving Alex Forrest for Christmas?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, what can I say about the Leader of the Opposition? This is a gentleman that said he was coming here to aim higher, and it's been a big disappointment, his performance so far.

And I know he's trying his very best right now to be clever, Mr. Speaker, but you know, when it comes to promises, one thing we won't do is we won't cut teachers like he'd do when he was in office. Seven hundred teachers lost their jobs. We've increased the number of teachers in Manitoba by over 325 with our smaller class size initiative. And we've delivered on it. And what have the members opposite done? They voted against that initiative in every single budget that we've brought forward.

We've got over 3,800 more nurses working in Manitoba now, Mr. Speaker. What was their promise to the nursing people of Manitoba? One thousand of them were fired when they were in office. That is a lump of coal for Christmas.

We won't do that. We'll keep building Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, a province with the lowest unemployment rate, the highest job creation rate and a real desire to foster reconciliation and do things that make for a greener, cleaner planet.

#### **Legislative Assembly Employees Best Wishes during Winter Break**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry the Premier is disappointed in me, but Manitobans are disappointed in him.

Mr. Speaker, I genuinely want to wish you and your family the best in the holiday season, and I do to the Premier, as well, and his colleagues. And I know that this year has been a difficult and challenging year for them, but I also know and they know that our party, as well, is no stranger to these kinds of things, and so I say sincerely to them, we sympathize with them. We sympathize with the challenges they faced in their relationships. We hope that they all can heal over the winter. I hope that they

can have a wonderful time with their families and friends.

I wish the best to our staff here for their Christmas. I wish—I appreciate and we all appreciate the work they do, and I thank the people at Hansard. I thank all our staffs in our offices. I also want to pass on—I also want to wish the best to the people who clean our halls, Mr. Speaker, and remove the snow for us so we can park our cars.

I think all of us join together in wishing the very best to all Manitobans for a healthy and happy and wonderful holiday season. God bless us, Mr. Speaker, and God bless them too.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the good wishes that the Leader of the Opposition offers to all members of the Legislature that work here. We do enjoy the benefit of their support every single day, and to all the families of all the members of the Legislature, including those that have decided to retire, we do want to wish them the best of the season.

And as we go forward, Mr. Speaker, I do want to see us follow through on that inquiry for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. And I would, in the spirit of the season, I would offer the opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition to finally get up and support that inquiry, not only for Manitoba but all across the country.

I would like him to get up and finally support legislation for safe workers in Manitoba so that when workers go to work, they know they're safe and they can come home to their families for Christmas.

Those are two simple initiatives that the Leader of the Opposition in the spirit of Christmas could support for the first time in his life. It would be greatly appreciated, and I would applaud him if he had the courage to get up and do that today.

#### **Small-Business Tax Threshold Government Promise to Increase**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read a quote from a member of the Selinger government: This is my contract to Manitobans; these are my commitments we believe in and commitments Manitobans believe we will keep.

I'm wondering if any member opposite could just indicate for the House if they remember who said that.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to stand up on behalf of our party and the members of our party and everyone in the Legislature who tries to do what they can that are best for all Manitobans.

We have never said that we are perfect, Mr. Speaker, but we've always been prepared to admit our mistakes. We've always been prepared to provide the information. We've been prepared to stand up and apologize.

In my time in the Legislature I have never heard the Leader of the Opposition once apologize. I know he thinks he's perfect, Mr. Speaker, but I've never heard him apologize.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have made errors. We've tried to correct them and be the best government possible, and while we're not perfect, we go to work every day knowing we're trying to build a better Manitoba, not a Manitoba for the wealthy and the rich like members opposite.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see the apology to each and every Manitoban who received a PST increase as a result of their broken promise from the last election.

Mr. Speaker, it was, in fact, the Premier himself who said that in September 2011, just after he promised on the eve of the last election to raise the small-business tax threshold to \$500,000.

\* (14:10)

But I'll give credit to this government in a rare moment in my time here in the Manitoba Legislature. The Selinger government sent out a press release earlier this week admitting to breaking that promise, Mr. Speaker. Finally, the truth from this government.

If this is the way this Premier keeps his promises to Manitobans, by breaking them, Mr. Speaker, how can he honestly expect Manitobans to believe anything that he says?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, when there was a flood and when the people were in distress and when needed help, this government was there.

Mr. Speaker, when the minimum wage needed to be raised so that workers could have a decent wage, we passed the legislation. When there were not enough doctors and nurses in this province, we put in programs to get doctors and nurses so we have more doctors and more nurses. We won't apologize for that.

We won't apologize, Mr. Speaker, for putting in legislation to prevent bullying in schools, even though members opposite tried to block that legislation. We won't apologize for trying to work with First Nations people in this province to try to provide reconciliation, be it in Child and Family Services, be it in economic development, because they enjoy as much a part of this province as anyone else on that side or anyone else, no matter how rich they are.

### **Health-Care System Government Record**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, NDP health failures continue to grow and put Manitobans at risk.

There is the longest ER waits in Canada two years in a row, highway medicine caused by 20 closed rural ERs, taxicab medicine where seniors continue to be kicked out of ERs and dumped off in front of their homes, an ER crisis because of a critical shortage of PCH beds, and a 52-hour ER wait for a child who needed a bed but couldn't get one.

Rather than focusing on fixing her failures, this Minister of Health would rather fear monger to try to deflect from her horrible record.

I would like to ask her if she would now admit that her broken promises are failing Manitobans.

**Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question, and I know in my time in the Legislature the only fear mongering I've heard regarding health care has come from that side of the Chamber.

I know on this side of the Chamber we have been making ongoing investments. We have more doctors than ever before. We have more nurses. We've worked well with nurse practitioners and physicians' assistants, midwives, all professions that did not practise under members opposite. We have made record investments in hospitals, including in west Winnipeg where a new emergency ward will be coming to the Grace Hospital.

So, again, we continue to invest. It's members opposite that continue to fear monger.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, there are many more NDP health failures. Either they've mismanaged issues, dropped the ball or this Minister of Health is in way over her head and can't figure out how to fix anything.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the worst doctor retention rate in Canada. Manitoba is the worst performing province on infant mortality. Hundreds of frail seniors are stuck in unsafe situations in their homes because of an inefficient and mismanaged home-care system. Yet this Minister of Health spends all her time fear mongering or trying to smear the former government.

I would like to ask her if she would now admit that all she has to offer is broken promises, broken trust, from a broken government.

**Ms. Blady:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question, and I would like to remind the member from Charleswood about the time she defended the bed closures when the Conservatives were last in government, saying there was no problem with the bed closures, that everyone was de-bedding, and we won't follow that trend line.

Our NDP government believes in investing in more beds, more personal-care homes, not cutting and freezing investments that Manitobans depend on most, not in privatizing health care and not in—what was the word that Dr. Fine described their judgment?—stupid and dishonest behaviour.

We won't do what they did. We will keep working with Manitobans.

### **Child Poverty Rates ALL Aboard Strategy**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, with the holiday season approaching, it is my hope that those of us with more than we need will take the time to help the 29 per cent of Manitoba children that are living below the poverty line.

It is my hope that Manitobans can all work together to put an end to the highest child poverty rate in this country. There is nothing wrong with Manitoba that cannot be made right by the good work of Manitobans.

Won't this government end their failed ALL Aboard strategy that has, in fact, driven the child poverty rate up?

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services):** Mr. Speaker, this government has been committed to poverty reduction since 1999. We work very closely with the non-profit organizations across this province to ensure that we are providing the services that are required.

And one of those important things is housing, and that's why we continue to build social and affordable housing. And we have gone one step further. This week we were very proud to be joined by hundreds of Manitobans and celebrate the full implementation of Rent Assist, 75 per cent of market median rent. And we're not—and we're going beyond that: investing in child care, making sure that we're increasing minimum wage every year.

We're making those investments. We will continue to work with all of our community partners and make those investments to ensure that we're moving forward to reduce child poverty across this province.

### **Children in Care CFS Policy**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, that 75 per cent of market median sounds very familiar. Oh, yes, we supported it two years before you got to it.

Mr. Speaker, to many of the 11,000 children in care in this province, the holiday season can be a stark reminder of missing family. To many, the festive season can—to many families, the festive season can also be a reminder of missing children. I am sure everyone in this House will join me in hoping that the new year will find less children in care of CFS and more happy family—joyous families reunited.

Can't this government make this happen? Can't they change their failed CFS policies?

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services):** We will continue to work with all of our community partners, and we will not be like the members opposite and take credit for the hard work that Make Poverty History did every day to bring Manitobans together to support 75 per cent market median rent. We are not drive-by poverty activists. We are committed to this fight every day—every day—as private citizens as well as elected officials right now.

We are continuing to work with all of our community partners to address the issue of child-of children in care. Yesterday we were gathered at Thunderbird House. Eighty people came out, 15 chiefs, three grand chiefs, to support the implementation of a new bill that is going to remove the barriers, that is going to provide more community involvement in the placement of children when they are in need. This is going to be about developing

prevention services in the community, also having that wraparound support for families. It is going to acknowledge—

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

### **Seniors on Fixed Incomes Affordable Rental Housing**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** The Minister of Housing and his NDP government promised seniors on fixed incomes that they would keep their rents affordable. Many of those seniors have seen their rents increase by double digits every year for the last three years in a row.

These seniors know that they can't trust this NDP government to keep their word.

Why would anyone believe anything that this NDP government has to say? Is this just more broken trust by a broken government?

**Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member asking the question; that gives me the chance to explain that we have implemented a Seniors' School Tax Rebate. And we are not working just one section of the seniors; we are working all the seniors who worked their whole life hard, did hard work and built this Manitoba.

So we are—last year we have a \$235 school tax rebate, this year it's \$475–\$470, and next year it's going to eliminate it.

And what will happen if those people other side come to power? They will eliminate all those achievements we have done. They won't have any affordable housing for the seniors. They will privatize everything. They will sell it to the—they will sell out those people.

So we are—

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

### **Hydro Committee Questions Timeliness of Replies**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** At Hydro committee this September, we asked for all Manitobans several questions about issues in regard to Hydro's position and a follow-up letter with those same questions, which we have not received response yet to date. I'd like to give the minister an

opportunity to explain why those responses have not come forward from this broken Selinger government.

\* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have lost trust in this government, assured that the real owners of Manitobans will receive a response to those questions.

I would like to ask the minister: Will he ensure the response will be back to all Manitobans within seven days?

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** Mr. Speaker, I do recall the questions being raised by members of the opposition when we had Manitoba Hydro at the Crown Corporations Committee, and I'm quite confident that Manitoba Hydro is assembling the many, many questions raised by the members opposite. And I am quite confident, as well, that the answers will be forthcoming shortly.

#### **Mental Health Services Coverage under Medicare**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem in any given year. The most common of these is depression and anxiety. The fastest growing cause of disability costs is depression. Evidence-based psychological services delivered by qualified providers have been shown to lead to less relapse of depression when compared to treatment with medication alone.

Will this NDP government consider including psychological services under medicare, as physicians are covered, as a Liberal government will do to improve treatment for depression in Manitoba?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I thank the member from River Heights for the question. He needs to know that the support for mental health services and regional health authorities has tripled from 50 to 150 million dollars.

I hope he will recall that Manitoba is the first jurisdiction to bring in post-traumatic stress disorder services as a coverable support under the workers' compensation program, and it's a service that's available to all the working people of Manitoba, whether they're front-line service providers, whether they're teachers, whether they work in a convenience store. Whatever their particular occupation, they will have access to that service if it's connected to their on-the-job stress, Mr. Speaker.

So—and, as well, the member will know that we have very active crisis response unit at the Health Sciences Centre for anybody that is in mental health distress. That unit is a full-service operation with psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists and, of course, health professionals that are there to fully look after people when they come in. It's a specialized unit. It's unique in Canada. I'm proud that Manitoba was the first province to bring that in.

And I'll give him further information in the subsequent questions, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, as the Premier should know, publicly funded services in this area are often in short supply and with very long wait-lists, and coverage is often too low for clinically meaningful amounts of psychological therapy. Manitobans either pay out of pocket or rely on the private health insurance plans provided by their employers.

Including mental health services under medicare, like physician services, is the right thing to do, and a Liberal government will do it.

Why won't the NDP government do the right thing?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question. Mental health services are an important dimension of looking after Manitobans' well-being, allow them to support their families, participate in labour markets and be full members of our community.

And that is why we are doing things in the schools, for example, the roots to empathy program is a very significant program for young people to learn how to relate to infants and learn how to connect emotionally with people, lessons that stay with them their whole life. The PAX program that we're doing in the public schools is teaching young people the skills of being able to understand their own emotions, how to relate to others without entering into violent conflict. We have programs in the schools including the respect program that was pioneered by Manitoba athletes.

And we're working, and we're working with our teachers. We're working with our schools. The Child Guidance Clinic provides psychological support to the schools. Many school divisions have their own psychologist that they've engaged to do that. We want to be on the front lines and help people develop that kind of resilience that will help them deal with the great challenges of life and people growing up.

And one of the things I was really impressed with this fall, Mr. Speaker, was being with a group of young people from all around Winnipeg that were doing suicide prevention programs, peer group programs to help each other deal with some of the challenges of being young people in a very dynamic and stressful society today.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, even with the services the Premier talks about, there are still far too many people who have a mental health problem each year.

Mr. Speaker, research has demonstrated that psychological treatments are effective in helping depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse and autism. Psychological services are just as effective and less costly than medication for many mental health conditions. These therapies can help lower suicide rates among individuals with bipolar disorders and prevent relapses in those with schizophrenia.

Why does the NDP hesitate to include psychological services under medicare, as a Liberal government would do?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we've tripled the support for mental health programs in our regional health authorities.

We've brought many more additional drugs onto the Pharmacare program, which is the only program in Canada that's rent geared—that's geared to income and allows people to have affordable access to drugs that will help with mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, we've put in place many housing programs. I can—I was just driving in the Wolseley area the other day and I saw emerging there a brand new housing project for people with mental health issues who will live with other people in the community and have stable housing. These are important initiatives on our part.

We support the self-help groups in the community that provide mental health services and support, and we support young people in school when they provide leadership to provide peer support to each other.

We also have the PACT program in the community, Mr. Speaker. We believe in community-based programs—[interjection] Clearly, the members opposite who want to cut education budgets don't want to hear the answer, but what we're interested in is the kinds of community-based programs at the front end that prevent and help young people be

more resilient. And we're interested in programs in the workplace that help people be more resilient.

And if the members opposite really want to support this, they would have voted for the anti-bullying legislation, which is one of the best ways to help people have a sense of belonging and be treated with respect in their schools. And it's shameful that the members opposite—

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

### Changes to Parental Leave Seniority and Salary Credits

**Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, we know that teachers work hard every day to make our children get a good education and are given the skills they need to be successful. We also know that teachers are professionals and many of them are juggling their careers with family pressures and active life as community leaders.

The Opposition Leader and the Conservatives think that teachers shouldn't receive fair pay. And their only plans for education are to fail kids, write off grade 9 boys as unteachable and cuts funding to our schools.

Will the Minister of Education please inform the House about an important change we are making to help teachers? Thank you.

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Flin Flon for that great question.

Of course, we're delighted that representatives from the Manitoba Teachers' Society are joining us today, in particular one very special member of that society who will be expecting her first child very, very soon.

But right now, Mr. Speaker, when she goes back to her classroom, her salary and her pension will be impacted because they aren't credited for their time at home. This means that teachers in Manitoba are being penalized for having a family and for having a children.

Today, we're going to right that wrong. That's why today we're announcing that we'd be changing the rules and making sure that teachers get full credit for their time at home with their children when on maternity leave and parental leave.

Our NDP government supports teachers, Mr. Speaker. I'm a teacher. We have many members

who are teachers in our caucus. We're always going to stand with teachers and we're always going to reject the cuts from the other side—

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

### **Independent Officer Reports Release of Reports**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** And I'm proud to be in the caucus that has the only leader who himself was a teacher, Mr. Speaker, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister).

Mr. Speaker, we know that this government loves to lock down information. We know that this government likes to redact information and try to hide information. But we certainly hope that wouldn't be the case when it comes to our independent officers.

The Auditor General has a number of reports that are yet to be reported to this Legislature, including reports on Keyask, including reports on the East Side Road Authority.

I want to ask for the support of the government that they will support those independent officer's reports being released prior to the spring election, if they're completed, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources):** Mr. Speaker, the—we have never shied away from providing information to members opposite.

In fact, they stand up every single day in this Chamber and read back their questions from freedom of information that we've provided them. Just the other day, they stood up and they read from a freedom of information of several years ago and tried to make it into an issue.

We are not—we've had more committee meetings, Mr. Speaker, in the time—in the last couple of years than the entire time, the nine years, I was in opposition. We have provided information. We've expanded FIPPA. We've put in whistle-blower legislation.

\* (14:30)

We've hired a new auditor. We've hired a new Ombudsman. We hired a new Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

And we will provide the information to this Chamber and continue to provide that information, Mr. Speaker. And we're not afraid to be transparent.

I do remind the member that his leader held their so-called speech from the throne by invitation only.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Not afraid to be transparent, but we've got hundreds of pages of blacked-out information, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has undertaken important work, important work to look at issues around Keyask and the East Side Road Authority. Those reports are due to be released in the new year.

But we've seen this government try to hide behind issues of a blackout period before that relate to the government and that relate to Crown corporations; they don't relate to independent officers. They've done that before, Mr. Speaker.

I want a commitment from this minister that they now have a different approach and that they're going to ensure that if an independent officer's report is done before the provincial election, that they're not going to try to stop it from being released using an act that doesn't apply to independent officers.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, I detect a bit of a pattern here. The first question asked by the Leader of the Opposition was, is there going to be an election on April 19th, even though it's in the statute.

We have functioned independently and provided more reports and had more meetings in the last several years than the entire nine years of the hiding of the former government, Mr. Speaker. We are holding six—or five public hearings before Christmas of members of this House. There have been more committee meetings this year than I think any other time in the history of the Legislature.

We have sat more days. We put in place rules that demand sittings. We put in place rules that demand reports, Mr. Speaker. Now members are saying, oh, do you think you'll put that out before the election?

They know what the date is; they know what our pattern is; they know what we've provided, and we have five committee hearings even before Christmas, Mr. Speaker. If they want to have hearings during Christmas, I guess we could try to do that.

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



### **Contract Tendering Practices Government Record**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister for MIT is responsible for the Tiger Dam cover-up, providing \$9 million of untendered contracts to his friend in the past.

We also know that the same minister attempted to circumvent Treasury Board's approval toward another \$5 million untendered, undisclosed, not made public, more Tiger Dam purchases from that same friend.

Other recent revelations show the minister has the same type of favouritism when it comes to awarding highway signs.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's actions reflect the lack of accountability under this Premier (Mr. Selinger): broken trust, broken promises.

Why are the NDP forcing Manitobans to pay more and get less?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely incredible that this member continues to go on about the highway signs.

He was wrong in terms of specification; the specification he referred to is actually an industry standard. He was wrong, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that it wasn't even included in the current tender. He was wrong in the fact that many of the companies that he'd referenced have received other contracts.

And the bottom line is safety. Whether it's fighting floods or having signs on our highways that meet industry standards, we make no apologies for our investments.

But the real question here, Mr. Speaker, is why isn't he asking about infrastructure? Maybe it's because we have record investment because we are the get-'er-done government.

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, there have been repeated requests to specify Avery Dennison as a supplier of ASTM type 11 as in other jurisdictions, but this minister continues to favour only his friends. This minister is the one putting false and misleading information on the record.

Mr. Speaker, \$9 million in untendered contracts awarded here, over \$2 million awarded there and an attempt to push another \$5 million past Treasury Board to award this minister's political allies.

The question all Manitobans are asking themselves are: Just how many more untendered contracts have the NDP been giving to their friends over the past 16 years? What else are they hiding?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that we've had three major floods in the last five years, and members opposite may have not had experience with that, particularly the Leader of the Opposition. I think in 2014 he went AWOL when it came to dealing with the flood. When he was minister responsible for EMO, he actually quit before the '97 flood, and he actually quit Manitoba politics during the '97 flood.

And members opposite may not have experience with dealing with floods, but when you're in a flood, Manitobans need flood equipment. We didn't hesitate to go to the suppliers that were out there, yes, to the Tiger Dams and the Aqua Dams and the HESCO dams and numerous suppliers of sandbags.

That's how you fight a flood. You don't go AWOL.

### **Seniors' School Tax Rebate Residence Exemption**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, this Selinger government has broken a multitude of promises, and Germain Roy is a victim.

Germain paid his tax bill in full on October 20th, promptly filed for his Seniors' School Tax Rebate, as is his right. Days later he received a phone call saying he didn't qualify because he had moved before October 31st. He maintains his residence in De Salaberry and for personal reasons had to rent an apartment in the city.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Roy is with us today in the gallery. Would the minister explain to him and all Manitobans why she continues to break promises to seniors?

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** The—I will remind the member and the—all members that it was this government that introduced the rebate, Mr. Speaker, \$235 last year; we doubled it to \$470. This means that over 6,700 Manitobans will be taken off the property tax rolls. This means that they'll be saving—last year, for example, they saved over \$11 million.

But I will make the offer to the individual, if he wants to meet with me afterwards, I would be more than happy to meet with him, Mr. Speaker.

### **Provincial Sales Tax Future Increase**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, trust and a person's word is very important.

In the 2011 election the Education Minister and his NDP colleagues promised every Manitoba family that he and his government wouldn't raise taxes. Shortly after the election, he and his Premier (Mr. Selinger) broke those promises and their trust with Manitobans. How can Manitobans trust or believe what is being said by this Education Minister and his Premier?

Mr. Speaker, will the Education and Advanced Learning Minister apologize and commit today that he will not be raising the PST to 9 per cent, or will he break that trust with Manitobans yet again?

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** You know, I'm proud to be Education Minister and I'm proud of our public education system. You know, 86 per cent of our kids are meeting or exceeding expectations, and our graduation rate in this province has gone from 72 to 87 per cent. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, our enrolment at our post-secondary institutions are at an all-time high.

But let's remember, Mr. Speaker, that when the Leader of the Opposition was in government, they cut education by 6 and a half per cent and over 700 teachers were fired.

On this side of the House, we're going to stand with parents, we're going to stand with teachers, we're going to stand with students. The Leader of the Opposition wants to abandon all those people; we're never going to let that happen.

### **Farmland School Tax Rebate NDP Election Promise**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** In the 2011 election campaign the NDP promised to increase the farmland education tax rebate to 100 per cent, another broken promise by a broken government.

Instead, the NDP has reduced the farmland education tax rebate by placing a cap on the rebate, a time limit with no appeal or penalty process, and a discriminatory rule which unfairly targets farm women landowners.

What promise will they break next?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** It's always a

privilege to have a question from the member opposite, especially when we talk about agriculture and the importance of agriculture is to the province of Manitoba. On this side of the House is a government that looks after those people and the opportunity of economic growth in the province of Manitoba, not only throughout rural Manitoba but the importance of import.

But I do want to bring forward the question brought forward by members opposite. The simple math is this: Members opposite were in power, what were they providing in school tax rebate? Zero. What was this side of the government giving today? It's 80 per cent.

Why is it so difficult for the member opposite to accept the reality of a financial benefit that this government brought forward? They chose not to.

### **Fiscal Management Government Record**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP continues its record of high spend, high debt, high tax, with new over-promises in the form of \$6 billion in new spending commitments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the context is this: They can't reduce spending; spending is up, not down. They can't reduce the deficit; the deficit is up, not down, leading to the first downgrade in Manitoba's history in 20 years. They can't address the debt; the debt has doubled in just six years.

\* (14:40)

In 2011 this Premier said he would not increase taxes, then he broke his word. He first widened the tax and then he raised it.

Will the Finance Minister just admit that this NDP is a broken government that has broken its word, it has a broken financial record and that its real plan is to raise taxes again on Manitobans who are tired of paying more and getting less?

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I'll remind the House the only individual talking about raising taxes is the member opposite.

We just talked about the fact that our government's providing a tax relief for seniors, Mr. Speaker. We're providing tax relief for volunteer firefighters.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I raised the issue—we made the announcement that our government will, in

2017, increase the threshold for small business so another 3,600 small businesses won't have to pay any taxes to this government.

I'll remind, though—I'll remind them that—all members that we have a piece of chocolate before us, provided by Constance Popp, who joined me yesterday at that announcement, who said incredibly powerful, great things about this government. She's very proud of what we've accomplished.

We've got the lowest unemployment in Canada, Mr. Speaker, we've got the strongest job growth, and we're proud of that.

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

### PETITIONS

**Mr. Speaker:** It is now time for petitions.

#### Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route— Information Request

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

And these are the reasons—background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by C. Auch, S. Martens, T. Dumesnil and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

The alternate route would've been a line that ran further east, avoided densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, has been signed by C. Legal, J. Legal and W. Sartoris and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line of 500 kilovolts of alternating-current transmission line set to be located southeast Manitoba and will cross the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by N. Widner, S. Chabot and R. Ouellet and many more Manitobans.

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* (14:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge Manitoba—the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria was used and the

reasons for selecting the preferred routing to the—for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition's signed by M. Vern, P. Desorcy and J. Barkman and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by R. Fournier, S. Hamm and J. Doerksen and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by T. Clincke, R. Miller, M. Verrier and many more fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 5,000-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by T. Yelinek, P. Yelinek, P. Knelsen and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) This line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower

heights expected to reach between 40 and 60 metres and will be located every four to five hundred metres.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

\* (15:00)

This petition is submitted on behalf of G. Therrien, J. Wiebe, T. Gareau and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers come in close proximity to the

community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition was signed by P. Courcelles, D. Courcelles, M. Rozitis and many other fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

(4) The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and

eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by J. Hiebert, A. Rodriguez, L. Moors and many other fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of

the line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by J. Gigolyk, R. Bremand, V. Verrier and many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Applied Behavioural Analysis Services**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention and ABA therapy for children with autism.

(3) The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 68 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 148 children by September 2016 despite commitments to reduce the wait-list–waiting list and provide timely access to services.

The current provincial government policy now imposed on the ABA service provider will decrease the scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven program and force children to go to school at age five before they are ready, thus not allowing them full access to ABA services promised them as they wait on their wait-list.

(5) Waiting lists, forced decrease in services and denial of treatment are unacceptable. No child should

be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the ministers of Family Services, Education and Advanced Learning and Health consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

This petition is signed by J. Brown, J. Klassen, Y. Neustaeter and many more concerned Manitobans.

#### **Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route– Information Request**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

\* (15:10)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation



to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria was—criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition is signed by D. Grabowski, B. Grabowski, S. Wastle and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 50 to 60 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

And this petition is signed by M. Dornez, E. Plourde, C. Watts and many other fine Manitobans.

### House Business

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** On a matter of House business first, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that'll be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business is the resolution on Manitoba Needs a Social License for Agriculture, brought forward by the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that would be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business is the resolution on Manitoba Needs a Social License for Agriculture, sponsored by the honourable member for Midland.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Steinbach, on petition.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and

eventually terminate in the same spot at the US border.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by L. Kanellis, M. Kanellis, K. Peters and many others.

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by A. Todd, B. Cleave, G. Keyes and many other Manitobans.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to moving on to grievances, as our annual open house will be held in the building later this month and as Youth Parliament will be using the Chamber over the holidays, I encourage members—all members to remove any personal items from their House desks.

Should members wish to recycle any Hansard transcripts or other papers, please place them in the blue bins at the back of the Chamber.

And while I'm on the subject of the open house on December the 12th, I would also like to encourage members to participate in the traditional MLA choir. Bring your best voices. I'm sure you will all enjoy the singing experience, which we'll be performing during the open house on the Grand Staircase.

So that's for information of the House.

### GRIEVANCES

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Pivniuk), on a grievance.

**Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are tired of the NDP's broken promises to reopen emergency rooms they have closed down. Many Manitobans have taken to highway medicine to seek critical care because of this NDP's dysfunction and mismanagement.

Rural Manitobans are told there will be no emergency-department services at Hamiota health centre for eight days this month alone. The fine

people of Melita will have no emergency-department services for over 20 days in the month of December.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the closure notice that's been posted at the Melita health district about the closures.

I was informed by a constituent of mine in—Hannah Minshull, who lives in the very southwest corner of the province in the town of Pierson with her husband, Dean, and their two boys, ages six and three. Both grew up in the area and chose to move back to Pierson to start and raise a family.

In the last few years, their medical needs changed dramatically. Dean was diagnosed with immune–autoimmune disease known as systematic 'sclerolosis,' a progressive and chronic tissue disorder. Her oldest son suffers from asthma, and her youngest son suffers from 'spamodic' croup.

\* (15:20)

On October 7th, Hannah's youngest son had a respiratory attack late at night. And their—at their dismay, the Melita emergency room was closed. After contacting the local facility to determine what was their closest option, they were informed that their closest available emergency room was in Virden, Manitoba, over 100 kilometres away.

They followed their normal routine and loaded up the boys in the car and headed to Virden. She could not even describe to us what that trip was like. As a mother, it was Hannah's biggest fear to not be able to protect her child. She contemplated called 911 several times along the trip to Virden, but could not bring herself to make the call. She kept on telling herself that by the time she gets an operator and a paramedic is deployed they would be already in Virden.

She informed me that the trip to the Virden emergency room ended well and that their little boy was able to go home and recover. However, this experience had made her realize that it will only take one unsuccessful trip to seal their fate, and this is not a risk she and her family were willing to take.

Hannah stated: I strongly urge everyone to take a look at our current health-care facilities and care in rural Manitoba and ask yourself this: If this was one of your loved ones, would this be an acceptable service for them?

People of Manitoba who are paying more and getting less are forced to use highway medicine because of this NDP government's waste and

mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, there's many, many cases like that in rural Manitoba. This is what we have to live through on a day-to-day basis when it comes to our loved ones, and this NDP government has not even addressed all these concerns and issues.

Will this Health Minister admit that she and her NDP government have lost the trust on Manitobans and what is clearly the people in rural Manitoba are not the priority of this NDP government?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are there any further grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

#### House Business

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, first on House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet on December 16th, 2015, at 11 a.m., to consider amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceeding of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet on December the 16th, 2015, at 11 a.m., to consider amendments to the rules, orders and forms of proceedings for the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. That's for information of the House.

On further House business?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Would you call the following bills: Bill 8 for second reading; then we would like to resume debate on second reading of Bill 4; following that we would like to call for second reading on bills 5, 3, 13 and 15.

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll be calling bills in the following order: starting with Bill 8, followed by Bill 4, Bill 5, Bill 3, Bill 13 and finally with Bill 15.

### SECOND READINGS

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

**Mr. Speaker:** So we'll starting with Bill 8, the—under second readings, The Employment Standards

Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave).

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross) that Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence familiale, congé en cas de blessure ou de maladie grave et prolongation du congé de soignant), now be read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services that Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave), be now read for a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

**Ms. Braun:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak to the House today about Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

Our government believes that victims of domestic violence should not have to worry about keeping their jobs as they deal with the effects of violence at home. We also know that a paycheque can sometimes be the difference between a victim leaving a violent relationship or staying.

This groundbreaking bill will provide employees experiencing domestic violence with up to 10 days of job-protected leave to use as needed, and up to 17 weeks of continuous leave in a 52-week period; this includes up to five days of leave to be paid by the employer. Paid leave is an important component of this bill as it will help provide victims with short-term financial stability during an initial crisis or an emerging situation, such as when a victim takes steps to leave an abusive relationship or relocates to a safe place. Employees will be allowed to take leave from work for specified purposes related to the violence they are facing at home, including to attend medical treatment or professional counselling appointments, access services for victims, obtain legal services or care for children affected by the violence.

Another important part of this bill is a requirement to protect the confidentiality of employees who take any protected leave, including domestic violence leave. Employers will be prohibited from disclosing information related to a leave except in limited circumstances. This provision is intended to protect personal information and personal health information of employees. As it applies to domestic violence leave, confidentiality can also be an important step to protecting the employee's personal safety, given that we know that incidents of domestic violence can increase when a victim is taking steps to end the relationship.

Businesses also suffer from the effects of domestic violence; reduced productivity, missed days and negative impacts on coworkers often create unseen costs for businesses. I believe the changes proposed by this bill will offset many of the existing business costs which have been estimated to be close to \$80 million per year in Canada.

The changes proposed by the bill build on Manitoba's Multi-year Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy introduced in 2012, which recognizes the importance of using a comprehensive approach to ending domestic violence. This is critical as domestic violence does not just affect victims or their immediate families, it also affects entire communities. And all Manitobans are touched by this violence directly or indirectly every day.

In addition to domestic violence leave, this bill establishes a new 17-week long-term illness and injury leave and extends the existing compassionate care leave provisions to ensure that workers in Manitoba can access corresponding federal employment insurance benefits without having to worry about losing their jobs. The federal EI program provides up to 15 weeks of benefits following a two-week waiting period for qualifying workers that are unable to work due to illness, injury or quarantine. But, presently, employees in Manitoba receive only up to three days of unpaid family leave which can be used for a personal illness. As a result, the more than 60 per cent of workers in Manitoba who do not have access to sufficient leave through a collective agreement or employment contract cannot access the available federal EI sickness benefits without the fear of losing their jobs.

Facing a serious illness or injury can be very stressful, and we believe that workers should have the opportunity to attend to their health-care needs and concentrate on their recovery without the

additional stress of having to worry about whether they will have a job to go back to once they are able to return to work.

The federal government also recently passed legislation that will extend the number of weeks of compassionate care benefits through the EI program from six weeks to 28 weeks effective on January 3rd, 2016. These benefits provide financial support to employees who are providing care or support to a family member that is critically ill. To ensure that employees in Manitoba can access these federal benefits without fear of losing our job, our government would extend the period of job protection for employees caring for a critically ill family member to 28 weeks.

Together these proposed changes will help ensure that workers who are facing difficult, sometimes life-changing situations are able to take the time away from work that they need for themselves and their families and return to work as productive and engaged members of Manitoba's workforce.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further debate on this matter?

Pardon me, questions for the mover of the motion? Sorry.

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Questions, yes.

What research was done to justify the necessity of this bill?

**Ms. Braun:** I thank the member for the question.

Some very substantial work was conducted by the University of Western Ontario in conjunction with the Canadian Labour Congress. And it was the first piece of research that was done that looked at domestic violence right across Canada, and that research was presented to me at—earlier this year, and it certainly provided the impetus to consider that domestic violence is a very difficult situation for people to be in, and it, in turn, also affects their work life, their family life and, in turn, employers also find that it flows over into the work situation.

So, from many aspects, this was a piece of legislation that needed to be presented, given that it is something that we're all aware of, many have experience, and certainly, many of us are touched by it.

**Mr. Smook:** Domestic violence is something that touches all of us, and it's—we wish we could eradicate that as soon as possible. Could the minister tell us who was all consulted during the creation of this bill?

**Ms. Braun:** I appreciate that question.

A number of different organizations were brought into the conversation, and we ended up with a number of organizations that deal with domestic violence, the 'mani'—pardon me—the consortium on family violence, an organization made up of 37 member agencies that provide supports to victims of domestic violence, members of the family violence research network. We also met with the Manitoba Federation of Labour a while back when they shared the CLC research with us.

We also went to the Labour Management Review Committee, and we consulted with them on the leaves for compassionate, as well as the illness—long-term illness and injury leave, as well as the domestic violence leave. We received consensus on the long-term sick leave and the compassionate care leave. We did not with the domestic violence, although there was a great deal of productive discussion that went along with it, and we certainly know that in the future was—we look at regulations that will augment this amendment act, that we will be further consulting both employers and the labour unions.

**Mr. Smook:** We all know how important employees are to small business. I mean, employees are the backbone of small business. What—was anybody consulted in the small-business community, like the CFIB or anybody like that? And what were their reaction or what were their comments?

**Ms. Braun:** I thank the member for the question.

The Labour Management Review Committee is one that has representatives from the Manitoba Employers Council, and I would imagine that there would be small-business members that are part of the Employers Council. So, certainly, they would've been part of—or their concerns would've been part of the discussions that would've occurred at LMRC.

**Mr. Smook:** In one of the areas under the confidentiality of information, the bill states that, maintain confidentiality in respect of all matters that come to the employer's knowledge in relation to leave taken by an employee under the—this division; and not disclose any information relating to the leave of any person except to employees or agents who

require the information to carry out their duties; where the employee has consented to disclosure of; as required by law.

I would ask the minister if an employee comes to an employer and states that they've been abused at home, domestic violence, would it be all right for that employer to let the police know. Is there something, a statute, where employers must inform the law, or is it part that the person cannot tell anybody?

**Ms. Braun:** I appreciate the question.

It is my understanding that it is not within the purview of the employer to share that information. That would rest with the person who's experiencing the domestic violence.

**Mr. Smook:** On unpaid leaves of two weeks, the employee must give—get a doctor's certificate, but yet, for a leave of 17 weeks, this certificate is not necessary. I would ask why would—you'd think that when a person's missing from work longer than on a 17 week, it would be more important to have proper documentation.

**Ms. Braun:** Thank you. It is my understanding that the employer may ask for it, but is not an obligation.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Can the minister indicate why there wouldn't be a duty to report by the employer if an employee has come to them and told them about a situation of domestic violence? Because you're putting the employer in a very difficult position where they have knowledge of something, that it might very well be a criminal offence, and not being able—the ability to disclose and perhaps be able to protect the individual.

**Ms. Braun:** Thank you; thank you for the question.

I would hesitate to think that it would be something that would be of advantage to the employee. I would think it would be, definitely, a safety issue for an employer to go ahead and report something like that without—on their own volition. I mean, that is something that I would consider a safety issue, and the victim would certainly be the one that would have to do that for themselves.

**Mr. Goertzen:** It sounded as though there is some conflict compared to the minister's previous answer where she indicated that information like that might be privileged or might be confidential, so there seems to be a conflict. If there is a—if there's not a duty to report, then they're putting the employer in a situation where they might be disclosing personal

information. On the other hand, they're putting them also in a situation where they're not disclosing something that might be—put the individual at risk.

**Ms. Braun:** I thank the member for the question, and obviously that his background in law is something that he is relying on, which I'm afraid I—I'm trusting that we have drafted legislation that looks at what other legislation has been done.

I think that this is also something that can certainly be brought up at committee. We can certainly look at this situation in the context of recommendations that might come out of committee.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** In clause 59.11(3)(f), there is included a reference to any other prescribed purpose. This is under Purposes for which domestic violence leave may be taken. And I'm just wondering if the minister would provide a little bit more clarity in terms of what she means by any other prescribed purpose. Does that have to be prescribed by a physician, or—what does prescribed refer to specifically?

**Ms. Braun:** Thank you, I appreciate the question.

We looked at a number of reasons that might be those purposes, and that was in—certainly, from—in conversations with organizations that deal with domestic violence. I think that this additional purposes would be something that we're—if in the implementation of the legislation, we discover there are other times at which leave might be required, this is something that certainly could, as we deal with regulations, we can look at other purposes that might be necessary.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister didn't answer my question as to whether it was specifically referring to a physician's prescription or whether it could be any, you know, reason at all or any purpose at all which might be prescribed in regulation or other.

If it's just any purpose, then it would seem to be a little bit overly vague, but do you intend to—does the minister intend to put this, actually, in regulation in some form of a list—a further list of purposes, or what is the intent?

**Ms. Braun:** Thank you. We've discussed this, and I think this may be an area in which regulation might be able to assist with it. So it's something that we have discussed and we're certainly willing to look into.

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Gerrard:** All right, well, I take it from the minister's reply that it doesn't specifically refer to the requirement for a physician prescription, as in prescribed, but that it could be much, much broader than that.

Let me go to the other area of confidentiality, which, I think from my read of this legislation, is a reasonable approach, but I would make this comment that in my experience people who are subject to victims of family violence or other problems can often find tremendous help and support from people in the workplace if the conditions are right for that to happen. But, for the most part, when that does happen, it's up to the victim herself to be able to talk to others in the workplace to the extent that she or he wants. And I presume that this confidentiality is not meant in any way to limit the potential for people in the workplace to help and support people who are victims of violence.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Ms. Braun:** —one of the things that we are looking at, the SAFE Work Manitoba and the five-year plan for injury and illness prevention is looking at the component of mental health issues. And, in conversation with the CEO from SAFE Work Manitoba, they're at the point where they're unfolding a tool kit for mental health, and certainly the issue of domestic violence and how training can be provided to employers as well as the employees within a workplace to deal with these issues is something that we're in discussion with, and they are very open to providing that kind of training and support through their education programs.

And I think that's one of the things that's very critical with this legislation as well, is to be working in conjunction with those who are helping create safe work situations through educational programs and training, and SAFE Work Manitoba is certainly one of those organizations that we will be working with closely to help them support and bolster what this legislation will do.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just make one further comment with respect to the support in the workplace. In my experience, individuals with mental health issues where there is a supportive workplace, it can make a tremendous, tremendous difference. And that, you know, that, it can, for example, make a difference between people in the workplace being understanding and supportive, or if people in the workplace have no knowledge of what is happening,

then sometimes they can be very—well, they can make comments which are, you now, inappropriate, but make them without knowing exactly what the circumstances are and can trigger problems and make things worse.

So getting the workplace environment optimum for people with mental illnesses, people who are victims of family violence or domestic violence, is, I think, tremendously important, and I urge the minister to have a look at this and make sure that the balance is right.

**Ms. Braun:** I appreciate those comments from the member opposite. I think that's one of the things that has been an important part of the discussion regarding this legislation, is to ensure that there's a lot of work done in the workplaces, and that's why SAFE Work Manitoba's going to be one of our important partners when we're developing that, obviously in conjunction with other organizations that deal with domestic violence.

I know that there are other organizations that are willing to work with SAFE Work, to provide them the insights and the guidance that might be necessary in developing the programs. So I thank you for your comments.

**Mr. Smook:** In a lot of small businesses, there are usually, it could be a, you know, a partner, a husband and wife working together—is there any provision in this bill to look at incidents like that?

**Ms. Braun:** Thank you very much for that question. I would believe that workplace safety and health legislation would cover anything that occurs as a result of having spouses working together.

**Mr. Smook:** When somebody hires a new hiree for replacement of somebody who's away on, say, a 52-week leave, whether it be on compassion leave—is there allowance in legislation for that employer to make an agreement with the employee, because it could be as little as 48 hours' notice of a return to work? Now, can the employer make an agreement with the new hiree that's replacing the person who's away on leave that would be upheld by the board of labour, or the Labour Board overturn any type of agreement that is written between an employer and an employee?

**Ms. Braun:** I thank the member for the question.

I guess it would depend very much on the situation and the circumstances and would be related to the kind of business it might be and the type of

employment contract that they might have. So it's not something I can give a specific answer to because I think it's very much dependent on the circumstances of the job as well as the employer.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for questions on this matter have expired.

Is there any debate on this matter?

**Mr. Smook:** Domestic violence is something that is near and dear to all of us. We don't like to see it happening in families, we would like to see it eradicated, and anything we can do to help this is important. We, on this side of the House, all believe we would support any measure that would prevent domestic violence and abuse from taking place in Manitoba and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, but what we'd like to see is this bill it's—I have no problems with the bill, but what I'd like to see is other areas looked at that maybe create domestic violence. I mean, in Manitoba here, we're one of the—just this morning it was stated 29 per cent of Manitoba children live in poverty. Manitoba leads Canada in the use of kids and food banks. We're rated in a lot of education as the bottom of the barrel, as 10th out of 10. Don't—doesn't the minister think that a lot of these areas should be looked at before, you know—and things introduced before we start—like some of the bills that are being brought forward, they don't seem to be as important as other bills that could be brought forward.

And a good example of this is this morning the member from River Heights brought forward Bill 215 to be debated, The Prevention of Interpersonal and Family Violence Through Education Act. Well, this bill was debated this morning and I think all bills have the right that they should go to committee. Now, I don't understand why this bill was put down. We have a—*[interjection]*—okay. Have they sent it up? Okay, my apologies—my apologies.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has one of the worst records when it comes to violent crimes against women. We nearly doubled the national average and have the absolute worst rate per capita of sexual assault in Canada. There were hundred and—there were 1,413 reported sexual assaults in Manitoba in 2014, while Winnipeg was tied for the second highest rate of sexual assaults of all major cities in Canada.

According to the Winnipeg Police Service's annual statistic reports, there were over 686 sexual

assaults committed in Winnipeg in 2014 along with 45 youth sex crime sexual assaults. The actual number of sexual assaults in Winnipeg is likely far greater than this, Mr. Speaker, but most sexual assaults go unreported. And I would ask the minister why are we not working at some of these other areas to—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order. We still have a little time left here where members, all members, are going to have the opportunity to debate this bill that's currently under discussion, Bill 8, and so I'm going to ask for the co-operation of all honourable members, especially the members of the government side here right now, because I want to have the opportunity to hear the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) during his debate on Bill 8.

So please give him the opportunity to debate, and the other members will the opportunity here this afternoon as well should they so choose. So please extend that courtesy.

The honourable member for La Verendrye, to continue.

\*(1550)

**Mr. Smook:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This NDP government has had 16 years and they've done nothing. They've—all they've done is create a lot more problems in our social system. We're rated like—our children use of food banks, the amount of children that are living in poverty, the amount—the education that our children are receiving in this province. Mr. Speaker, this government needs to look at prioritizing their bills, not just bringing bills forward before an election.

According to the hunger council 2014 food banks, Manitoba has the second highest percentage of children using food banks in Canada. Why is this? Why isn't the government doing something about that?

There's a lot of areas that this government totally ignores but yet when it comes to legislation to make themselves look good, they bring it forward. I brought forward legislation not that long ago but yet this government talked it out. They did not send it to committee. Those are areas, Mr. Speaker, that I think this government needs to do better with.

I know that our members on this side of the House look forward to working with the people of Manitoba, to providing them with a better education



to combat poverty, substance abuse and also domestic violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I, too, would like to put a few comments on the record regarding Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave).

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate first of all that we on this side of the House really do support any legislation or any initiative that might make it easier. And life is never easy for anyone that's been a victim of domestic violence, but that might make it just a little bit easier for them to be able to find a solution and a direction forward because we know, and I listened to the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard)—is it Fort Rouge?—this morning, speaking to a private member's bill, and was very—I heard very heartfelt and open comments about her experience as a family member. It's—having experienced domestic violence, and my heart went out to her this morning. Just wanting to say that, boy, I haven't had that experience but I really want to say thank you to her for sharing that, and I know it's not an easy thing to share.

Very often we all have things that—in our family we call them, sometimes, the skeletons in the closet, that we have difficulty talking about and sharing. And so I just commend her for having the courage to stand up and to share that because it also always gives us a little different perspective on who people are and why they have a passion and a desire to make a difference in certain areas of our community and our society. So I want to thank her for that, and I know that there are others, probably, in this House too that have had those kinds of experiences.

And there isn't anyone, regardless of political stripe, that condones or supports the abuse of anyone, whether it be domestic violence or whether it be abuse of children. Mr. Speaker, there isn't anyone that supports that, condones that or wants to see that happen. What we really need to do in this House is ensure that we are working collectively, and when someone comes up with a good idea, there shouldn't be that criticism of that person for bringing that issue forward, regardless of political stripe.

Mr. Speaker, there have been governments, and I've talked in this House in the last few weeks about some of the positive initiatives that were undertaken

with the Filmon government around domestic violence and crisis shelters and second-stage housing. All of those things were good steps in the right direction, and I would hope that everyone that sits in this House would applaud those kinds of things. They were—some of them were 25 or 30 years ago. We do know, from the member for Fort Rouge talking this morning, when she was experiencing that kind of angst within her family, that there were no supports available.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way, and we all know that there's a long way still to go. And every step that we can take in the right direction is a good step, is a positive step, and so we shouldn't be necessarily critical of each other for, you know, some of the things that have or haven't been done. I do know that legislation, though, isn't the only thing that is going to help because laws are only as good as the paper they are written on, and people do break the law. People do break protection orders. People do end up, and women end up, being killed as a result of violence, and people that don't obey the laws that they are supposed to obey.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can't, and we all know that we can't, prevent everything, absolutely everything that does happen, but we can take steps in the right direction, and this is one step. But I am concerned, and I am not going to be too critical, but I am going to say that we've had, you know, a government that's been in power for 16 years now and we are seeing some failures in the system and we are seeing some alarming numbers in the province of Manitoba. And I think it's incumbent upon all of us to recognize and to acknowledge them, not to try to make excuses for them, but to acknowledge them and say, let's collectively work and take steps forward to see whether we can't make things better.

And, Mr. Speaker, we do know that we have one of the worst records when it comes to violent crimes against women right here in Manitoba. We're nearly double the national average, and we have the absolute worst rate of per capita of sexual assaults in Canada. And those aren't things that we should be proud of. Those are things that we need to collectively be looking at solutions for.

We do know, too, Mr. Speaker, that there were 1,413 reported sexual assaults in Manitoba in 2014, while Winnipeg was tied for the second highest rate of sexual assaults in all major cities in Canada. According to the Winnipeg Police Service's annual statistical report, there were over 686 sexual assaults

committed in Winnipeg in 2014, along with 45 youth crime sexual assaults. The actual number of sexual assaults in Winnipeg is likely far greater than this, as most of those assaults go unreported, and that says something about the situation too. And I just had the opportunity, without mentioning any names, to speak to a young woman who was a victim of family violence in the last week, and she was reaching out for some support and wondering where to go and what to do and should she report it, should she lay charges, what would that do to her children and her family, where should she go. And I was at a bit of a loss because I could give her all kinds of advice, but, you know, I haven't lived that experience. So I can't give advice with any confidence that I'm giving the right advice.

Just like there are people, sometimes, that tell me with my family when I may have a problem or a crisis, well, you should do this or you should do that, when they don't have the same experience, the same problems or issues in their family.

Mr. Speaker, these women need to go to the proper support services, the counselling services, the crisis lines, that can give them the proper advice based on the experience and the expertise that they have to try to help those people.

And so that's what I was able to do. I was able to connect her to the right people and, hopefully, just hopefully, Mr. Speaker, she will find the right answers on what to do and where to go and how to move on with her life and with her children.

So we need those kinds of supports in place, and we know that they are there, but I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, whether there are enough of those kinds of supports for the kind of incidences we are seeing in our community.

\* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, I know that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) this morning brought forward a piece of legislation that would talk about education and prevention, and I think that we should all very seriously take a look at that legislation and, possibly, the government should take a very close look at it. I know they spoke it out this morning, but take a close look at it over the next short period of time during our break and maybe in the spring, with a co-operative effort, look at moving that on to committee and getting some input from Manitobans that might see us provide that education and that prevention.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, when we're seeing that we have some of the worst records for violent crimes against women right here in Manitoba, there needs to be some new things tried and some new initiatives undertaken. And education and prevention are very, very important pieces of that whole puzzle that needs to be examined.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the state of violence against women in Manitoba made national headlines last year after the death of Tina Fontaine as she was a CFS ward whose body was pulled from the Red River. And none of us, or I should say all of us were very saddened to hear of that discovery. And not long after the public was informed of the shocking aggravated sexual assault and attempted murder very shortly after Tina Fontaine, 16-year-old Rinelle Harper was—miraculously survived after being left for dead on the river bank after being assaulted.

Another victim, Mr. Speaker, was in this past spring where a 15-year-old Aboriginal girl in CFS care was found severely beaten and sexually assaulted in a parkade in downtown Winnipeg. She was abused by another child in Child and Family Services. Both children were placed in a hotel by the NDP government. And I know that the government has since taken some action, they've—over the years they have attempted to take action to get kids out of hotels, and it appears that has happened in the last short period of time and we're hopeful that we aren't going to see the return of kids in hotels and this kind of activity happening.

Mr. Speaker, poverty, racism and social injustice make our Aboriginal population here in Manitoba especially vulnerable to gender-based violence. And Aboriginal women are more likely than anyone else to be victims of violent crime. So it's incumbent upon us to work together. We need to work with Aboriginal leadership, we need to all be standing up together and saying domestic violence will not tolerated,. Let's work together, let's find the solutions. And, again, many of those solutions come with education, prevention, raising people up out of poverty, helping people find good jobs and become part of the community, helping parents to learn how to parent appropriately. How do we learn more on how to break the cycle of violence? And I know that that is not easy when, you know, families are exposed generation after generation to violence.

Mr. Speaker, we see poverty as one of the main contributing factors to family dysfunction and family violence, and we need to address the whole issue of

poverty here in Manitoba. And I don't think we've done a good enough job here and that needs to be changed.

Mr. Speaker, I think with just some of those comments I would like to indicate that we support measures that will help women and victims of domestic violence and I am hopeful that rather than the criticism that sometimes goes across this House, that we will collectively put our minds and our actions into ensuring that we work together as a province, as citizens and as neighbours. And I think by neighbours helping neighbours to—and knowing what's happening in their community they can—there can also be some of the supports that might be necessary to help families when they are in a position of crisis.

So, Mr. Speaker, I put those few comments on the record and I look forward to—although I may not do it from inside this Legislature for very much longer, I look forward to continuing to work with the community and in the community and do everything that I can possibly do to help end violence against women in Manitoba.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to have had the opportunity to put a few comments on the record.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to Bill 8. I am in support of this legislation. I think it's very important that we do what we can to address family violence and to help those who are victims of family violence.

The rates of family violence are far too high in Manitoba, and it speaks to the fact that there has been a lack of really effective measures taken in Manitoba to reduce family violence. And, of course, that's one of the reasons that I worked with Rana Bokhari on a bill which I brought forward, Bill 215, to improve the education of children in primary and secondary school with regard to understanding of family dynamics and family violence and reducing family violence.

I think that it is tremendously important that we are in a position where we're able to provide not only reduction, decrease in family violence—hopefully, at one point, eliminate it—but help for those who are victims of family violence and that's why I support this measure.

I think one of the important parts of this measure is that it speaks to victims of domestic violence, and there's almost always an assumption that such victims must be women. And it is interesting that I've

had a number of men come to me who are victims of domestic violence. And you would ask, well, you know, how could that be? I can give you an example: A man who has, you know, a condition like Asperger's syndrome, right, where this is a, you know, the brain works a little bit differently. He is sometimes more susceptible to being manipulated or being, you know, the subject of domestic violence.

And yet we generally assume that it must be the woman who is the victim, and an individual in that circumstance can have a very difficult time trying to convince anybody else that he's the victim instead of the other way around because you're in a situation of he says, she says, and it's—you know, I don't think I need, necessarily, to say any more.

The other sort of interesting circumstance, other than conditions which are—may affect brain health in one way or another, would be circumstances where you have somebody, a man who has a very gentle disposition. Sometimes, interestingly, men who are physically larger but very gentle and can get in circumstances where nobody, you know, would believe that the wife is the one who's perpetrating the violence. And yet this is sometimes the circumstance, that the very gentle nature of such individuals sometimes puts them in a position where they are being manipulated or accused of violence wrongly.

And I think we need to be aware of these issues as we are dealing with legislation like this and be able, as a society, to understand that things may not be exactly what we've seen the first time that we look at people in a family in terms of what is happening inside the family and inside the family dynamics.

\* (16:10)

I think it is important, and we've discussed this a little bit in the question and answer which already occurs, that the situation—because this is what we're dealing with, a situation in the workplace where one employee is getting a leave, maybe paid or unpaid, but has a leave of absence from work, and I think rightfully that's what should happen. But, if one is not careful, if there is not good to—communication, there can be tremendous resentment toward an individual who is not present at work and not showing up for reasons which are not explained. And I think that the importance here is not necessarily to, you know, breach the confidentiality of what's happening to that person but to somehow create a situation where people have enough understanding that they are sympathetic to what's happening and

not resentful. Because when you get the situation where you've got employees who are resentful of other employees, it can cause problems within the workplace.

And, although this is not the first thing that we would necessarily think about in these circumstances, that it's one of the things that we need to be aware of; that, in my experience, if there are people who have mental health issues or victims, if one can provide them with a work environment where they are protected, then that can be tremendously important to their own health and it can also be tremendously important to their own productivity in the workplace.

And so I think approaching this in a way which is sensitive to the positive and negative potential of this measure, that we can actually have measures which will work better. And I think that these measures can work very well. I'm very much in support of them, but I do think that there needs to be some support for employers in, you know, dealing with this in a way that is understanding and sympathetic and sensitive, rather than dealing with this in a way that can cause friction and problems within the workplace.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments about this legislation, I look forward to it going to committee stage, to hearing comments and discussion at that point, and it to proceeding and becoming law in due course, hopefully next spring.

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I'd like to put a few words on the record with regard to Bill 8, an amendment to the Employment Standards Code, which allows employees who are victims of domestic violence to have up to five days of paid leave, up to 10 days of leave in a continuous period or intermittently, as well as a continuous leave period for up to 17 weeks in a 52-week period.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that every single person in this Chamber knows of somebody or of a situation that has occurred in a family that has caused a family crisis, a family domestic situation of abuse. And I believe that each of us, if having the ability, would try to intervene or to try to make a difference.

I think that the information that was put forward by the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), as was indicated and eloquently supported by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), is important information that she's put on the record. It's—it educates all of us in the Chamber on the personal

challenges that individuals face when they are involved in a family dispute or a domestic violence. So not only do we—I have—do we have the opportunity as members of this Legislature to bring forward ideas on how to improve family units, we also have the opportunity to share our personal challenges as each of us have experienced and to ensure that we can bring forward legislation such as this to improve the family unit.

I want to thank the member for River East for bringing—or River Heights for bringing forward his legislation and his ideas with regard to education and prevention. And it's a missed opportunity, I believe, by this government to not include that in legislation that's going to be going forward to committee because I believe it would provide a more wholesome approach to domestic violence, to family crisis.

And I believe that when we're looking at the worst record in Canada with regard to violence against women, I believe that any legislation that you bring forward that helps prevent and educate individuals on domestic violence is just as important as bringing in legislation that will be punitive or hold people to account, Mr. Speaker. So we have to have a more holistic way of dealing with domestic violence, a true balance with regard to this issue, which, I think, is missing and should have been addressed in this session. So I believe that we've missed an opportunity.

There is so many issues with regard to domestic violence or family disputes that lead to a crisis situation. We have seen young women and men with eating disorders who are looking for treatment, Mr. Speaker, who are looking for supports. And it is known that a lot of individuals who suffer from eating disorders are victims of sexual assaults, and that's—I can attest to that as having a family member who is presently dealing with an eating disorder, who has got to the point of not feeling her life is worth living and is fighting for her life at this present time, and is a victim of a sexual assault.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that when you look at legislation like this, it was concerning when a question was asked with regard to a husband-and-wife business, a small business or a farming operation. We know that when there's crisis in your community or in your family, that leads to increased stress, that violence may be an indicator in the household.

There were a number of issues when I was first elected with regard to agriculture that put the family,

farm families in a very difficult situation. The BSE created a lot of stress within families. And I think that what we have to remember, a lot of these families that work as a team work in an isolated environment. Farm families live often on several acres and live several miles from a community. So, if there is an individual within that household who is being victimized, it is extremely difficult for that individual to get help because they would have to get to the community or get to a bigger urban centre to get supports.

And I do know that there are some young children who are witnesses or are subjects to violence who cannot get to town, cannot get to an urban centre to get those supports, Mr. Speaker. So, again, that's an education piece, a very strong and important piece that was raised by our side of the House earlier today and was being challenged by the government side. And I think he raised a very important issue, that it's not always that easy to get supports. It's not only difficult as an individual to ask for help, but sometimes there are more than just a personal interest or a personal challenge to get help, there's geographical challenges as well for an individual to get supports. And I think that has to be considered when you're looking at legislation such as this.

And I believe that the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) by including the piece on education and prevention for River Heights, I'm sorry—the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) brought forward this legislation, would have helped so many young people who live in rural communities who would have had the resources available to them and would have empowered them to then move forward to ask for support and help, Mr. Speaker. So I believe there was a missed opportunity, as I said earlier.

\* (16:20)

Another situation in the years that I've been elected, this was shortly after I was elected, and one of the members from rural Manitoba asked me to approach this young woman. She was from rural Manitoba, going to university in the city here, and she was assaulted—sexually assaulted by another student at the university, and this young woman didn't feel that she was capable of getting the support she needed to get help and to be believed.

She did tell the university that she was assaulted but was told to put it aside. She was not supported by the university when she approached them, so she went to her MLA, and that MLA felt that—this

individual felt that a woman MLA had just a different approach and probably could handle the situation a little bit differently, but I had total support from the MLA. But we worked together on this and we approached the university and we demanded that this situation get addressed, and that is probably one of the—I wouldn't call it a highlight, but I considered it an important piece in helping young women who leave home.

We all have children and they leave, you know, your nest, as parents. But when you have a child who's going to another community and trying to do better for themselves, you always fear that there's going to be an obstacle that may challenge their growth, and here was an opportunity for this young woman to go to university in a big city, coming from a rural community, and I believe that the work that we did to ensure that the university addressed the issue, that the male student was expelled and actually had to leave the country, that we empowered this young woman, who I track and I follow to this day, is a leader in so many areas of life.

And I believe that that came from us believing in her, No. 1, and actually providing her with the tools that she could challenge the status quo and challenge the individuals who didn't believe her, because, often, domestic violence or family violence, a lot of the challenge is just the inability to believe that people believe you. And I think that when you can empower an individual, say yes, I believe you; I support you, and I will help you find those supports, it's just critical, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that, again, this legislation could be a lot stronger and could provide a lot more of those supports.

Again, it's piecemeal and we want to see a bigger picture and a lot more supports available for individuals who are dealing with family violence, and I think by presenting these ideas today, I'm hoping that this legislation can and will become stronger when it eventually becomes law.

Mr. Speaker, by not having the supports in place for individuals who come forward who have said, okay, I'm strong; I'm going to fight this; I'm going to challenge the individual who's abused me, and not having those supports in place, by not having a justice system who will deal with the issue when it comes before them, who continually remand. What that does for a young person, and I'm going to speak honestly, I'm a victim of sexual assault, and I had to wait four years to get my complaint to the court system because they continued to remand, they

continued to play games, and when you play games with an individual who comes forward, it doesn't empower them; it degrades them. It empowers the perpetrator. It empowers them because they believe that eventually they will win. And I believe that this system in Manitoba has a lot of flaws.

So, when you have a legislator who can't get through the system, who understands the system and sees the flaws and continues to see the flaws, I believe there's a lot of work that has to be done, Mr. Speaker.

So I believe, Mr. Speaker, when there's any initiative that can empower the victim, it's so important, and I believe that there's a lot of work that needs to be done. This is just one piece. Bill 8 provides some of those supports, but it doesn't provide half of what is required for this government or this province to begin to address the issues. And, you know what, it shows we are a shameful province when it comes to dealing with supports for victims of violence. And this legislation that comes in at the eleventh hour before an election speaks volumes. It speaks volumes, and it doesn't show true support for the victims out there who have been fighting for years to see a better system.

We talked earlier about making sure that the supports are in place for families, and we talked about the grassroots and the need for families to have the basics. To have a family in northern Manitoba have more than eight people living in a house that has two bedrooms, give me a break. How can that be a healthy environment for any family—any family? To have families that will not support their young ones when we have over 10,000 children in care, and we continue to see a government that refuses to put into place recommendations that would make some changes in a positive way to the structure and the healthy environment of a family. Mr. Speaker, this legislation that we are going to support has a long, long way to go before I as a victim support—that we support one committee—that I as a victim would feel comfortable that it's going to provide those supports that are required.

Mr. Speaker, in 2014, there were 45 youth criminal sexual assaults. The actual number of sexual assaults in Winnipeg is likely far greater than this because people have to come forward, they have to be believed, they have to be supported, and when you have no supports and you have no faith—no faith—in what is being offered to them, why would

they come forward? So this is a drop in the bucket. I believe it's a drop in the bucket.

And, when we see 15-year-old children—babies, I call them—15-year-old children in the care of Child and Family Services who are pulled from the Red River, Mr. Speaker, who have been sexually assaulted, we did not take care of Tina Fontaine, no, bottom line, we didn't take care of her. We had the opportunity and we failed her. She was pulled from the river. If that was my daughter, oh my goodness, or anybody's child within this Chamber, how would we feel? How would we feel? When you learn of these situations and you have a daughter, I know how I feel. I hug her and I tell her I love her and, if anything ever happens, I want to know. And I think that any of us would feel that way with regard to a family member that would be put through such a situation and then thrown into a river to, you know, to get rid of her is just astounding.

\* (16:30)

We have 1,200 documented cases of missing and Aboriginal women between the years 1980 and 2012; that is not a record to be proud of, Mr. Speaker. What atrocities have these women faced in their life? How many opportunities did we have as a government to provide supports for these women, and how many times have we failed them? It's not about the 1,200 people, young women, that have been murdered or are missing; it's about how many times we had an opportunity to make a difference and we failed them. We failed them.

I have a good friend who's an educator. About five years ago, and I think I shared a little bit about this in one of the debates, but she was beaten and I swear that her husband would've killed her if it—the situation hadn't happened in a hotel room where we were all staying as hockey parents. She would've died; there's no doubt about it.

She's not a dummy. She has—she's a strong woman, a very strong woman. But when this happened, and she called for me to come down to see her in the lobby, and she asked if I would take—go with her to the hospital, and which I did, she was a broken woman. She had missing teeth, she was covered in blood and all she could say was, I can't believe he did this to me, I can't believe he did this to me; what am I going to do?

This is a woman that has two children that love her dearly, same age as mine. She's a teacher, so

she's educated and she just faced the most horrible situation in her life.

I stayed with her for about a week and then convinced her—helped her find a place to live outside of the home. And then we went to her home to pull furniture.

You know what was just outrageous? My husband and I and another couple were moving furniture out of her house in rural Manitoba, not knowing that the husband had been released from jail. Nobody called her. No one told the wife. Here we are, feeling fairly safe, we thought, because we thought he was in jail, moving furniture out of her home in rural Manitoba and no one bothered to tell her that her husband was out and could've been on in his way out to the farm. And he has guns, Mr. Speaker. He carries, you know.

So when we—after we'd heard that, I was just outraged. I thought, how could this possibly happen? How could the victim not know when the perpetrator was being released? And she lives in a little—in a—not in a community; she lives all by—well, isolated, 15 minutes from Souris. So if she would've been at home by herself, if she didn't have the supports in place, that we were there for her, who knows what've—could've happened. So there's the weaknesses, there's the challenges.

We have what is called Victim Services. We have Victim Services officers who need support, who need help. We have a Victim Services officer who works out of Brandon, who covers the area all the way up to Saskatchewan, past Swan River. You know, I have a riding that I think I—it's almost impossible to represent. Can you imagine being a Victim Services person and covering an area that is almost like three constituencies in rural Manitoba?

She was—she didn't, you know, I'm not blaming her for not calling my friend because she was—she's overworked, she's overwhelmed, and when she found out that this had happened, she was devastated.

So, like, what I'm saying, and I guess what I'm trying to get at through my points raised today is Bill 8 is great. But, boy, every single department that has a finger on this file better step it up. Justice, Education, Family Services, every single one of these departments better step it up, and there better be regulations in place to make sure that everybody's on board, because if you have a bill like this that comes forward, that raises hope, there's an expectation that things are going to change. And,

again, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) had a—we had an opportunity to build on this legislation, and we didn't. So shame on us, Mr. Speaker, for not making this better—position and a collaborative or collective position on domestic violence.

And, on that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stop, but let me just say that this is probably one of my last debates that I'm going to have in this Legislature. But it is one of the most important debates because we cannot take care of our families in our province, then we have to—have a lot of work to do. We have a lot of things we have to be accountable to. And, in the next election, I'm going to be looking at this government, and they better be—better be—providing policies and supports in place, and this bill better have really good regulations in it because I'm going to be back here as a citizen. And I will make sure that victims are treated with respect and that perpetrators are treated as they are, which are criminals, and they need to be treated that way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden):** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's going to be a hard act to follow after this one. She did such a great job and she's so passionate at what she does and we're really going to miss her as a colleague of—and she's therefore they—for the person who's been the victim of domestic assault.

Mr. Speaker, I'm—I'd like—I'm honoured to put some words here today on this bill, Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act. Again, this allows employees of—who are victims of domestic violence to have up to five days paid leave and up to 10 days of leave of a continuous period of—as well as continuous leave periods up to 17 weeks in a 52 period.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the bill aims as to help employees to work that experience physical and mental 'dismestic' violence at home. The PC caucus supports the measure that will help prevent domestic violence and abuse by taking place in Manitoba and around the world. However, we have—we would like to have this NDP government make much more significant efforts over the next 16 years to help educate our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I was—at a young age, I remember I had—my dad's sister, who was living in Dauphin; she actually experienced domestic dispute. I remember one time getting up at the farm, and my grandma

actually lived in the same yard as we did, and the next thing you know, I saw some of my cousins in the yard. And I was wondering—I went up to them and I was wondering what brought them to the area, back in to stay at my grandma's. And it was kind of an odd time because it was actually a weekday—a weekday that they should have been in school.

And I remember the story well is that a couple of my family members went to pick up my aunt because she was being assaulted and physically abused at—with her husband at the time. She had four children, and I remember the stories that they told us about how they had to support—one of my oldest cousins who was the only boy in the family, had to help protect his mother because of a domestic dispute of—that they had, an argument.

My uncle, at the time, was an alcoholic, and he'd come home after drinking in the bar and socializing and having good time and come home and assault my—beat my aunt up. And, at a young age, you know, you kind of wonder, because I was so probably blessed, living on a farm and we actually worked so hard just to get everything done; we worked as a team. And I was so fortunate not to have to worry about my dad coming home and beating up my mother or our safety as individuals. You know, he was always there for us, and thank God, we—I didn't have to experience that.

But, having to listen to what my cousins had to talk about with domestic dispute, and I think what this bill does not address was the education. And the unfortunate thing was my aunt would go back many, many times. He would come back sober and he would actually convince her to come back, that he would change. And so many times, this probably was about five times that we were told, until she finally made a decision that—and to have the strength to say, like, this is enough. And, again, it took years, but the main thing was her children had to be part of that and it was the years that—the most important years that she had—that they were growing up with, they had to be exposed to such abuse by my uncle.

\*(16:40)

And I think with—what's so important is that we're seeing more and more of that in Manitoba, and, especially, we have the—double the national average of domestic disputes per capita, of sexual assaults in Canada. And the thing is, I think with my aunt's situation, there could have been a—with more education and actually having more resources to help people and individuals like that, and when, again,

I think it all comes down to social economics. Social economics in—up for our northern communities or Aboriginal communities, if they had bigger opportunities and people felt that they don't have to be part of that abuse, you know.

I always feel that my wife, who—her mother always told her that: get an education. Get an education so that you don't have to depend on your spouse in case situations like this arise, that a person is abusive or able to control a person. And she always told her daughters that—my mother-in-law always told her daughters is to make sure you get educated and have a good social economics because the fact is you have the power to leave a situation. And I believe that my wife and I, we have a relationship that's based on not independence of each other, independence of each other or are dependent on each other, but we call it interdependence. And we believe in each—we need each other's support and both helping out with the raising the family. And we both contribute to the household. And—but at the same time, if there was ever a situation, you know, my wife can continue prospering and raising the family if something ever happens to me—or, you know, I think every family—we need to educate our—everybody in this community, like, in our province, about social economics and how being empowered and to have that better opportunity to leave a situation of abuse. And I think, also, the government actually has to take a stand, too, of educating and helping with resources for domestic disputes and also sexual abuses.

You know, so often, we have—we've heard university students who—you go to parties, and with different— alcohol, and sometimes you see, you know, date rapes and also people giving drugs; they're putting some pills in someone's drink. You know, we fear—it's horror stories about this too. And I think it's important to educate our youth in schools about domestic disputes and domestic violence and sexual assaults, and I think that starts from the education level and, I guess, empowering our youth, our young females out there and our Aboriginal individuals who, again—it's—they're sometimes five times likelier to be abused in a domestic dispute.

And, like I said, it all comes down to social economics. I think if we give people opportunities—you know, build the economy, encourage growth up in our northern areas with mining and, you know, when it comes to exploration of mining, giving people trades, educate them and be able to contribute to society. I think this would actually have—empower



people to get away from these situations of domestic dispute in our society.

Mr. Speaker, we as a party, we—I agree with my colleague from the Riding Mountain constituency and my—and the—my colleague with River East and also the—what the River Heights Member of the Legislative Assembly has indicated about how we should be more engaged. We have an opportunity here to really work with bringing these numbers down when it comes to domestic disputes and sexual assaults.

I can't imagine, you know, all of a sudden, you get a phone call, what has happened to some of these Aboriginal women who have been, you know, found—their bodies have been found on—in the river, Red River, and having—being one of the family members having to get that phone call to say that their loved one has been killed by someone and—or sexually assaulted. I can't imagine what the last moments of that individual had to go through having to be in a situation. And I think, too, you know, we have so many kids in CFS, you know. This is where we need to find out why these kids are in CFS and what we can do to help the families to give them guidance, to give them support, to educate them, to say, look, this is probably, in a lot of cases, it's a cycle and it continues and how do you get out of that vicious cycle? And I think with education and guidance and helping and actually getting leadership, leadership in these communities would be the biggest thing that we could do for these individuals.

Leadership comes through taking a role and working with your individual residents in your communities, and especially in the First Nation communities. This is what a lot of these people need, is to have a role model to say, look, we have zero tolerance for this domestic dispute, and by educating these individuals, this is going to be so much opportunity to bring those numbers down and so that we are not, in Manitoba, one of the highest per capita—with the highest victimization of our youth and our females in our society.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to maybe pass it on to my colleague who can also add some more words on the record for this bill, which, again, we got to make sure that we review this, do it right, you know. We can't just all of the sudden pass a bill because of the time frame. You know, we've got to make it right. We've got to do it correctly, include more people in the committee—at the committee levels and listen to Manitobans, what Manitobans

really need in—that would make this bill so much more important and go forward in making sure that we don't lose sight of how we can change our society and have better results.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** And it's a pleasure to rise to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 8 and amendments for the Employment Standards Code.

Let me be really clear up front. There is no circumstances whereby any of us should be tolerant of domestic violence. Certainly there are many causes. Some of the times it's addictions issues, sometimes it's mental health issues, many times it's poverty issues. But changing this specifically without dealing or trying to deal with any of the underlying causes is a little akin to parking the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff and saying, oh, we're dealing with the problem. You're going to pick up a lot of bodies and a lot of injured people, but you may not ever deal with the root causes. I think that we really should talk a little bit more about dealing with the root causes.

I commend my friend from River Heights for the bill he brought forward the other day on education process because certainly education helps deal with many of the underlying problems that are contributing to this.

Now poverty, in particular, seems to be underlying many of them. And we know, and I brought that issue up earlier today in question period, that child poverty in this province is reaching the critical level. It continues to rise, 29 per cent of our children living in poverty now and many more on the edge. And poverty limits your options in life. Pushes children to make—when they are approaching the age of maturity, and the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) made reference to children having children and babies having children. They make bad decisions. They think, well, perhaps my way in the future is to go out and have a child and be part of the family cycle and, hopefully, that things will turn out well for me and I'll find the right man and he will support me. And yet, we know that that's not always the case, Mr. Speaker. Some of the agencies that deal with children involved in Child and Family Services have come to me with the statistic suggesting that 41 per cent of the children that currently are in Child and Family Services had at least one parent in Child and Family Services, and that tells me very clearly that we are perpetuating a cycle here. That is cause

for concern. We are not dealing with the root problems.

Now education may not deal with the root problems alone, but it's certainly a powerful first step to do that and I think it's something we should have had a much more constructive and positive discussion about earlier today and maybe we should have brought that bill forward.

\* (16:50)

Now this one actually raises a few questions in my mind. I mean, I have been an employer and, unfortunately, have been in a position of being an employer of someone who came to work looking quite abused. And we, you know, take them aside and say, you know, what has happened here? Have you had a physical accident? Are you okay? And, of course, very often they don't want to talk about what has gone on. But if you're gentle enough with them and emphatic enough with them, they'll often share the problem with you, and someone wouldn't want you take any action.

Where does that leave an employer if the worker come—if the worker identifies that there's been abuse and the worker doesn't want to take any action? The employer knows something is wrong; does he now have a legal obligation? And it was referenced earlier in one of the questions. It leaves you in an uncertain position and certainly something that I think we need to clarify and perhaps we'll get to do that when this bill goes to committee. But I think the minister needs to think about that answer. She needs to have an answer ready because the question of legal obligation, one that drives us very often, especially as employers, both in family businesses and on individual small businesses, it is something that needs to be resolved.

And assuming that, and then what we did in this case, one worker came to work looking quite abused, and we, of course, give them time off to recover. That's fine. We continued to pay them. That was our choice to do so. We didn't need any piece of legislation to know what the right thing to do was. And we were certainly very happy that we did that. And they—and the worker did come back to work eventually and did, in fact, move on to another household because the household that that person was in was obviously too violent.

But the violence in that 'househide' was driven not by poverty, it was driven by addictions issues. And in that case, it was alcohol addiction, but it

could be addictions to any problem. And you know, you say to them, well, can we get you help, can we find anyone to help you deal with the family crisis, can we get you family counselling?

Family counselling is hard to come by, especially when you're living on a reserve as that, as the case was, because all counselling is at the discretion of the chief and council. The admission that there's a problem is very difficult to get and certainly then they have to reach out and bring in and it takes them a while through to do this process, to bring in a third party to help with the counselling. That just never happened, Mr. Speaker, and it leaves you wondering if they're ever going to be any resolution to this problem, if we're just going to put the cycle off for another year.

We must confront this problem, Mr. Speaker, and parking the ambulance at the bottom of the hill is a long ways from confronting this problem. It is simply putting a band-aid on the injury, perhaps a bit of a crutch and helping to move along. And maybe a few of them, maybe a few of them will find the supports that they need to deal with the problem but that's not in any way connected to this bill; that is just good luck or persistence on someone's part which I think is what we need more of.

We need more of someone saying: we need to deal with this problem; we are not going to put it aside; we are going to find the supports that are necessary; we are going to make whoever's responsible, whether it's an individual, or whether it's an organization that is pushing the problem aside, pretending it doesn't happen, we're going to make them stand up and take responsibility for that.

So I guess it's, in some ways, it's a useful bill. Perhaps it'll identify a few people and—that will self-identify and perhaps some of them will be able to take steps to get themselves in a good situation, a better situation. It is a long ways from the right solution, Mr. Speaker.

I am disappointed in some ways that this was the best priority, but I suspect from some of the bills we've been seeing the last little while, they're not really designed for Manitobans in general. They're designed for an election campaign, something that we want to talk about and not necessarily want to deal with. We want to look like we're doing something; we don't actually want to do something, Mr. Speaker.

And, in fact, I guess we'll see when we look at some of the bills that were introduced today, one being custom adoption and the other one being the Children's Advocate, which is the second Children's Advocate bill we've seen this year. I don't know what happened to the first one. I guess it just fell off the Order Paper when we started a new session. Don't know why it was even there because it was such an inappropriate bill and we certainly spoke to that, Mr. Speaker.

But I know that there's desire to move along on this one and so I will limit my remarks, but I cannot help but think we are not dealing with the underlying causes on this one, Mr. Speaker, and we certainly need to look beyond putting band-aids on the problem.

We've had 16 years for—of a government putting Band-Aids on the problem, and during which time the number of kids in CFS has risen and risen and risen. The number of—the amount of—number of children impacted by child poverty continued to rise all of that time. The number of children, and people, using food banks continued to rise during all of that time. I think it's time to put the bandages aside and deal with the injury underneath.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there 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 Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave).

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

\* \* \*

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

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, insofar as we will be heading into a recess over the holiday season, I'd like to take the opportunity at this time to thank all of the clerks and the people that work in this building for all of their hard work in helping us to do our jobs, all the members of this Chamber, the House leaders in

particular for their co-operation and assistance in order to try to move matters forward; I appreciate the trust that we've developed. And I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your wisdom and your acuity in dealing with the matters in this House and for the—and for all of the work that is done behind the scenes that isn't always recognized.

And I wish a very happy and a merry holiday season, good luck and good health to everyone and their families. And when we reconvene after recess that then we'll come back with good spirits and in good health and thankful for all of the bountiful gifts that we in this province are fortunate enough to enjoy.

**Mr. Speaker:** Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), on House business?

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** If I could add to the member's comments, I also want to wish all the members a great holiday, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, and I hope that you get time to spend quality time with your families and your loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your guidance, as always, in this session and, of course, with your—the help of your able staff in the Clerk's office and all of those who assist us in helping us do our jobs and making us probably look better than we usually are. As legislators, we appreciate it very much.

I also want to wish the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) well. We thank him for his assistance in all of the House stuff as well and, of course, the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak). We appreciated working closely together to ensure that we can have our disagreements but the House operates in a way that Manitobans would expect and respect.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The—Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join the other House leaders in thanking yourself, the staff of the Chamber, all those who work and support us, whether inside the Chamber or outside, in Hansard and various other places, security people, and wish everybody well over the holiday season, and enjoy family and friends and have a good time and come back refreshed when we come back in the new year.

**Mr. Speaker:** Very good, very good. No doubt practising for the Grand Staircase performance.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank honourable members for their work during this fall sitting. I think we've made great progress here, and

thank you very much for your co-operation and your guidance on so many different matters. And I, too, would like to thank the table officers for their work, and the Chamber attendants and staff here as well.

Thank you. It's much appreciated.

And before we recess, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind honourable members that they

are also invited to a reception in my office after the House rises this afternoon, and everyone is welcome to be there.

And the hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on February 24th, 2016, and/or the call of the Speaker.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 3, 2015

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>		Indo-Canadian Community Jha	491
Bill 16–The Children's Advocate Act Irvin-Ross	487	Tax Increases Mitchelson	492
Bill 201–The New Motor Vehicle Buyers' Rights Act Maloway	487	TEDxKildonan Conference Braun	493
Bill 17–The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act Allum	487	<b>Oral Questions</b>	
<b>Tabling of Reports</b>		Provincial Election Pallister; Selinger	493
Financial Statements of Red River College, June 30, 2015 Allum	488	NDP Leadership Convention Pallister; Selinger	494
Assiniboine Community College, Annual Report, 2014-15 Allum	488	Legislative Assembly Employees Pallister; Selinger	494
Manitoba Text Book Bureau, Special Operating Agency, Annual Report, 2014/2015 Allum	488	Small-Business Tax Threshold Stefanson; Chomiak	495
Office of Fire Commissioner, Annual Report, 2014-2015 Braun	488	Health-Care System Driedger; Blady	496
Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation, Second Quarter Report, 2015-2016 F. Marcelino	488	Child Poverty Rates Wishart; Irvin-Ross	496
Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, Quarterly Financial Report, September 30, 2015 F. Marcelino	488	Children in Care Wishart; Irvin-Ross	497
<b>Ministerial Statements</b>		Seniors on Fixed Incomes Mitchelson; Saran	497
National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women Irvin-Ross	488	Hydro Committee Questions Eichler; Robinson	497
Driedger	489	Mental Health Services Gerrard; Selinger	498
Gerrard	490	Changes to Parental Leave Pettersen; Allum	499
<b>Members' Statements</b>		Independent Officer Reports Goertzen; Chomiak	500
International Day of Persons with Disabilities Gaudreau	490	Contract Tendering Practices Helwer; Ashton	501
Andy Thiessen Friesen	491	Seniors' School Tax Rebate Graydon; Dewar	501
		Provincial Sales Tax Ewasko; Allum	502
		Farmland School Tax Rebate Pedersen; Kostyshyn	502
		Fiscal Management Friesen; Dewar	502

**Petitions**

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route–  
Information Request

Mitchelson	503
Graydon	503
Piwniuk	504
Wishart	504
Cullen	505
Smook	505
Schuler	505
Eichler	506
Pedersen	506
Ewasko	507
Martin	507
Briese	508
Friesen	509
Goertzen	509
Helwer	510
Applied Behavioural Analysis Services	
Rowat	508

**Grievances**

Piwniuk	510
---------	-----

**ORDERS OF THE DAY***(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****Second Readings**

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

Braun	512
Smook	513
Goertzen	514
Gerrard	514
Mitchelson	517
Rowat	520
Piwniuk	523
Wishart	525

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>**