

First Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 24, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Annual Report, 2015, for the Manitoba Office of the Commissioner of Law Enforcement Review Agency and the Annual Report for the Provincial Court of Manitoba, 2014-15.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Brooklyn Walker

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good afternoon to my fellow members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to address the Chamber.

Today I rise to share the story—a story of bravery and instinct of a young woman from Ste. Anne, Manitoba, Ms. Brooklyn Walker. On August 29th, Ms. Walker, along with her sister and brother, were swimming at the Clarion Hotel in Winnipeg. While there, her instincts kicked in and she found herself swimming to the other side of the pool, where a terrible situation unfolded. A young girl in the deep end of the pool was in critical distress, and other swimmers were yelling save her, save her. Ms. Walker acted with great courage and quickly worked to remove the girl from harm's way and resuscitated her. After performing CPR, a skill which she was fortunate to learn the basics of through

Steinbach Regional Secondary School, the little girl opened her eyes. Following an assessment by the responding paramedics, the young girl fully and physically recovered from this tragic experience.

Ms. Walker, who is with us here in the gallery, is a true hero. Her determination to bring the young girl to safety and save her shows what a little faith and a quick response can do. Since that day, Ms. Walker and the young girl have spent many hours together, and I have no doubt it will be a lifelong friendship.

Any situation where there's a life—where a life is almost lost is a tragic experience. From her family and friends, swimmers and hotel employees, Ms. Walker's actions on August 29th are truly commendable. Today, as a member of the Legislative Assembly, and on behalf of all honourable members, I thank Ms. Walker for her quick decisions and actions that saved this young girl's life.

United Nations Day

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): October 24th is United Nations Day, the perfect day for us to learn about, and recognize, the UN's influence in our province. Here in Manitoba, many organizations promote the ideals of the United Nations. Groups like the Winnipeg Model United Nations Assembly give people the opportunity to replicate general assembly proceedings while meeting like-minded people with similar interests. Buildings like the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which is located in my constituency, are everyday reminders of our history as a nation, and our role in creating peace in the world.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites are all symbolic of our history. Manitoba has buildings and parks that have been honoured by the UN, including the UN peacekeeping monument, which is located here in Memorial Park, as well as several UNESCO-associated schools, including École Laura-Secord in Wolseley and Niji Mahkwa School in my constituency.

The United Nations efforts have helped preserve our history. The world is not perfect, and we still have a long way to go before achieving peace for all nations. It is important that we all work towards peace and understanding, and strive to build a better

future, which is possible and attainable in our lifetime.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Child Abuse Prevention Month

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I rise in the Legislature today to speak about Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month is a time to reflect and take action by openly discussing child abuse and violence. What goes on behind closed doors has stayed there for far too long. When it comes to children, it's everybody's responsibility; the entire community is responsible for keeping our children safe.

Our new government has embarked upon making many changes that will benefit both present and future generations by implementing further protections for our children. This has already begun with The Protecting Children Act, which makes it easier for government departments, child and family service authorities, community service providers and law enforcement agencies to share information and collaborate when dealing with victimized and at-risk children. This legislation is a necessary first step towards the establishment of a made-in-Manitoba 'collaborative' model that puts children first.

One such recent change is to regulate governing legal aid, which will help make justice more accessible and timely for low-income Manitobans. Access to justice for all Manitobans is a cornerstone of our legal system, and this change will help improve the process for individuals who require legal aid. Timely delivery of the services provided by Legal Aid Manitoba in areas of child protection, family, immigration, poverty, public interest and criminal law is fundamental to a fair and balanced justice system.

Providing the best possible care to children, families, seniors and patients is the most fundamental role of government. This requires ongoing vigilance and support, while protecting jobs of the dedicated front-line workers who provide those services.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hunter Lee

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, today I would like to recognize Hunter Lee, a remarkable young man in my constituency. Hunter's in grade 12 at Hapnot Collegiate, and he's also a world-class athlete.

This past April, Hunter qualified for the under-17 Team Canada wrestling team at the cadet wrestling championships in Calgary. He practised tirelessly all summer and trained everywhere from Japan to Colorado with other top wrestlers.

*(13:40)

In July, Hunter completed—competed for Team Canada in Peru at the United World Wrestling Pan-American Championship, earning himself a bronze medal. Hunter went on to compete at the United World Wrestling Cadet World Championship in Georgia in September, and his performance was exceptional. It was Hunter's very first major international competition in the cadet category, and even though the competition was stiff, he managed to hold his own.

Time and again, Hunter has proven himself to be an exceptional athlete and a fantastic role model for the youth in our community. Despite his own busy training schedule, Hunter still finds time to volunteer as a coach for the École McIsaac wrestling team and to promote the sport in the community. Even with these accomplishments under his belt, Hunter remains grounded and humble, and I know the people of Flin Flon are incredibly proud to have him represent our community.

Congratulations, Hunter, on all your success, and we hope to see you in Tokyo in 2020.

Small Business Saturday

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): As a former small business owner, I am proud to recognize that this past Saturday was Small Business Saturday, which is an event promoted every year by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB, an organization which is always looking out for my interests in my previous life as a grocery retailer.

Small Business Saturday is about honouring local, hardworking small businesses. I think we can all agree that small businesses bring life to our communities and are something we can be proud of regardless of political stripe.

Imagine the most vibrant street in your constituency without its small businesses, and I think you'll immediately understand why they are so important. A street like that would be far less interesting, less of a meeting place for the community and contribute less to the economy.

Of course, big companies tend to grab most of the headlines, but according to Stats Canada,

small business, that is, businesses of less than 100 employees, employ 69 per cent of the workforce. So it is essential that we make things easier for small business to let them thrive. We also have to remove obstacles to growth so that some of those small businesses can expand and hire more people.

I also want to draw members' attention to a website, shopsmallbiz.ca, which allows you to search for the independent business in your community. You can also find out about events and leave reviews for individual businesses. If you're a business owner, listing there is completely free.

I'd encourage all of us here, next time we go shopping, to consider shopping and supporting our local, independent businesses.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Steinbach Regional Secondary School, 50 Grade 9 students under the direction of Ward Kay and Scott Reimer. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health.

On behalf of all honourable members here, we'd like to welcome you to our Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations Rules and Practices

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): First, I would like to congratulate, on behalf of our colleagues—of my colleagues from the official opposition party, congratulations to our colleague, the new interim Leader of the Liberal Party.

Madam Speaker, this Conservative government won't recognize it has a problem with transparency or accountability. On Friday, we were witness to a sad series of events. The government tried to undermine the long-standing tradition of how committees run. It tried to take it over and turn it into a partisan exercise, and when it couldn't get its way, the government shut down the committee because it didn't want to answer further questions.

Will this government stop its partisan attack on our parliamentary tradition?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I am also very pleased on behalf of this side to offer our congratulations and encouragement and support to the new interim Leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba. We think that she is well equipped to do the job. I also wanted to go a little further if I could, Madam Speaker, and say that her pleasant demeanour, her winning smile and her personality are also precious items here because they are so scarce. And I know that she represents—she has shared with her stories aspects of her life very openly with people in this Chamber, and I think that that is—that openness is to be desired. It is something we are doing our best to encourage and support as we take on the challenges of being a new government in this province, something that was, sadly, missing for the last number of years.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: Manitobans want an end to partisan games and they want a real commitment to accountability. They want a government that will respect our parliamentary traditions. They do not want a government that will bring the worst of the Harper-style tactics of secrecy, partisanship and obstruction.

Will the Premier commit to ending partisan games and to continue respecting our long-standing parliamentary traditions and practices?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed, at times I would say the most of any of my experiences as an elected official, the work that we have been able to accomplish in committees of the House, whether federally or provincially.

And I say to the member opposite that I think it is very important that members in committees are respected and given the opportunity to express their views fully and to share their circumstances, their personal circumstances with one another in a non-threatening environment.

And so that is precisely the goal that we have in terms of supporting committees here at the Legislative Assembly, and it's something that I—and many members of this House—have worked for, for a long time.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: This government has a problem with transparency. It makes announcements but it's short on substance. Unfortunately, it seems to be copying the worst practices and attitudes of the failed Harper government. It should not be a surprise, as the Premier used to be a member of the Harper regime.

But we need to ask: Why is this Premier bringing Harper-style tactics of obstruction to Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the children are gone from the gallery, but they themselves would have observed the attempt to slam and to besmirch in the member's preamble, just as all members here did.

And I think the important thing to understand here is the record. Certainly, personally, I have a record of standing for committee freedom for a long time, refused to be directed as a committee chair in Ottawa, to conduct the affairs of the committee in anything but a full and balanced and fair way. I continue to believe that, as Premier, what I believed as backbencher, what I believed as a Cabinet minister: that all members in this House have something to contribute.

That's why, in fact, I've reached out to the members of the NDP and encouraged them to share in the responsibilities they have—but refused to accept—of listening to Manitobans in genuine prebudget consultations process, now participated in by over 10,000 Manitobans, but ignored by the NDP members opposite—such a shame; such a shame, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Head Office Cancellation of Relocation

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): The real shame here is that, for the first time in 50 years, the government shut down a committee of this Legislature.

And, Madam Speaker, this government seems to have an amazing propensity to get things backwards. First, it cancels projects and then it searches in vain to find the reasons for doing so. And lost in all this are the benefits that smart investments bring to our economy and especially to downtown Winnipeg while our committee was abruptly shut down by the government.

I want to get the Premier on record: Why did he kill a project to get a head office and 400 workers downtown that was good for Manitoba Liquor &

Lotteries, good for the downtown Winnipeg and good for the shareholders—the people of Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, we have inherited quite a handful of problems and challenges from the previous administration, and I don't think we need to have members opposite pretend that that is not the case.

* (13:50)

A decade of debt, a decade of decline and, certainly, a decade of decay in our social programs; the worst record in terms of Manitobans being able to access health care of any Canadian province; the highest per capita increases in terms of the tax burden placed on Manitoba citizens and, frankly, Madam Speaker, more children in care than any province for our size. That—these are not the records that would speak to the member or his colleagues' ability, when in government, to actually strengthen and secure the lives of the people of Manitoba, not at all.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, we've said it before and we'll say it again: this is a government with no answers, no plan and no interest in governing for all the people of Manitoba.

Now, it's quite clear to most Manitobans that the decision to kill the head office of the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries head office relocation project was a political decision. It took years of study to bring the head office downtown, and, yet, in a matter of minutes, the new government-appointed board decided to can the whole project.

Will the minister provide just a little shred of evidence why this was a good idea?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I know the member is still having difficulty accepting the verdict that the Manitoba people gave in the election of six months ago and I know that he is grieving in respect of that. But he should not call to question the mandate that we were given by the people of Manitoba to correct and clean up the finances of our province and to repair our economy and to rebuild the social services that have suffered.

Now, when the members opposite decided, through their Crown corporation—and they, of course, had hands on all their Crown corporations on a regular basis, Madam Speaker, as opposed to respecting the relative independence they should

enjoy—they decided that they would become, at the last second, that they would become property managers, when, in fact, their mandate is for them to run Liquor & Lotteries, to be the vice squad for the province, not the property manager for the province.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, when our Crown corporations invest in downtown Winnipeg it's good for all the people of Manitoba. Why can't the Premier understand that?

But just like with rail relocation, which they just cancelled and let go without an alternative plan, this government is interested in settling old political scores than in building the province of Manitoba.

Will the Premier just admit that this was a political decision taken by his government and that his new board was simply the mouthpiece for doing so?

Mr. Pallister: Well, here the member goes too far yet again, Madam Speaker, learning nothing from two weeks ago when he had to apologize for behaviour just like that. That is totally disrespectful to the new board at Liquor & Lotteries, totally disrespectful to the fine Manitobans who've decided and agreed to serve, none of whom asked for severance—which the members opposite, of course, all asked for and gave to their people and covered up for years—none of whom asked for any special compensation, all of whom share our concern on this side of the House to build a stronger Manitoba where the finances are fixed, the services are repaired and the economy can grow after a decade of decline.

Secret Path Inclusion in School Curriculum

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Last night, Canadians got a chance to see Secret Path, a powerful album, graphic novel and video project by Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire. It tells the story of Chanie Wenjack, also known as Charlie, who froze to death while trying to run home from the Cecilia Jeffrey residential school near Kenora, Ontario. Chanie died 50 years ago this past Saturday.

This was not an isolated incident. This happened to thousands of children, including in our province. It's not indigenous history; it's our history.

Will the minister commit to making Secret Path a part of the Manitoba curriculum?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I appreciate the member's statement—his question because certainly it was a very touching and compelling story, and I think something that I hope every Manitoban and every Canadian learned something from that story last night.

As the member knows, we currently have three points during the education system where we do talk about residential schools, and I suspect the teachers won't be long in incorporating this type of story as part of that.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Rouge, on a supplementary question.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Request to Implement Call to Action 62

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): The story told in Secret Path happened many times in our province. There are documented cases where children who ran away from the Norway House Indian Residential School were tied up so that they couldn't escape again. In another instance at the same institution, a boy was permanently disabled after his feet froze when he tried to run home. The boy was beaten by school officials.

It's important for children in our province to learn our shared history so they can prevent this from happening again, but also to learn about the resilience of residential school survivors.

Is the Minister of Education implementing TRC Call to Action 62 which calls for these but also other indigenous issues to be a mandatory part of the K-to-12 curriculum?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite.

As I said, I suspect that many teachers will be wanting to incorporate these and other stories as part of the curriculum, and the flexibility of the curriculum certainly does that.

We recognize, under Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the recommendations thereof, that we have an obligation and, frankly, we have a desire to make sure that Manitobans know the story and know part of our history; that is something that Manitoba does—should—has no reason to be proud of. There are certainly issues attached to what was done and we want this brought forward. We're an inclusive government and we think everyone should know the truth.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Rouge, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: The same TRC call to action, Call to Action 62, calls on the government to provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate our teachers on how to properly bring indigenous knowledge into the classroom.

Will the minister commit today that his government will provide the proper funding—proper funding—so that teachers will know how to teach all of our children about our true, shared history, including the history of residential schools?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question.

And certainly we have actually met with the deans from the Department of Education to look for ways forward here to make sure that our obligations under Truth and Reconciliation are met. And we had a very good discussion with them not too long ago. They're very aware, as are we, that as Manitobans we have an obligation to make sure that story is brought forward, and we will certainly do that.

Thank you.

Fentanyl Deaths

Request to Declare Public Health Emergency

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, last week we heard the personal stories from families who have experienced first-hand how drugs like fentanyl are sweeping through our province and country and leading to a dangerous influx of overdoses.

Since we raised this in the House last week, I've heard personally from many more Manitobans who've come forward with their own experiences, and they want to see the government act decisively, now

Last week's heartbreaking near tragedy involving an infant's exposure to fentanyl was just another reminder of how this government must move now to get their handle on it.

Will the minister acknowledge the scope and 'immediacy' of this problem and declare a public health emergency?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I'm sure the member knows that public health emergencies are called by the public health officers in Manitoba.

But his point is correct about this being a significant issue and that is why we've looked to increase the distribution of naloxone across the province. That is why we've agreed to participate in a national meeting in Ottawa in a couple of weeks to look at issues that have a national scope to deal with this issue.

Certainly, we were concerned about the incident that we heard on the weekend, Madam Speaker, regarding a young child. We would also hope that there would be adult and parental responsibility involved in this as well.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Naloxone Kit Availability

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, this minister doesn't need to wait for medical professionals to say this is a crisis. They are, in fact, telling us it's a crisis now. Dr. Joss Reimer, who sits on the government's own task force, says the availability of fentanyl and its deadly cousin, carfentanyl, makes her, quote, very concerned that we may see more overdoses.

The minister must now show real leadership and act on the several reasonable recommendations outlined in our PMR last week.

* (14:00)

The minister could take real action today that would save lives by extending distribution of naloxone kits in Manitoba, which he does acknowledge is vital.

Will the minister declare a public health emergency and mandate that the naloxone kits must be available at all over-the-counter pharmacies?

Mr. Goertzen: And I certainly remain open to discussions and advice from our public health officials, Madam Speaker, but we are not waiting.

We've already given direction to expand the availability of naloxone. I think there are other things that would be discussed at the federal meeting in Ottawa. I certainly know I've heard from officials across Canada who are concerned about the availability of pill presses and whether or not there should be direction—national direction to restrict the availability of pill presses. These are some of the issues that we'll raise in Ottawa to have a co-ordinated response.

Manitoba is not waiting. Manitoba is already taking action. I think there's more work that can be

done and we're willing to take that work, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: And I applaud the minister for recognizing the family's concern for— for pill presses and the issue that that potentially brings.

We ask, though, the minister, with these federal meetings that he's had an opportunity to have already, the good ideas that are around the table when we're asking simple steps that can be taken here and now in Manitoba, why the minister won't simply move on some of the most immediate and some of the most basic and reasonable requests that we're asking.

So I will ask the minister one more time: Will the minister declare a public health emergency and mandate that naloxone kits must be available at all over-the-counter pharmacies, shelters, hospitals, schools and community-based addiction centres?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, as was the case in British Columbia, it's the public health officers who make those decisions on public health emergencies. But the member is certainly correct that action needs to be taken. That's why I've directed officials to bring forward a plan to have a broader based distribution of naloxone.

We're certainly considering other measures. I look forward to talking to my federal colleagues in Ottawa. We will bring forward our own ideas for Manitoba in terms of how we can have a national co-ordinated response. I have committed to meet with—I've already met with some families who have been dealing with addictions within their families and I've committed to meet with more. I'll be meeting with them later this week and I appreciate the member bringing those forward. I'll continue to meet with families to hear from their ideas as well, Madam Speaker.

Shoal Lake 40 First Nation Freedom Road Construction Funding

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Canada stole our land, imposed Winnipeg's water intake on us, then abandoned us to cope with the results. That act of colonial theft began what Canada's new Museum of Human Rights has described as a cascade of human rights implications, including a threat to our very existence, words spoken this past April by Chief Redsky of Shoal Lake 40 directly to

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, an issue 100 years in the making equally through PC, NDP, and Liberal governments within federal, provincial, municipal fears.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) provide a definitive confirmation of Manitoba's commitment to support one-third of the total cost of Freedom Road?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the member bringing forth this question about the Shoal Lake Road. Our government is committed to building this road. The negotiations are continuing with both federal and the city. The engineering is continuing on this road. We plan to have this road built, unlike the former government who talked a lot about it, put up steady growth signs, but did absolutely nothing about it.

This government will get the road built.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a supplementary question.

Freedom Road Construction

Ms. Fontaine: Despite providing Winnipeg with its water, for the last 18 years Shoal Lake 40 has been under a water boil advisory. Shoal Lake 40 has repeatedly been advised a water treatment plant of its own is much too expensive without a road connecting it to the broader network of highways, roads, and committees.

Today, despite having all the players committed to rectifying this long-standing and unacceptable wrong, this government is dragging its feet.

Will the Premier provide a definitive confirmation on building Freedom Road?

Mr. Pedersen: I thank the member for bringing forth this question. She talks about dragging their feet. The NDP dragged their feet for 17 years on this and did absolutely nothing on this file.

In the six months that we've been in, we've got started on the engineering and on the work on this road. We will build this road, unlike the previous government who constantly failed. Their idea of infrastructure building was putting up steady growth signs, and it was not about building a road for these people to have access like all of us in—across the province assume we should have.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary

Ms. Fontaine: Mayor Bowman committed to Freedom Road, acknowledging it, and I quote, as a moral imperative. Minister Carolyn Bennett has committed to Freedom Road, linking the project to a very tangible act of reconciliation, making those federal dollars available now to start building the road on reserve. Our NDP government recognized the fundamental importance of building Freedom Road, with the commitment of contributing our fair and equal share.

Freedom Road is on the right side of history: When will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government get on board?

Mr. Pedersen: Again, I thank the member for bringing up this question. She talked about recognizing the issue. Everyone recognizes the issue. The difference is this government will actually build a road, not like the previous government.

The previous government's idea of infrastructure was to create the East Side Road Authority, which the Auditor General's report—and I have a copy on my desk if the member hasn't read that. Their idea was bringing forth ESRA, which wasted hundreds of millions of dollars, built very few roads and a complete waste of time of all members in this House.

Hunger Free Manitoba Request to Increase Basic Needs Allowance

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Hunger Free Manitoba is a united effort of faith communities calling on the Manitoba government to help those who are most vulnerable. For 24 days, members of Hunger Free Manitoba have been asking this government to make changes to increase the basic needs allowance for Manitobans living in poverty. Currently, an individual on social assistance receives \$3.96 per day for food. This amount is clearly inadequate.

We have heard for the past six months the Premier talk about improving conditions for Manitobans: What does the Premier plan to do today to ensure Manitobans' most vulnerable will have food to eat?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I can tell you that ensuring people have food to live by is something that this government truly thinks is one of the most important issues that we can do. We know under the previous NDP government the amount of children that were living in poverty dramatically improved for it. We also know that the NDP government didn't increase Rent Assist, which we

think has helped out, until this government did. That is part of our plan going forward to help the youth. It's also part of our plan in terms of addressing poverty with the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a supplementary question.

Mental Health and Addictions Services Review Government Intention

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Addressing mental health issues is an important part of addressing poverty. During the election, we heard the Premier talk about doing a comprehensive review of mental health services and providing a strategy combining both mental health and addictions programs and services. The Premier can be quoted on saying that this must—this is a priority.

It has now been more than six months after the election and the Premier has not even announced a task force or committee. When can Manitobans expect this government to conduct the review of mental health services?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I want to thank the member for the question and add my congratulations to her on the important position that she assumed late last week, Madam Speaker. I'm sure she'll do a fine job representing her constituents, her party and all Manitobans.

She asks a very important question and a right question regarding mental health and the combination together with addictions. We do believe that those services should be looked at together, not that they are always correlated, but more often than not, they are correlated. She will hear more about the formation of the task force in the coming weeks ahead, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a final supplementary.

Brian Sinclair Inquiry Recommendations Government Intention

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Thank you; I can't wait.

Madam Speaker, one of the most important recommendations of the Brian Sinclair inquest was that there be better accountability, improved measurement and reporting systems.

* (14:10)

There is a problem when recommendations aren't implemented and the government is not able to report on outcomes.

How can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) expect speedy action when his government takes more than six months to set up a task force and when he himself votes against accountability in health care, as he did on October 13th?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Certainly, we do believe strongly in accountability. We've been bringing that forward, even when you look at the regional health authorities and the move to having individuals who are appointed based on merit and having accountability within that. We'll be bringing forward accountability and measurement measures within our regional health authorities in the weeks ahead, Madam Speaker. We do, in fact, think that this is one of the most critical things that are important.

It is also important to have a real partner in Ottawa when it comes to health care, Madam Speaker. There's been a reduction in the partnership in Ottawa. And we see a further reduction being planned by the federal Liberal government. And I hope that she'll add her voice and the new position that she has to ensure that we have a real partner at the table so we can have accountability in Ottawa, as well.

Crown Corporation Management Adherence to Core Mandate

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Manitobans' new government welcomed the decision by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to cancel the unnecessary downtown relocation and construction of a new headquarters.

Can the Minister of Crown Services speak to the importance of restoring prudent fiscal management to Manitoba's Crown corporations and ensuring their activities fall within their core mandate?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member for the Interlake for that respectful question.

Manitoba's Crown corporations endured the decade of debt and decay under the previous NDP government. During the NDP decade of decay, our Crown corporations were compromised by political interference, which forced them to operate outside of their area of expertise. Under our new

government, and in co-operation with our newly appointed boards, the professionals of our Crown corporations are now able to focus on the business of the corporations and on providing Manitobans with exceptional products and services.

Manitobans elected our government to fix the finances of this province. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

Dauphin Correctional Centre Review of Facility

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, Manitobans have learned about two recent deaths in custody at the Winnipeg Remand Centre. But, sadly, these are not the only recent deaths in custody. This summer, a troubled young man committed suicide at the Dauphin Correctional Centre. I'm advised he took his own life by hanging himself in the shower area.

Can the Minister of Justice advise this House of any steps that have been taken at Dauphin since then to try and prevent another tragedy from occurring in the future?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question. And, of course, it's—any death at all is a horrible thing, and so we regret when those things take place.

I do want to say, Madam Speaker, that certainly we are—we have inherited a justice system that is—has some significant challenges that we're facing. And I'm working with my department to ensure that we create efficiencies throughout the system to do away with some of the backlogs that have been created as a result of the last 17 years of decay within the system in the province.

And so we—there's much work to do. We have started the work and we will continue to do so.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Swan: Well, Madam Speaker, the question is whether this minister had done anything to try and prevent another tragedy from taking place.

I understand, and no member should be surprised, the death of this inmate was upsetting to the other inmates in the Dauphin Correctional Centre, but also for the staff at that centre who do their best to keep inmates safe in a building which has outlived its useful life. This death, of course, was upsetting to the community of Dauphin and to the

deceased's home community. The staff in Dauphin do their very best, but they'll tell you, it is difficult to keep inmates safe.

Can the Minister of Justice, today, confirm that the review has now been completed and a new jail in Dauphin will be built?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. It certainly gives me an opportunity to talk about the incredible work that the correctional officers are doing in the Dauphin Correctional Centre, as well as all of the correctional officers in all of the correctional centres in the province. They are doing amazing jobs.

Of course, we do know, after 17 years of what's happened within the justice system, there are some significant challenges that we face, but we are prepared to face those challenges. We will work with all of the front-line workers. We will work with all of the stakeholders within the justice system to ensure that there's more efficiencies and effectiveness to the justice system in Manitoba to get rid of the backlogs that exist.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Swan: The member is right that our correctional employees do great work.

She should know that they want a new jail built in Dauphin, and the Premier would know that if he ever had the courage to sit down and meet with the MGEU.

I'm disappointed that this minister still will not give any confidence this new jail would proceed. I expect, if the Minister of Justice had asked, she would have learned that the inmate's brother, who is also an inmate at that facility, has had no choice but to use the very shower stall where his brother hanged himself.

Manitobans can decide the role of jails, how much is rehabilitation, how much is punishment, but they would agree that it's not meant to be a death sentence.

What more does this minister need to know to do her job and get this government to commit to building a new jail for the people of Dauphin?

Mrs. Stefanson: Okay, and I want to thank the member for the question, and it is an important one. It does bring to light the fact that within our correctional facilities, 70 per cent of those are on

remand, which means that they're waiting for sentencing right now. Only 30 per cent of those in our correctional facilities, as it stands right now, have been sentenced in the provincial justice system. So we need to—and this is a system that we've inherited from members opposite.

So where they failed, we will deliver. We will ensure that we find ways to create efficiencies within the system, to move people through the system, get rid of the backlogs and do what is right for all Manitobans.

Labour Relations Amendment Act Labour Union Consultation

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Rather than giving a long preamble, I'm just going to ask the question.

Will someone in this government please tell Manitobans why they've decided to attack organized labour instead of consulting and working with them?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I appreciate the member's question.

And, you know, we've had a lot of discussions with labour across the province. Obviously, you know, by the debate we've had in the House over the last couple weeks, we obviously disagree on certain issues, but that's all part of democracy. We—we're going to have a disagreement on certain issues.

At the end of the day, we believe in the rights of voters to actually have a vote when it comes to forming unions and that's no secret, Madam Speaker. That's just the difference between the previous government and this government.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a supplementary question.

MGEU President Request for Meeting with Premier

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Over the weekend, we learned from the newspaper that the president of the Manitoba government employees' union has sent several letters to the Premier requesting a meeting, but has not heard back in over six months.

Is this how the Premier works with labour, by ignoring them? Will this Premier commit today to doing the respectful thing and simply respond to that representative's letter?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate any question from a member on the NDP who wants Manitoba workers, men and women in this province,

to not have a secret ballot. I thank him for his question, and I assure him that I have responded, and I congratulate the newly elected president of the MGEU, who I will be meeting with shortly.

And I have also—but I don't—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the members—it may be a surprise to members opposite. There was a bit of a contest. You guys are maybe occupied on the other side with your leadership tirades against one another. The MGEU had three people running, and I didn't think it was right to take preference over the members. I thought the members should have the right to vote on it.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary.

Labour Relations Amendment Act Labour Union Consultation

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The non-answers continue.

This Premier refuses to name a labour representative to his advisory council, steals—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —legislation from the Harper government that attacks organized labour, and avoids meeting with representatives from organized labour. This is an attitude of disrespect, this attitude of dismissal. This Premier must stop his ideological games.

And when will he actually sit down and listen to organized labour?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, well, when will the members opposite sit down and listen to front-line workers in unions instead of just their bosses?

I've really enjoyed meeting with the heads of most of Manitoba's labour unions, and I'll continue to meet with them and look forward to those healthy discussions. I also, though, don't limit my interactions with union people to just the people at the top of the shop. I like to talk to the union workers who are at our front line for health care, social services and many other important services. Manitobans appreciate their work. We appreciate their work. We

appreciate it enough to stand up for them and give them a secret ballot, Madam Speaker.

Hydro Review Report

Minister of Sustainable Development's Position

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, this Premier has repeatedly stood behind a report which says Manitoba should burn more fossil fuels. His Crown's minister has stood beside the same report, calling on Manitoba to burn more fossil fuels.

My obvious question: Does the Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox) agree with him?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I just want to really encourage the member to read the report he keeps referring to, because it also says that there was an incredible amount of mismanagement by the previous administration in awarding untendered contracts and forcing through projects which experts at the Crowns did not want to proceed with. And, in circumventing the processes of allowing Manitobans to have the protections of things essential to them like the Clean Environment Commission, the Public Utilities Board.

So, frankly, after, you know, this report—so much work went into this report the member cites. Maybe if he read it he would rise and he would admit that there was a decade of incredible deception and mismanagement when it came to Manitoba Hydro under the previous administration, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

Proposed Federal Carbon Tax

Minister of Sustainable Development's Position

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): The Premier's pontificating notwithstanding, Madam Speaker, it is interesting that, for a gentleman who claims that people were appointed to his Cabinet based on merit, he does not feel that the minister is capable of answering a very simple question.

So, I'll try another one: Could the Minister of Sustainable Development please inform us what her position was on the carbon tax at the recent meeting of federal and provincial ministers, or did she receive her marching orders from the Premier and he's going to answer the question for her again?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I leave the difficult questions for ministers to answer; I answer the simple ones—

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to raise a point of order on an issue that came up during question period, and that is the question raised by the member from St. Johns, where she—where the member asserted that Canada stole land, or something to that effect.

This is a—I object to this for three reasons: One, it's factually not true. Second reason is, in the preamble of a question, according to Montpetit and Campbell, is you can't make a charge by way of a preamble to a question, and that is what happened.

And, finally, Canada, in the context of the question, is actually a synonym for Her Majesty the Queen, and it is improper to defame the monarchy in this House. And given that Her Majesty, according to our own Constitution, is the embodiment of Canada, I—on—I say that—I believe that her comments are out of order.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on that same point of order.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): If the member from Assiniboia had actually heard me clearly, he would know that I was actually quoting Chief Redsky from Shoal Lake 40. And it was an exact quote that was given in a speech to the Prime Minister of this country.

It is in my right to quote a particular narrative that the people of Shoal Lake feel—believe and, in fact, many people—indigenous people across this country. It is my absolute right as a member of this House and as an indigenous woman to be able to quote Chief Redsky.

Madam Speaker: The member from St.—order, please.

The member for St. Johns was 'indeeding'—reading from a quote from someone, and therefore this is a dispute over the facts and is not a basis for a point of order.

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of the petition is as follows:

Manitoba telephone system is currently a fourth cellular carrier used by Manitobans along with the big three carriers: Telus, Rogers and Bell.

In Toronto, with only the big three national companies controlling the market, the average five-gigabyte unlimited monthly cellular package is \$117 as compared to Winnipeg where MTS charges \$66 for the same package.

Losing MTS will mean less competition and will result in higher costs for all cellphone packages in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government do all that's possible to prevent the Bell takeover of MTS and preserve a more competitive cellphone market so that cellular bills for Manitobans do not increase unnecessarily.

This petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read, they are deemed to be received by the House.

Union Certification

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The reason for this petition:

Manitobans have benefited greatly from a fair and balanced approach to labour relations that has led to a long period of labour peace in the province.

Under current legislation, if 65 per cent of workers in the workplace vote to join a union by signing a union card, then a union can qualify to become automatically certified as the official bargaining agent for the workers.

These signed union cards are submitted to the Labour Board and an independent review by the Labour Board is held to ensure that the law has been followed.

Provincial threshold to achieve automatic certification of a union is the highest in the country at 65 per cent. The democratic will and decision of workers to vote and join the union is absolutely clear.

During the recent provincial election, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party announced,

without any consultation, that it was his intention to change this fair and balanced legislation by requiring a second vote conducted on the matter where the democratic will of workers has already been expressed.

This plan opens up the process to potential employer interference and takes the same misguided approach as the federal Conservatives under the Harper administration took in Bill C-525, which was nothing more than a solution looking for a problem.

The recent introduction of Bill 7 by the provincial government confirmed this possibility by removing automatic certification and the safeguards in The Labour Relations Act to protect workers from employer intimidation during the certification 'process'—process.

* (14:30)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government maintain the current legislation for union certification which reflects the balance and fairness, rather than adopting the intention to make it harder for workers to organize.

And this petition has been signed by many hard-working Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, we'd like to call Bill 17, the fatality inquiries and vital statistics amendment act, for second reading.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that this House will consider Bill 17 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 17—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment and Vital Statistics Amendment Act

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 17, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment and Vital Statistics Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes médico-légales et la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil, be now

read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I am pleased to rise to say a few words with respect to Bill 17, and in this bill, our new government in Manitoba is making changes in order to comply with the Government of Canada's recently enacted law—with the law that allows for medically assisted dying.

The Government of Canada needed to bring forward legislation because of a Supreme Court case, *Carter v. Canada*. Amendments to the Criminal Code now permit Canadians who are at least 18 years of age and who are suffering with a grievous or irremediable medical condition to voluntarily obtain medical assistance in dying.

Changes to the legislation will remove the requirement that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigate the case of a medically assisted death. However, the CME will still be providing oversight, and our government will be proposing to make a reporting requirement mandatory in this case.

The Chief Medical Examiner will still have oversight over these deaths, but a medically assisted death will not be considered a homicide or a suicide but will be considered a natural death. Typically when a death is unexpected and the cause of death is not immediately known or when the death is the result of violence due to an accident, suicide or homicide, it will be investigated by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Physicians will have the ability to administer the death and issue burial certificates without the involvement of the medical examiner's investigation, allowing for families to make more timely funeral arrangements for their loved one.

The changes will also allow for a framework of information to be gathered on medically assisted deaths to meet federal reporting requirements. So that's something that will come down the road. These changes are being made in order to comply with the recently enacted legislation from the Government of Canada and the *Carter v. Canada* case.

The amendments set in this bill respect the rights Manitobans now have according to the Supreme Court of Canada to access medical assistance in dying in our province. Their deaths will be treated in the same manner as a natural death and without the involvement of a medical examiner. But the bill allows for regulations to be developed that will

ensure oversight of these deaths by the Chief Medical Examiner.

The amendments clarify that a death that occurs as a result of medical assistance in dying in accordance with the Criminal Code is not a suicide or a homicide under The Fatality Inquiries Act and The Vital Statistics Act. This means that deaths that occur through medical assistance in dying that would otherwise be natural death do not need to be reported to a medical examiner. This will allow a physician the ability to complete the death—the certificate of death and issue the burial certificate without the involvement of the Chief Medical Examiner.

We are empathetic to families who are in this situation. They are usually dealing with a loved one who has been dealing with a prolonged illness and then their death. Without these changes, they would need to wait for an investigation to take place before funeral arrangements can be made. Most families in this situation would want to have as little process as possible when making funeral arrangements, and this is exactly what this legislation provides to those families.

In addition, the amendments will also permit regulations to be developed to allow the Chief Medical Examiner to provide oversight of these deaths. We will be proposing to make a reporting requirement mandatory in this case.

Finally, the amendments add regulatory power to the fatalities inquiries act to permit regulations to be developed regarding reporting requirements. The information will be for provincial and federal governments allowing for national statistics to be gathered. This is a new law in Canada and information will be essential for any future changes or updates that may be required, and so statistical requirements have not yet been determined by the federal government. But we expect that these will come shortly, and so that's why we've set this up by way of regulation in order to ensure that we comply with any changes that may come as a result of changes in regulation or to the legislation by the federal government.

So this is essentially a housekeeping bill that allows for us to comply with the Supreme Court ruling in Carter versus Canada as well as the changes that have been made with respect to medical assistance in dying at the federal level.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: First question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I do thank the minister for her information on the record today. I think we understand that the specified information referred to in the act is yet to be determined by the federal government.

Could the minister let us know, is the Province actually involved in consulting with the federal government to determine what this information is? Is it on the Justice side or on the Health side, and what else—what other details can she give us about when we can expect this to occur?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question. Of course, we're in constant contact and negotiation with various things with respect to the federal government.

With respect to this legislation, what will come about is: as a result of the regulatory side of things, we'll just be on the reporting end, so it isn't very clear right now. The federal government has indicated that they would require some reporting to take place, but we're not—it isn't clear yet and specific yet as to how that will come out of the federal government. Of course, we want to be prepared to comply with whatever changes that take place at that level.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister. I understand it may take some time to have the federal government clearly state where it's going.

Will the minister undertake to consult with Manitobans, and when that's done, to—when the federal information is received, to pass the regulations contemplated in this act in a timely way?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question. Of course we are always consulting with Manitobans. We know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) is currently conducting his various consultations with respect to the upcoming budget. I am always consulting various stakeholders within the

community that pertain to my portfolio. I've met with front-line workers; I've met with—with most stakeholders within the Justice system. I'm still trying to get through some of them and—but, certainly, it is my intent to continue to have those discussions with all stakeholders in the Justice system to ensure that we get it right here in Manitoba when it comes to the regulatory changes, but it will be up to the federal government as to how they want to package that.

Mr. Swan: The proposed changes to The Vital Statistics Act will, and I think we can agree with good reason, provide that an assisted death will not be treated as an act of suicide or an act of homicide.

Will the death certificate, in future, in an assisted death situation, will it refer to the cause of death being assisted death, or will it be the underlying cause that led to the assisted death being approved?

*(14:40)

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, it's a very good question, and I think it's one that Manitobans should know—that it will be the underlying illness that will be on the death certificate, not medical assistance in dying.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister what actions have other jurisdictions taken to bring their provincial laws into line with the Supreme Court's decision, and what stages are each and every one of the other provinces on this particular issue?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question. There are—it's important to note that there are differences among the provinces in how they determine reporting statistical information, so each province will have to bring forward various changes with respect to the acts that exist in their provinces, which are different from ours.

So I know that some provinces have moved forward. I know Alberta has dealt with some of the provincials related to medical assistance in dying; through an order-in-council they were able to do that that way.

Ontario has indicated that they intend to make changes in the way of legislation, and Quebec has already—has a full legislative scheme in place to take care of those issues.

That is what we know as of today, but certainly we can report as we—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to ask the minister: How will this amendment to the act affect health-care bureaucracy in the office?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I think, as it stands right now, any death that is a homicide or suicide declared to be a homicide or suicide has to be referred to the Chief Medical Examiner. The Chief Medical Examiner will still oversee that but will not conduct an inquest into that if it's deemed to be medical assistance in dying, so it should create some efficiencies there so that the Chief Medical Examiner is no longer examining or by way of an inquest into those cases that fall under medical assistance in dying.

Mr. Maloway: And, as the minister probably knows, Manitoba has one of the best palliative care regimes in the country, but there's room—lots of room for improvement even here, especially outside of Winnipeg.

I'd like to ask the minister what action this government's going to take to increase palliative care services for Manitobans, both inside Winnipeg and in the country.

Mrs. Stefanson: And I am going to defer that question to the Minister of Health at another time that the member may want to ask that question. I think it's more of a policy question that is outside, necessarily, of the scope of some of the changes that are taking place within this bill, which is essentially just a housekeeping bill to allow us to comply with some of the changes that have taken place with the federal government.

Mr. Swan: And I think one of the earlier questions touched on what kind of information's going to be gathered and collected by the Province. Is it the intention that there will be an ongoing report on the number of Manitobans who seek or who follow through with assisted death and the reasons for that? One could see, as long as it's aggregated and not impacting anybody's personal health information, it could actually be very helpful for us to see which diseases or which conditions are creating the most grief for Manitoba families.

Mrs. Stefanson: And, again, I want to thank the member for the question. It is a good one. It is one that I think it's very important that we work together with other provinces as to what kind of—how things are reported so that—and that, of course, the other provinces and the federal government to make sure it's consistent across all jurisdictions. I think it's important, so certainly I'm open to any suggestions

that he may have and, indeed, other Manitobans may have, about the kinds of information that they would like out of it as well, and we can certainly bring that forward to any meetings that we have with our federal, provincial and territorial partners.

Mr. Swan: I think the minister and I would agree that it does make sense that there be, as much as possible, a uniform standard across the country. I appreciate this bill is in a provincial jurisdiction.

Can the ministers give us some more detail, then, if this is the first bill of its kind across the country that's been introduced? What discussions are now taking place among the various provincial and territorial jurisdictions? Is it at the deputy level? Is it an assistant deputy? Who's actually working on this to try and make sure that we have, rather than a patchwork, as much as possible a continuous fabric across the country?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, I want to thank the member for the question. It certainly was an issue that came up. We had our federal-provincial-territorial, also known as FPT. So, if I do mention that, maybe the member will know what those are. I'm sure he recalls attending some of those in the past himself, but certainly it did come up at our FPT meeting. And we'll work at the ministerial level as well across the—across provinces and jurisdictions and the federal-provincial-territorial—so, at the ministerial level, but it's also taking place at the deputy minister level as well.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that answer.

I mean, the challenge with working with it at the FPT level is, of course, the Justice ministers themselves only meet once a year, whereas the officials have a greater opportunity to meet and to continue to move on this. I presume, though, it's not just Justice officials that are dealing with this; it's also Health officials that are dealing with this.

Can the minister just give us just a bit more detail? I don't think it's the minister's intention to wait for a year before we bring in regulations. I think it's the minister's intention that it happen more quickly than that.

Can she give us any more details on the type of discussions taking place with other provinces?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, there are discussions taking place at the deputy minister level across the country with respect to how different jurisdictions are dealing with some of the changes that need to be made

within those other jurisdictions, as well, within those other provinces.

So those will—that dialogue will continue. It's not that nothing's going to happen between now and a year from now when we meet again at our FPT meetings. This is ongoing work that will take place, and, certainly, when the federal government brings in their—any changes that they make in the way of any regulatory changes that will affect the provinces, we will have a look at that at both the deputy minister level and a minister level to ensure that we have a uniformity across the country.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Can the minister please tell me—I don't really understand too much about this. Can the procedure of medically assisted dying be performed in a private residence?

Mrs. Stefanson: There's actually—and really that would be more under the jurisdiction probably of the Minister of Health as to how this is performed, but, as I understand, there is, under the College of Physicians and Surgeons, there is a team that has been put together to deal with these cases. And so that's the way it will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Marcelino: Almost the same question. But can it be done in a private clinic?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, I want to thank the member for that question. I think it's beyond the scope of some of the changes that are taking place within this bill.

This is a housekeeping bill to deal with The Vital Statistics Act as well as the fatalities inquiries act, which has to do with more in the area of reporting. So, again, I think the member has an opportunity to probably ask those questions at another time; it's really not within this area.

Mr. Marcelino: And almost of the same nature: My question is about the death of a child. Does—is it included in this amendment—or in this bill?

Mrs. Stefanson: I believe it does. It is—it does fall under this unless it has to do maybe with CFS. But I can certainly get further clarification as to some of the details with respect to that, and get back to the member.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

* (14:50)

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm pleased to be able to put some words on the record this afternoon about Bill 17.

Bill 17, of course, will bring Manitoba into line with the recent Supreme Court decision to legalize assisted dying in Canada.

And I think at the outset of my comments, Madam Speaker, I think I want to just put on the record that not every member of this Chamber may have an identical view about assisted dying. But I think that every member of this Chamber can agree that, given the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and given the movement of the federal government, that it is incumbent on the Province to take reasonable steps to bring Manitoba law into compliance with the federal bill which came as a result of that Supreme Court decision. And I think every member of this House can agree that legislation should minimize, first of all, any unnecessary work to be done, and also to minimize the impact of any work to be done on the families, of course, who—when someone chooses the very difficult decision to receive assistance to end their own life—those families are grieving, and those families want to make that path as smooth as can possibly happen.

I think it's important just to put on the record a little bit about the history of assisted dying in Canada. I think most members know that it was a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada—*Carter v Canada*—which was the landmark decision of the Supreme Court, where the prohibition of assisted suicide with challenges contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by several different people, including the family of Kay Carter. Kay Carter was a woman who suffered from degenerative spinal stenosis, as well as Gloria Taylor, who was a woman suffering from the disease that I will not even attempt to put on the record but we all know, unfortunately, as ALS. And, in their unanimous decision on February 6th, 2015, the court struck down the provisions in the Criminal Code and gave Canadian adults who are mentally competent and suffering intolerably and enduringly, the right to have the assistance of a physician in ending their life.

And this was a major decision by the Supreme Court of Canada. It effectively reversed a decision it'd given more than 20 years ago in the

Sue Rodriguez case, which many members of this House may be familiar with. *Sue Rodriguez* was a woman who wanted assistance in ending her own life. The Supreme Court, at that time, said that an individual did not have the right to have a physician assist in the ending of life. The Supreme Court, in this case, took a look at how the Charter has been interpreted since then, took a look at what different countries have done, took a look at how the Charter has been interpreted and how health law has been interpreted over the last two decades in coming to its conclusion. It's not a light thing for the Supreme Court to reverse itself and to change course, and I know that the Supreme Court took its role very seriously in coming to this conclusion.

It is certainly a difficult area when the Supreme Court has to wade in and determine things which may already be contained in laws passed by Parliament but, when there is a breach of someone's Charter rights, that is the role of the Supreme Court. The Court suspended its ruling for 12 months, with the decision taking effect in 2016. The Supreme Court's intention at that time was to give the federal government enough time to amend its laws. As we know, that didn't happen. It wasn't touched by the previous government before the election occurred in the fall of 2015 and, in January 2016, the court actually granted an additional four-month extension to its ruling suspension to allow time for the new government in Ottawa to consult with Canadians in drafting a law to comply with the ruling.

And, as an interim measure, it ruled that provincial courts could begin approving applications for assisted death until the new law was to pass. And, indeed, in Manitoba we know that's what did happen. A number of individuals came forward, assisted by their families, and the court actually had to grant orders allowing physicians to assist somebody in ending their life without the fear of a charge under the Criminal Code. And, even though—as you know, Madam Speaker—I'm trained as a lawyer, a court of law is actually not the best place for decisions of this to be determined. And so it was welcomed when the government actually stepped forward and passed legislation.

That law was passed in June 2016 and, since that time, it has been possible for individuals to move ahead and end their life with the assistance of a physician without the need to proceed to court.

What has been helpful about this is that doctors in Manitoba—and, indeed, across Canada—have been

very prepared to sit down and come up with guidelines and rules that I think are actually quite useful. And, if the members of the House have not had a look at it, I know there are resources right on the government website and the Department of Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living, which set out a number of answers to questions, including who might qualify for medical assistance in dying; determining what is defined as a grievous and irremediable medical condition, as set out in the changes to the Criminal Code; and how to access those services here in the province of Manitoba.

Individuals who have questions or who want to inform themselves can also go to the website of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba or can even find on the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority website information on the standards of practice for those physicians who will be assisting people in ending their own life upon request.

And it's quite—it's actually quite an interesting document. And many of us, of course, have parents who are aging or who may have had parents who went through long-term terminal illnesses, and certainly I know, reading through this, I was actually somewhat comforted that doctors in Manitoba and their counterparts across the country have taken this very seriously.

I know the federal government took this seriously. There was some debate. There was certainly some discussion about how wide the ambit of the law should be. I know, frankly, there was criticism of the federal government on both sides, some people saying the law should be wider, some saying it should be narrower. There was some discussion that perhaps there will be other people in future who challenge the law, saying that it violates Charter rights in one way or the other. That's not what we're worried about today. What we're worried about today is making sure we have the best law in Manitoba to carry forward what the federal government has done.

Now, one of the interesting amendments that was made to the bill at—in Ottawa was to provide that there would be additional information given to people who consult their physician to try and get information on whether they would meet the requirements for assisted death and, further, whether there are other alternatives. And it was actually written into the law that any physician who receives this request from a patient, in addition to all of the other things they have to do to satisfy themselves that

the person has an illness or a condition which would fit the definition to convince themselves the person has the requisite mental ability to make that decision, that there is no undue influence, whether it's from family members, whether it's from the community or otherwise, that would prevent this person from truly making their decision freely.

It also requires the doctor to provide alternatives to the individual. So if somebody, for example, is at home and is suffering from cancer, it's clear their family is not doing well at dealing with the situation, it is up to the physician to actually provide alternatives and information to that person. And it is not unusual. Some people may choose to end their lives at home because they're most comfortable there and they want to be with their family members. In some cases, if families don't react well or respond well or if there is a reason why they're having difficulty, it may be that that person is actually more attracted to a palliative-care facility, where they may choose to live out their remaining days without having to have a physician assist them in dying.

There is no value judgment. One is not better than the other. But the bill does provide that that's what is to take place. And it does focus us on the need for improved palliative-care services in the province of Manitoba. Even with this bill passing and even with a number of Manitobans that have already used assisted dying, even with the prospect of more Manitobans choosing, after discussions with their family, after considering their own situations, to ask for a doctor's help in dying, it is not going to reduce or release the need to continue moving our feet on palliative care.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And there's no question in Manitoba that there is still more work to do. In the previous government's term, there were a number of things that were done. In December 2002, we established the Palliative Care Drug Access Program, covering the costs of drugs for patients in their homes, sometimes drugs which could cost hundreds or, in some cases, even thousands of dollars a month. I believe that people should have the right to have a physician assist them with ending their own life, but, again, I believe, as I believe many Manitobans do, that it should truly be an informed and reasonable decision. And we would never want, just as we would not want it to be a family member trying to put pressure on someone to end their own life, so too we never want it to be a financial decision about somebody worried about the

cost of the drugs they're taking or the care they need to remain in their home.

* (15:00)

In September 2000, additional funding was announced for expanded community-based palliative-care services within the city of Winnipeg, including dedicated home-care services. And now, in Manitoba, and we hope this will continue in future, there is a 24-hour, seven-days-per-week professional nursing response team. People who have terminal illnesses are now able to have access to specialized case managers and essential support staff.

And I would hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that will continue into the future. As well, there are dedicated home-care services to assist with medical and surgical supplies as well as capital and equipment.

Of course, it's important that our facilities are also continued to be upgraded. While some people may choose to live out their last days at home, again, for any one of a number of reasons, it may be necessary, it may be preferable for people to live their last days in hospital. And in June 2000, the state-of-the-art St. Boniface Palliative Care Unit officially opened and patients were admitted beginning in July 2000. And as well, in the last government's term, there was approved funding to recruit dedicated palliative care physicians with expertise to support the comprehensive palliative care program. These doctors provide clinical care to patients, consultation and education to family physicians regarding palliative care.

And, again, I hope this is something that will be continued by the new government, that there will be appropriate funding given to health authorities, not just to maintain what exists, but to continue to expand what exists. As well, in the last few years, a new 12-bed hospice was opened at the Grace general hospital site to provide another option for Manitobans who want to live out their last days in dignity and in comfort.

And I say all this, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to make it clear that although I think we can support this bill going forward, I think we can support the efforts of the government in Ottawa to try to do a very difficult thing: to comply with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada which, in the absence of a court case, would have led to more and more court applications. I think we can all agree that it's incumbent on all of us as legislators to do

what we can to improve, across the spectrum, services for people at the end of life.

And, the availability of physician-assisted death is one part of that continuum. Again, I expect that more and more Manitobans will chose to do so, taking into account their own circumstances, taking into account their discussions with family members, their own situation, where they may live, what supports they may have, but it is only one of a number of things that we need to provide to make sure that people are treated with dignity as they come to the end of their lives.

So I believe there will be grounds for a few questions at committee. Perhaps there will—we'll hear from some Manitobans and we'll have some other ideas on how we can even strengthen this bill a little bit more. I do want to encourage the minister—not just her, but also to encourage the Minister of Health to continue to work with their provincial and territorial counterparts to see if there can be, as much as possible, a uniform standard across the country.

I do appreciate the minister coming forward with this bill. Sometimes if you're the first one in the water, it doesn't mean that you have to make the biggest splash. And I hope that if there are other ideas that come forward from other provinces before this bill goes to committee or before we come back for third reading—if there are other provinces and other ideas, that the government will be open to considering that.

If there are other ideas we hear from Manitobans before or at the committee, I hope the minister will be open to hearing that. I hope she will provide her staff with not just the ability but the expectation that they'll continue to discuss these things with their counterparts across the country, and I also hope that she will encourage the Minister of Health to do the same thing.

The circumstances giving rise to this bill, the case in the Supreme Court of Canada, the federal bill and now this provincial bill are really the point at which justice issues come right face to face with health-care issues and it is important that we get it right.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those comments, I believe that we will be agreeable to sending this bill on to committee. I think there will be a thoughtful and appropriate conversation. I want to repeat once again that Manitobans may have different views on what is a difficult subject. In fact, if you were to talk

to members of this Legislature, there may be individuals here who have a different view of whether assisted dying should be allowed, how broad the ambit should be, but that's not what Bill 17 is about. Bill 17 is about trying to find the best way to have Manitoba's laws and practices of physicians here in Manitoba comply as best we can with the federal law and also to prevent medical examiners, indeed, the Chief Medical Examiner, from having to do a bunch of work, which may also not be necessary but may also be difficult for families who have just undergone a very, very difficult thing, being the terminal illness of a loved one.

So I look forward to what other members of this House have to put on the record on Bill 17, and I certainly look forward to any other advice that we may receive from Manitobans as we go forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am honoured to stand in the House and speak to Bill 17, the fatality inquiries and vital statistics amendment act. Bill 17 is our government's response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Carter v. Canada*, and the federal legislation that followed and was passed by the Parliament of Canada on medically assisted dying.

This landmark Supreme Court decision involved Kay Carter, who suffered from degenerative spinal stenosis. The Carter family argued the prohibition on doctor-assisted death was in contradiction to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Under *Carter v. Canada*, it remained a criminal act in Canada for a doctor to administer an assisted-dying medical procedure. The Carters' court case made its way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and, on February 6th, 2015, our country's highest court of appeal struck down two sections of the Criminal Code.

Following this landmark Supreme Court decision, the federal government was permitted some time to decide a strategy and legislation to implement the results of *Carter v. Canada*. In June 2016, the federal government put forward Bill C-14 in the House of Commons, which permitted doctor-assisted death for patients who were terminally ill. Of significance, on June 17th, 2016, a majority vote in the House of Commons passed an amendment to Bill C-14. After the amendment was approved and implemented to Bill C-14, the bill allowed for individuals suffering

from incurable illness, whose natural death was quotably foreseeable, to be eligible for the medically assisted death. Ultimately, Bill C-14 amended the Criminal Code to allow Canadians who are at least 18 years of age and who are suffering with grievous medical condition to voluntarily obtain medical assisted–assistance in dying.

Our new government's Bill 17 amends the fatality inquiries and vital statistics amendment act in order to accommodate these federal changes. Typically, when a death is unexpected and the cause of death is not immediately known, or when the death is the result of violence due to an accident, homicide or, of a particular relevance here, suicide, it will be investigated by the office of the Chief Medical Examiner. However, our amendment to the act will ensure that when there is a death resulting from the procedure of medically assisted dying, when it complies with the Criminal Code and is not a suicide or a homicide, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner will not be involved with the death. Ultimately, medically assisted death will not be considered a homicide or a suicide; it will be considered a natural death.

Bill 17 gives physicians the ability to administer the death and issue burial certificates without the involvement of the medical examiner's investigation, allowing for families to make timely funeral arrangements. Bill 17 also requires a framework of information to be gathered on medically assisted deaths to meet federal reporting requirements. It is important to note that the Chief Medical Examiner will still provide oversight, and our government will propose making the reporting requirement mandatory. The amendment will require regulatory power under The Fatality Inquiries Act to permit regulations to be developed regarding reporting requirements. The information will be for provincial and federal governments, allowing for national statistics to be gathered.

This is a new law in Canada, and the information will be essential for any future changes or updates that may be required. Statistical requirements have not yet been determined by the federal government, but we advise they will be—we expect they will be very shortly.

* (15:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amendments set out in Bill 17 respect the rights Manitobans now have, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, to access medical assistance in dying. Our new government is

empathetic to families who are experiencing the trauma of having loved ones who are so painfully ill. Situations that involve the need for assisted dying are never easy. Without the changes in Bill 17, these families would need to wait for an investigation to take place before funeral arrangements can be made.

It is understandable that most families in this situation would want to have as little process as possible when making funeral arrangements and that this is what Bill 17 provides.

We are proud to put forward this bill and, as an MLA for the great constituency of River East, I support this bill wholeheartedly.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's nice to stand today and put a few words on the record regarding Bill 17, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment and Vital Statistics Amendment Act.

I was pleased to see that earlier this year the federal government began standing up for Canadians who have been calling for greater access to medical assistance in dying. We, as Canadians, should be proud that we have the option to live our lives with dignity. With the change, Canadians now have the choice for when they choose to end their lives. That is also something that we should be proud of.

This is a crucial change that will impact the lives of many Canadians, including our very own Manitobans, along with their friends, their families and their loved ones. It is important to discuss Bill 17 here in the Chamber, even though it is a sensitive issue. Those who seek assisted dying must be recognized and listened to when it comes to the government's role on this issue. Our provincial government needs to work with the federal government, the Supreme Court, medical professionals and patients.

With Bill 17 I am concerned because of the uncertainty of what medical assistance means in Manitoba. The bill states that the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council may make regulations for the purpose of monitoring medical assistance in death. As medical assistance in dying is a reality, it leaves me uncertain of what role this government believes it has in ensuring the legitimacy of assisted dying in the province.

In order to make the strongest regulations on medical assistance dying the government needs to

work very closely with health professionals at every level. This is something I look forward to being discussed further in depth at committee.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Good afternoon, Deputy Speaker. I am honoured to stand before you and the House this afternoon to put a few words on record for Bill 17, the fatality inquiries and vital statistics amendment act.

Bill 17 is in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Carter v. Canada* and the subsequent legislation passed by the Parliament of Canada on medically assisted dying.

Bill 17 will update the vital statistics and fatality inquiries act. Bill 17 will clarify that a death, because of a procedure which complies with the Criminal Code, will not require the Chief Medical Examiner to become involved with the death. It will also put in place provisions for information gathering and reporting.

Madam Speaker, I reference *Carter v. Canada* in this groundbreaking case; Kay Carter suffered from degenerative spinal stenosis, and her family challenged the prohibition on doctor-assisted death by arguing it was in contradiction to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The case went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada which, on February 6th, 2015, in a momentous decision, struck down two sections of the Criminal Code. Until this ruling, the right to doctor-assisted death had been denied, and a doctor who assisted someone in doing so would have been committing a crime.

Due to the Supreme Court decision, the Canadian Parliament was allowed time to implement the new legislation. In June 2016, the House of Commons passed a bill, Bill C-14, which allows for doctor-assisted suicide for individuals with terminal illnesses.

On June 17th, 2016, a majority vote in the House of Commons passed an amended bill. The final bill allowed for individuals suffering from incurable illness whose natural death is reasonably foreseeable, to be eligible for the medically assisted death.

In keeping with the legislation which the Government of Canada has recently enacted, Manitoba's new government is making changes to harmonize our legislation with the new federal law.

The changes will respect the rights of Manitobans in accordance with the court's decision.

This bill changes the legislation governing the role of the medical examiner. The office of the 'medil' examiner is currently required to investigate cases of homicide and suicide. This bill will classify doctor-assisted death as a natural death and, therefore, the medical examiner will not be required to investigate the cause of death of an individual who has had medical assistance in dying.

This does not mean the office of the medical examiner is completely uninvolved. The chief medical officer will still provide oversight, and our government will propose making a mandatory reporting requirement. However, they will no longer be required to launch an investigation. We think that this requirement is unnecessary and can be safely eliminated.

Physicians will be able to administer the death and issue death certificates without involving the Chief Medical Examiner. This will allow family members to proceed with funeral and burial arrangements in a timely manner without having to wait for an investigation to take place to determine the type of death.

Our government is empathetic to families dealing with this situation. Usually, these families have been dealing with family members who have had a prolonged illness. Our government wants to honour and respect the choices and rights of all the individuals involved.

Deputy Speaker, this bill will further provide a framework for the collection of information on medically-assisted deaths to be provided to and to meet the federal government requirements. The amendments add regulatory power to the 'fatality' inquiries act to permit the development of regulations regarding reporting requirements. The information will be useful to both the federal and provincial governments, allowing for national statistics to be gathered and regulations to be improved. This is a new law in Canada, and the information gathered is essential for any future changes or required updates.

At this moment, the federal government has not put any requirements in place for statistical information gathering. However, we expect that they will be moving on that shortly, and our government wants to be prepared.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 17, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment and Vital Statistics Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 14—The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Yes, we'd like to call Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act, continue debate on that, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: To resume the interrupted debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), second reading of Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon, who has 22 minutes remaining.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): However shall I fill 22 minutes? I'll find a way.

Let's just get back to everybody understands what this bill is about. It's about actually releasing the information on severance pay, which is, in essence, a very good idea and an idea that we support. However—there's always a however—well, not always, I wish there wasn't always a however, but it seems with this government there's always a however—

An Honourable Member: Sometimes there's a but.

Mr. Lindsey: Sometimes a but.

The problem is with this bill is it doesn't quite go far enough, does it. It doesn't talk about financial disclosure for everybody's severance. There's certain criteria that have to be met, and some of their political staff will not meet that criteria. It's people that have an employment agreement, which apparently not everybody that gets hired has an employment agreement, which I'm sure is interesting information for a lot of the folks back home that don't realize necessarily how all this government

business works. I know it was certainly enlightening for myself to realize that some people get agreements for employment that they have to comply with, whereas other people of a more political nature, I guess, they get a separate kind of agreement, I guess. It's not an employment agreement. It's not an official document.

* (15:20)

So then the citizens of Manitoba are left in the dark on those particular people's severance agreement, and, really, those severance agreements are probably very critical pieces of information that the citizens of Manitoba would dearly love to find out about: the truly political hacks, if you will, that get hired and fired and—as they fall in and out of favour with particular governments at the time. Those are the ones that we'd really like to know, not just what their severance package is, I guess, but what their total pay package is. And, certainly, that will hold true for governments going forward.

So, while the basis of this particular piece of legislation seemed like a good idea, as I said, there's always that however that comes into play, that doesn't capture everybody that's going to have severance that leaves the employ of the government or the Legislative Assembly. The other concern that became apparent when we had the briefing on this bill was that there's no hard and fast rules going to be around what that disclosure looks like, which then allows, of course, for all sorts of political games to be played in what gets reported, what the numbers are, what do they mean. It's bad enough that we don't report for everybody, but now everybody that does get reported won't get reported the same way.

So, you know, for a government that stands up at every opportunity they get to tout themselves and their openness and transparency, really, it's bills like this and many other statements that they make in the—in this House that lead people to believe that they're not that open and not that interested in transparency because this bill clearly isn't as open and transparent—*[interjection]*—in six months, it could be interesting, all right. This bill clearly isn't as open and transparent and doesn't leave the people of Manitoba with a very clear picture of what those severance packages are going to be going forward because, as I've said, the way the legislation is worded at present—and, perhaps, maybe there'll be the opportunity through amendments at some point to actually make this bill a workable bill. Certainly, we haven't seen much of an interest in the

government working together unless you capitulate and merely go along with whatever they've suggested. They haven't really accepted any amendments that we've made so far, so I don't have a whole lot of confidence that that's going to take place going forward either. I certainly hope that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his ministers and the back-benchers will come to realize that the words they speak about open and transparency and working together for a better Manitoba will actually be what they come to believe at some point in time and they'll actually use them as a way of governing, not just as empty words that we see so far.

It's kind of a shame because for a new member of this Legislative Assembly I was looking forward to be able to work, even in opposition, towards making a better Manitoba. I guess my difference was I was interested in making a better Manitoba for all Manitobans, not just a select few that this government seems to be interested in. And it becomes clear, again, with this piece of legislation, that there's certain groups of people, if you will, or individual people that they want to exempt from the rules or have different rules for those people. And it's all about the people with privilege with this government holding on to that privilege and their financial disclosure, their severance, not being open to public scrutiny.

And that's what's wrong with this bill and, really, that's what's wrong with this government, I guess, is the illusion of the words they use rather than the reality of the words they use because the two are clearly different, and it doesn't matter whether it's this bill or Bill 7 or any other bill that they've put forward so far, really. The openness and transparency and the ability to consult and work together isn't what they're all about. And that's a shame for all Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that opportunities are missed. If you don't want to listen to other people and what they have to say, then you're going to miss the opportunity for better legislation.

And, really, what we've seen with this bill is it certainly is a step in the right direction, but it's not the be-all and end-all. And there's opportunities for improvements to this particular piece of legislation, and those are the improvements, certainly, that—while we support the general concept of the bill—we're certainly in favour of there being some amendments or changes made to the content of the bill so that it truly does become an open and transparent piece of legislation that leads to the open and transparent disclosure of severance packages to

all people that it should apply to, not just to a select few.

I see some of the members opposite think that's kind of humorous, that they don't believe in really open and transparent, which is kind of a shame, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that their constituents are probably as concerned as mine are that, perhaps, maybe they should be more open and transparent. And they're missing the opportunity, if you will, to demonstrate that that's really what this government is about. Of course, what we've seen is that's not really what this government is about. So I guess I'm not overly optimistic that things that will make this bill better will actually be introduced because I suspect very strongly those very things that we've talked about are the—been left out on purpose, that—certainly, I wouldn't ever suggest that the members opposite aren't capable of drafting legislation, because they very clearly are capable of drafting that. It's unfortunate that they let their ideological thought process influence their ability to draft really good legislation, and that leaves all of us worse off rather than better off.

As I've said repeatedly, that we hope to be able to work with the government opposite to make this piece of legislation better, which will lead to a better Manitoba, which will lead to a more open and transparent government that all Manitobans really look forward to seeing and will lead to less, I guess, skepticism on the part of the voters, the citizens of this province, towards politicians in general. Because when we aren't open and transparent, then people become somewhat jaded with the concept of what a politician is and what we do in this House. And, certainly, we should have the ability in this House to do really good things. And, certainly, there has been good things done in the past, and I think I can speak for all of our 14 members on this side of the House that we want to be a part of good legislation going forward, good legislation that will address all the concerns that Manitobans have. And, really, this is an ideal opportunity to do that very thing that we're talking about.

Leaving the disclosure mechanism open to the interpretation of whatever minister's there on that particular day without having a hard and fast rule as to what that disclosure should look like so that it's the same information reported for the people that are going to get this severance, so that it's the same information every time that's understandable to members of this Legislative Assembly, that it's understandable to the people of Manitoba, that

that's—should be a critical part of, really, I guess, any legislation that we pass in this province is that everybody can understand what the outcome is, everybody can understand the information that's provided.

* (15:30)

Now, right now, the way this legislation is worded, that certainly could lead to that not being the case going forward, and, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's probably not the right way to draft any kind of legislation—excuse me for that—so the purpose of the legislation, I guess, is really to make sure that there is proper disclosure. That's what the name of the act is, so it's unfortunate that this government, again, if I could reiterate one more time, it's not just about the words that they use; it's about what the true meaning of those words are so that this government actually does go down the path towards open and transparency. And what better way to do it than with this bill, with this bill that's before us for debate today, that really can show that they actually mean what they say, that they're going to be open, they're going to be transparent.

There's not going to be attempts to hide what they're saying in future so that people don't understand what the numbers are because they're not reported the same way every time, and, really, when this open and transparent government tries to leave individuals or groups of individuals out of this legislation, as they've attempted to leave groups of individuals out of the future prosperity of Manitoba, Manitobans need to say that's not right.

And, certainly, this caucus, this NDP caucus on this side of the House, will stand and say that's not right. It's not right in this case; it's not right in the case of Bill 7; it's just, again, playing to a select audience, I guess, that they don't want to have everybody who gets severance have that number reported, and it's really too bad.

You know, again, we're hoping that throughout the process, you know, this bill will at some point go to committee hearings and there'll be people able to make presentations—well, maybe not. Certainly, some committee meetings we've seen of late would lead one to believe that there's not going to be much of an opportunity to really have a wholesome discussion at those committee meetings. When the committees get shut down and the members that are trying to ask legitimate questions about bills so that maybe we can make those bills better and really bring out any shortfalls and really understand what

those bills are about, when that process gets hijacked, it doesn't leave us with a lot of confidence that, in the next instance, that there'll be a spirit of co-operation that traditionally has taken place with the committees.

So, I mean, this bill, when it gets to committee, we've all been asked to support it, and we do, with reservation, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, reservation tempered by the fact that there's ways to make it better. But how will we go about doing that if, at the committee level, we're not allowed to speak, we're not allowed to ask the questions to fully delve into what the government's intent was? And maybe they have a really good set of answers as to why they've left select groups of people out of the legislation, that they don't want to have them report their severances.

How will we ever know that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the system becomes hijacked to the extent that the official opposition is not free to ask those questions and, really, to get answers, because that seems to be, of—if I may, a bit of a shortfall with the government—is not strong on answering the questions that are asked of them, either in the House or in the committee, from what I've seen. And I'll admit I'm pretty new to this process, but I've seen some committees that worked reasonably well. There was the first committee meetings I ever went to, for example. There was speakers came out and asked questions, and the process seemed like a almost reasonable process, but, certainly, the process we saw last Friday wasn't reasonable and wouldn't lead us to think that there was going to be a lot of opportunity first to make improvements to this bill.

And this bill is a very important piece of legislation that we appreciate the fact that the government has put it on the table for discussion. Well, not really for discussion I guess we're hoping for discussion on it, and certainly I would hope that the government is—has listened to some of the words that have been spoken on this particular issue to make sure that changes can be made to this particular piece of legislation to make it really and truly a meaningful piece of legislation that provides the people of Manitoba with information that, really, the people of Manitoba are entitled to. So there is a process by which that can take place.

I mean, this debate on that particular bill is one part of the process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but there would be other opportunities—or, there should be other opportunities, I guess, going forward to have a

meaningful and wholesome discussion and, hopefully, the government will listen to some of the suggestions that are put forward. And I wouldn't for one minute suggest that they should just blindly accept every suggestion that we make, I mean, as good as they are, maybe there's a reason why some of those suggestions aren't workable, but I would hope that they would, at least, be open to sitting down and listening because, as I pointed out repeatedly time after time after time on the debate on this particular piece of legislation—that, again, we support in principle—that there is improvements that can be made that really would show the government is committed to open and transparent government, that they're really committed to working together with all members of this Legislative Assembly to make legislation that's good, that's better, that will really lead to a better Manitoba at the end of the day.

So, just as a form of recap, I guess what's wrong with the legislation, what needs to be fixed with it is a couple of really important things. Making sure that the disclosure of severance covers all people that get severance, that there isn't a select class of people that we have no idea what they've gotten paid, we have no idea what they've gotten paid for their term of employment and, now, we'll have no idea of what they get as part of their severance package as well. And that's too bad because those political-type positions that get hired and fired at the whim of the government are, really, an important piece of information that the people of Manitoba—that the members of this Legislative Assembly should have so that they can discuss it so that those types of things can be part of why changes in the future are contemplated and made because, as the numbers become apparent and come out, maybe there's a way to change the way the employment process takes place once everybody's fully aware of what those employment agreements are and what the severances are and—so that people understand that information.

The other part, of course, as part of the wrap up, is there need to be very clear regulation as to how that information is disseminated, how that information is reported so that it's reported in the same format every time so that everybody fully understands and has the ability—because the numbers are reported in such a way that everybody has the ability to understand what those numbers mean, and that they mean the same thing with this person that's been given severance as they mean with that person that's been given severance so that it's a relatively simple request, I guess.

* (15:40)

But it's those things that are missing from this particular piece of legislation that cause us concern that we're certainly hoping there'll be the opportunity to make amendments, to make changes that the government will listen and be willing to actually live up to the words that they say, that they want to work together with everybody to make legislation better—better for Manitobans so that, actually, this province of ours will be good and better for all Manitobans not just for some Manitobans. That's where we want to go. That's what we want to be a part of, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is making this province the most-improved province for all Manitobans, not just for a select few. And I—only one of them's cheering, which is—I guess the rest of them don't believe it any more than I do that that's what this government's about.

So, you know, we need to make sure that we're a part of this process. We want to be a part of this process. We—oh, they've woken up. We want to make sure that this legislation is the best piece of legislation—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the member from Flin Flon for adding his comments to the record. I think that's a wonderful part of our democracy is the ability to stand in the House and be able to respectfully disagree with each other.

I do rise in the House today, though, to put some facts on the record of my own, and I—this time, for the benefit of our members, I promise to put on more than one sentence, so we will get on with that. There we go.

On April 19th, for the first time in 17 years, Manitobans went to the polls to elect a new Progressive Conservative government. The reasons that Manitobans voted for change are numerous, but key issues were instrumental in that decision. Many Manitobans felt that transparency was an important fact when casting a ballot that day in April. Although this marked an historic win for our caucus, we know that this election was about Manitobans, their future and their well-being. It was time to put to rest old partisan battles and see to it that this Legislature be filled with a new government with the majority of its caucus being brand new members and new MLAs.

I also note that members opposite are new as well in this Legislature, and I welcome their new

enthusiasm and fresh ideas. In fact, we just saw the honourable interim Leader of the Liberal Party is a brand new member herself, and so we do congratulate her and welcome her to this team in the Legislature.

I would hope that this would usher in an era of political co-operation. And this includes bracing new ideas and new ways of doing business. Upon forming government, we have set out a number of goals aimed at making Manitoba the most-improved province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have insisted that Manitobans have hired us to fix the finances, repair our services and rebuild the economy. We've also promised Manitobans a more 'transparency' government.

As part of this ambitious goal, we have introduced Bill 14. This bill will ensure that political—or, also known as technical officers—and secondment contracts and 'severant' payments are disclosed. Taxpayers expect integrity in the hiring and severance processes, and this bill ensures this. The public has a right to know how government dollars are being spent, especially when it comes to advisers to the government. Government advisers are paid with taxpayers' dollars, and should have no problem with this type of information being disclosed to Manitobans. In fact, all members here in the Legislature are paid by the government of Manitoba and, therefore, the taxpayer, and all of our salaries and benefits are disclosed to the public as well. Bill 14 ensures timely disclosure of severances: 30 days after completion. This bill will be retroactive to include current staff hired by our newly elected Progressive Conservative government.

You know, when I'm out in the community, people tell me how much they appreciate accountability and transparency in government. After all, we as members in this Chamber were elected to treat taxpayers' money with the utmost respect. The public has a right to know how government dollars are being spent, especially when it comes to high-ranking advisers in the administration. This practice is a far cry from practices of a previous government. Let's recall that, in November 14th, 2014, Manitoba's taxpayers were on the hook for the former premier's chief of staff severance to the tune of more than \$146,000. Now, it's interesting to bring up the former chief of staff and his severance, because, indeed, his salary was a very handsome salary at best. And it's just interesting to put on the record that how much the average—how much people

would need to make to—or how much the average Manitoban would have to work to earn that type of salary.

Now, Tim Hortons' employees would have to work roughly eight years to earn that salary. A Winnipeg Transit driver would take six years, a Manitoba nurse—just over three, a Winnipeg police detective would be two and a half years. It seems strange that the members opposite claim to stand up for the working Manitoban when, in fact, one of their highest advisers is being paid a very handsome figure, not only to work there, but, to be fired, they pay him out to the tune of \$146,000. And, you know, that's something that Manitobans should definitely be informed about.

As a former staffer myself, I know that a staffer's job is to aid the elected official in serving the best interests of the public. So it's not to get caught up with internal political battles. Using political staff who, again, are paid on the taxpayers' dime and using them for any other reason is disingenuous and disrespectful to hard-working Manitobans and hard-working families.

Manitobans do not pay taxes so that money can be used for political gain or to settle political scores. Manitobans did not vote for us as members to bring internal 'caucus' revolts to the public sphere. Manitobans did vote and pay taxes to governments so that their best interests are always kept in mind.

It is certainly not the role of a sitting government to pay a handsome amount to a staffer to leave in the middle of a caucus issue. In other words, the government of the day decide to pay out Mr. Martin as a problem, a problem that will just go away to the tune of \$146,000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, did the former government use taxpayers' money to pay off a staffer for not taking sides in the political fight or perhaps taking the wrong side in a political fight?

The Manitoba Ombudsman investigated the NDP cover-up, and it was revealed that the political payouts were not based on layoff, terms of employment or contracts, but were negotiated to resolve a labour-relations dispute.

We also saw the departure, around that time, of Anna Rothney, another adviser to the then-premier of this province. It was said that the previous premier's—she was the previous premier's closest and most powerful political adviser. Instead of spending her time working for the benefit of taxpayers, she

ended up taking leave to work on a leadership campaign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unlikely that this kind of shenanigans would occur in any other organization. Had this happened, say, in a private sector setting, it would be considered a slight to the owners, the shareholders or other investors.

So why, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would we not extend that same respect to hard-working taxpayers?

The logic of the former government seems to be that well, when there's an internal problem, we use taxpayers' dollars to fix it. Why spend one dollar when you can just as easily spend three? There's no wonder that our government inherited historic debt levels from the previous administration. In fact, we took over after a decade of debt, decline and decay. But rest assured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government was hired to fix the finances, rebuild the economy and repair our services.

The office of the Manitoba Ombudsman has indicated that its view that senior civil servants should have limited expectations of privacy when it comes to their salary, benefits and severance. Public money should be the subject to public scrutiny.

The Province of Manitoba has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the public purse and carry out the work we were elected to carry out. Under The Civil Service Act, civil service employees are referred to as technical officers. While the annual salary is subject to the same rules as civil servants, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen that it is important that these technical officers be accounted for in the most transparent and honest way possible.

*(15:50)

This act is but one small piece of a larger set of changes that our government has committed to undertake. It will introduce the concept of severance to the act and require that severance payments to technical officers be reported publicly within 30 days of payment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the act will make clear that employment contracts and secondment agreements of technical officers will be made public. The act will be dated to the day our Cabinet was sworn in and ensures that our government will be accountable more so than any Cabinet before us.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I again want to thank members opposite and all members in this House for speaking on this bill and putting their views on the

record. The member from Flin Flon had brought forward his concerns and his views on this particular piece of legislation, and, you know, on this side of the House, we've long said that we don't believe that anybody or any one institution has a monopoly on good ideas. So, of course, we're always welcoming new ideas and welcoming thoughts on how we can introduce legislation and what ways we can improve legislation. But the end of the day, I do encourage members opposite to support this bill. You know, we were elected to do a few things: represent our constituents, represent Manitobans, but also respect their hard-earned taxpayers' money. If we can't respect the money that was given to us in good faith, then I don't think that members in this Chamber would be doing their job.

This new government was elected on April 19th with a mandate to be responsible to the taxpayer and to make sure that expenses, anything that—expenditures and salaries be made public and transparency would be the key to earning trust, rebuild trust that has been broken in this province for 17 years. Now, I know many new members from across the aisle have—were not here under the previous administration. They did—not responsible for the 17 years of debt, decay and decline. So I encourage these new members to represent their constituents and fulfill this mandate that helps make Manitoba's government more transparent and makes sure that the Manitoba taxpayer is indeed respected.

I know I can hear members opposite interjecting, and, again, you know, of course, I—we always welcome their comments. But, at the end of the day, if they do not support Bill 14, I suspect that anyone who rose and spoke in this House was talking for the sake of speaking, not necessarily for the sake of putting—interjecting good suggestions into this piece of legislation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, if we were in any other institution, as I had already mentioned, whether you were working for a small company or a big company, investors would have the right to know how their money's being spent. If you owned a small company, a small-business owner—and there are many small-business owners in this Legislature, I know, on all sides of the House—they would expect to know how their employees and management is spending their money. So, if we as elected officials can't do the same, then there's a serious problem.

When I knock on doors in my community, I ask—*[interjection]* No, it's—when I ask constituents, the

very question is how can we serve you better, how can we be of services to you and how, as your MLA, can I represent you in the Legislature, the last thing anyone would ever say to me is, you know what, I would like to see less transparency in government. I've never heard that from the lips of a voter, from the lips of a taxpayer. But what I do think I hear, and I've heard during the campaign and even after the campaign when I continued to door knock, people are impressed with our new Premier (Mr. Pallister), our new government, and the new way of doing things.

I know members opposite laughed, but I can only assume they're laughing along with us in support of the new Premier. So I really thank them for the support of our new government and new way of doing things, because I know that they are as concerned as we are when it comes to making sure that the public purse is protected and that we have transparency in the way that money is being spent by the hard-working taxpayer.

Manitoba, under our government, is on its way to becoming the most improved province in this country. Over the past 17 years, we have seen an unfortunate decline in our status in the federation. We'd spent the most on health care and got some of the worst results, spent the most on education and, again, some of the worst results.

Now, I believe it was the member from Steinbach who once said during a debate, during the campaign, if you don't care about results, you just don't care. In fact, the Premier says that too. If you don't care about results, you just don't care. And that's unfortunate because I believe that Manitobans elected us to deliver results. Otherwise, why are we here? *[interjection]* Well, I could ask the members the same question, of court, why we're here, but I think Manitobans on April 19th sent them a very strong message why we're here, and that's why the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba was elected to form a majority government while members opposite laid in defeat.

So I thank the members opposite for interjecting again, but, you know, at the end of the day, Manitobans selected us to represent their interests. And to argue with Manitoban voters and the taxpayers was disingenuous and unparliamentary. So I thank members for interjecting again, but the Manitoba—our new Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of our Premier, is well on its way to making Manitoba the most improved

province and getting back to the basics of delivering services, delivering results and making Manitoba a transparent province and a transparent government that Manitoba taxpayers will know that when they pay—or when they pay their taxes that their taxes are going to things that matter to them and not for political priorities and political fights that we've seen from members across.

Today we stand here in the House, as we do every day, and we believe it's our duty and our responsibility to represent the good folks who sent us here to the Legislature. No matter your political stripe, no matter your background, we have a very diverse group of people here in this Legislature from different, different backgrounds, whether they're ethnically, whether it's work and career related, culturally; we have folks from the military or former military veterans in this caucus. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's important to draw on these people for their expertise.

If the members opposite would like to engage with the new government and actually provide constructive criticism or constructive suggestions, we are open to that, of course. You know, the prebudget consultation is one case in point, but I'm not going to go there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that in light of what's happened in this province over the past six months—and I said, again, as I door knock in my community, I have heard nothing but people being happy with the direction that this government is going. These are people that I've door-knocked during the campaign, many of them who said they don't know who they're supporting. They've come back and they've said: We're glad that the PC government is now in power. I've heard this from countless numbers of people. When I'm in the community or I'm in the store in my community, I always hear that. So I want—*[interjection]*—the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) popularity does indeed show this. Just recently we saw, again, the second most popular premier in Canada. That is by no mistake. That is not a mistake.

You know, the people are never wrong in a democracy. And I think on April 19th, we all learned a valuable lesson on both sides of what happens when the people speak, and that's why we're here today. And I know that my colleagues—I've got to know many of my colleagues over the past six months, and I've been very impressed with the calibre of candidates that came forward and the

calibre of MLAs that got elected. Notwithstanding the current Cabinet that we do have serving under Premier Brian Pallister, we see an incredible dedication not only to this province—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. *[inaudible]*

Mr. Smith: My apologies.

* (16:00)

But, under the leadership of this current Premier, we have seen an incredible leadership in province. But not only that, we've seen an incredible amount of talent and enthusiasm behind that. We know this is a team. Our government works and our caucus works as a team—a united team that is focused on delivering results for the people of Manitoba. You can't run a province without teamwork. And look no further than the past year or two years from members opposite, when they refused to work as a team and, in fact, they decided to run against their own leader. And that is not why we're here. We were never sent to the Legislature to run against our leaders, to run against our team. We were there to work as a team for the people of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I—it is such a privilege today to speak on Bill 14 and to discuss its merits and argue its merits. Again, disclosure is important. In our households we have—we would not disclose our financial situation to our spouses, to our family members, right, we work as a team. Households that are successful work as a team. Our provincial caucus, our Progressive Conservative caucus works as a team. And, because of that, we are very confident in our ability to be successful in making Manitoba the most improved province. And I don't underscore that enough, that Manitoba is well on its way to become the most improved province in this country. When a government rose all in the same direction, you actually move in a direction. When everyone's paddling different directions—and we've seen that before—you go in circles and get nowhere. And results are never achieved.

So I know, again, members opposite have interjected and are putting—hoping to put facts on the record, I guess. But the fact will remain that, on April 19th, Manitobans voted for change. And again, to argue with that would be nothing short of disingenuous. With an historic win, a historic win in the last 100 years, I think it's very clear that Manitobans are happy with the direction that this province is going.

I listen to question period, I listen to questions from members opposite—I have never once heard any of those issues brought up at a door when I'm door knocking post-election. So I'm not entirely sure where these questions are coming from. But, in fact, if members opposite would like to spend more time talking to their constituents and finding out what the real issues are, we'd be happy to discuss that. But until that time comes, you know, I suspect it's more just putting points on the record rather than actually engaging with Manitobans.

During this election campaign, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I knocked on literally thousands of doors, and I know that every member in this Chamber has probably done the same, but I've never once heard or have been asked if this government—or, if elected, would this new Progressive Conservative government spend more time trying to hide and obfuscate the facts, try and spend more time hiding political salaries for political staff. That is not what a government ought to be doing.

As the member—as the MLA for Southdale—and I know that members all across the Chamber here today, your constituents—our constituents never once suggested or voted for us so that we could gain politically from their taxpayers' money. Never. We were elected to represent them. We were elected to represent Manitoba and make sure that Manitobans are well served and well represented in the Chamber. And I think, with our new caucus here being—vast majority of them—brand-new MLAs, they've done a fantastic job here, and they're going to continue to do a fantastic job going forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that, if you were to do a poll on Manitobans—and there was a poll done, of course, showing that our Premier (Mr. Pallister) is one of the most popular premiers in Canada—but, if you were to do a poll on Manitobans and ask them what their most important issues were, I sincerely doubt that any of those questions that are brought up in question period, for the most part, would ever even show up on the radar. Half of those questions, I'm sure, most Manitobans have never heard of.

So I think, in all honesty and in all fairness, to get back to the basics of representing and good governance, we need to start listening to Manitobans. And that's why our government embarked on an ambitious plan to reach out to Manitobans in the prebudget consultation. And why, then, do members opposite feel it's within their purview not to represent

their constituents by providing valuable input during those consultations? You know, hey, if anyone asked me as a non-MLA, if I was prior to my election and asked me if I wanted to participate in a budget consultation, I'd be happy to. I think many Manitobans would be very happy to do the same thing. I know a lot of small-business owners, community volunteers and people who have a vested interest in this province, they would be very much inclined to attend these consultations.

So, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do sincerely want to say that I am very honoured to be here today to be able to speak to Bill 14 and hope that members opposite will indeed—*[interjection]*—I see that the member seems to agree with me on this—but that—if Manitobans were to put confidence in us as members in this Legislature, then we should have the decency to show them respect in kind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to reiterate the importance of Bill 14, disclosing political staff salary and severance. I don't believe that anybody, any political staff who was let go, especially for political reasons, not picking a side or picking the wrong side, in a political fallout within a caucus, should be paid 146-plus thousand dollars. I don't know any position—if you were a small-business owner and your company for some reason had a cash flow problem or you ran into financial difficulty, would you receive a \$146,000 payout just to protect you? Most jobs get, what, two weeks' severance and you're out.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So, again, Madam Speaker, I do want to reiterate the importance of at least showing Manitobans and providing them with the avenue to find out what political staff are being paid out when they leave government. The highest levels of government should always be under the microscope because when no one's watching, that's when unbecoming activities occur.

So let's be clear, Madam Speaker. I am proud to stand here and support Bill 14. I know that my colleagues support Bill 14. I know our government supports Bill 14. And all I ask is that the members opposite support Bill 14.

An Honourable Member: We're all together on this one.

Mr. Smith: Well, there we go. Absolutely. Thank you so much. The members from across the way have just agreed that they support Bill 14, and I'm

glad that they've done an about turn given the fact that 17 years prior, they would never even have thought of this because that might have exposed some of their internal strife within their caucus, notwithstanding their—the payouts that they used to pay away a problem. You can't make a problem go away by throwing money at it, but you seem to be able to do that when you're in politics. And that, to me, is a poor use of government money, a poor use of the taxpayers' money and a poor use and a disrespect to the good, hard-working Manitobans who have sent us here in good faith that we will respect their hard-earned dollars, Madam Speaker.

*(16:10)

Thank you, and, Madam Speaker, I also want to say that we are—as a government, we are very, very humbled to be representing the people of Manitoba, that, you know, when we knocked on doors and we asked Manitobans for their support, we believe that we were—it's our fiduciary duty to respect their money and respect their hard work, that they have put faith in this government to govern this province and to make sure that Manitoba is on its way to becoming the most improved province in Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I'm quite honoured to have the opportunity to speak in the House again and to rise before you and put a few words on the record regarding this bill.

Again, I'm very proud to speak to this bill if it's, you know, going to give time to my esteemed colleagues across the way to figure out what it is that they want to do here in government because to date we have seen no answers to that question. We've seen no plan, seen very little in the way of direction.

So we're left with questions and if, you know, putting a few words on the record will help our colleagues on the other side to strategize and to update their message box, to update their speaking notes, to respond to the current reality facing our province, then I'm certainly prepared to do my part to help that along.

I think my colleague from Southdale may have lost track of the new message box, the new speaking notes for his caucus. As we saw, they've clearly retired the I-went-knocking-on-doors line and—because when he brought it out, no one in the House seemed to be willing to knock on the doors, at least for the first time. But then they remembered that

when you say I went knocking on doors, everyone in the House on their side is supposed to start knocking, right.

So it's good that we're seeing a recitation, a rehearsal, a practice of the, you know, 2016 election's greatest hits, and you know hearing the speaking points that—*[interjection]* Well, when they talk about historic election they are right in the respect that it is the first time in history that I was elected by the people of Fort Rouge. It was also the first time in history that my colleague from St. Johns was elected, the first time in history my colleague from Flin Flon was elected also. So, right there, historic in many, many different senses.

But, in all seriousness, you know, this bill that we're debating here, Bill 14, it will have some real impacts on, you know, how things operate both here in the Legislative Building but also across the province in Manitoba.

Speaking as somebody who spent many years as a journalist, I know that this type of disclosure, it does play a role in our democratic process. It helps to provide information that journalists can report on, journalists can write their stories about, journalists can create posts about for their web portals and so on and so forth. And inasmuch as having a free press is crucial to the free and open function of our democratic system then I think that this will certainly contribute to that end.

As we know, journalists typically do like to report on disclosures of the compensation of those in the public sector when they have access to those figures. I can recall doing the same during some of my time as a journalist, and I've been provided speaking notes which shows the figures paid out to Progressive Conservative officials, caucus members, even, you know, elected officials who've been paid severance in the past. I don't want to go on to read all those names and figures into the record at this time but just merely to highlight the fact that these disclosures, when published by arms of the government, do find their way into the media and then, of course, those media reports are out there for the benefit of all Manitobans including, at times, you know, caucus staffers from the various political parties here in the House.

But, hopefully, also—you know, just the average, everyday Manitoban is also able to access those things and is able to avail themselves of that resource so that they can have a fuller understanding of where

their taxpayer dollars are going, and also of what is being done in their name.

And so those are all notable goals. I am, of course, a firm believer in the importance of a free press, of a free and open press, and also the ability to have access to information. I think, in particular, you look at the way our society is going with the fact that we're in a knowledge economy in the information age, it is—of course—crucial that we do have these type of disclosures, and that they—these disclosures be a regular and commonplace occurrence in our government.

We do, of course, have the freedom of information laws, FIPPA, FIA, things like that. But, of course, we shouldn't always rely on a journalist or an activist or an opposition researcher digging up these figures. They should be out there for people to come across by a simple Google search, and so, again, we're perfectly happy to support the bill that's been brought forward here today, though, of course, we have, you know, thoughts, concerns, notions even, as to ways that we might improve this bill or even, you know, improve the overall function of our parliamentary democracy, again, keeping those touchstone values of openness and transparency first and foremost.

You know, it was during my time as a journalist, Madam Speaker, that I was working on a story—you know, this was back in my non-partisan days—and I was working on a story during the lead-up to the 2011 provincial election, and I was quite privileged to spend an afternoon with the former auditor general of Manitoba, Carol Bellringer. Truly, you know, a good person, fine public servant, deserving of many accolades. I believe she's now carrying out a similar function in British Columbia. But the reason why I spent the afternoon with the former auditor general is that, you know, I had some questions about the public disclosures that were going on at the time and, indeed, about the provincial budget, the Public Accounts. And so the Auditor General was very gracious and very generous with her time, sat with me there and walked me through how she exerted oversight over all those publicly disclosed documents, publicly filed accounts of public monies in our province.

And the thing that kind of sticks out in my memory about that afternoon is she actually showed me how to look up the salaries paid to, you know, public servants, people on the public payroll here in Manitoba. And so, of course, being a—you know—

young, enterprising journalist, my first thought was, well, why don't I look up the names of everyone who I know who works for government. And so, you know, made my way through the phone-book-sized list of all these various officials and kind of ooh'd and aah'd to myself. Oy, you know, don't want to put any of my, you know, acquaintances on blast, as the young people say nowadays, but, suffice it to say that, you know, anyone can go look up that information. But I did get a kick out of that discovery, you know, that I could go there and see the salaries paid out to many public officials.

And, of course, there is that sort of, you know, gawker, if you will, kind of inclination to look at those figures and to see how much a certain person is being paid, or to find out the salary that a certain class of employee for the provincial government might earn. But, again, it is much more deep and more profound than that. It's not merely about providing fodder for gossip or, you know, providing a little did-you-know-how-much-so-and-so-makes type of conversation.

* (16:20)

It really, really does have to do with the true exercise of parliamentary democracy in our province here because, as it turns out, the reason why I had these questions was because Tory operatives during that provincial election campaign were calling into question whether the Public Accounts of the Province could be relied on and were questioning whether the Auditor General herself could be counted on to deliver a full and open disclosure. In fact, one of the individuals that I spoke to while researching a story even went on to go and question the generally accepted accounting principles, right. And we've seen, you know, evidence of this sort of behaviour in the most recent session, too, where, you know, members opposite will claim the sky is green and, you know, the grass is red, and they insist that that might be the case so long as all their colleagues applaud wildly for them when they make these assertions.

But it's through the disclosures through, you know, this bill here that we're debating today as well as other initiatives in the pursuit of access to information, freedom to information, that we're able to verify claims such as those, that we're able to check the record and to look at what the facts tell us. So, in that instance, you know, I had heard certain questions being raised and, you know, went to the Manitoba AG and asked, so are the generally

accepted accounting principles really in dispute? Are these, you know, rules governing the profession really things that I should spend my time as a journalist questioning? And I was told by that independent officer, no, this is how the books are kept, not just in Manitoba but in most other comparable jurisdictions. And therefore we shouldn't be, you know, spending too much time on that, and rather just have a policy-based discussion, a policy-based debate on what those numbers and what those facts are telling us.

And so that was an eye-opener, if you will, for me just to begin to understand the importance of having public disclosure rules and things like that. I had, of course, been availing myself of these mechanisms, you know, filing ATIP requests at the federal level, filing FIPPA requests at the provincial level, so on, so forth, but I hadn't really thought about it, so to speak, up until that point when I reflected upon my conversation with the then-auditor general. And so it was a productive conversation, and it was one that I carry in my mind, in my new career of public service.

And, you know, it's upon entering this new endeavour that I expected disclosure, Madam Speaker. You know, I expect the salary that I earn as an MLA to be publicly disclosed. I expect the amounts that I spend under the members' allowance will be disclosed, and I do think that it's important to be accountable for those public dollars. It's important to be accountable, because it is a principle of trust, but it's also public monies that we're spending here. And, for me, it is a matter of principle to be very judicious with the money that we are paid and the money that we spend on behalf of the service of the people of Manitoba, because I always remind myself that, you know, every dollar, every taxpayer dollar, every public dollar that we spend is a dollar that could have been spent on something else. There is an opportunity cost.

And so I like to, you know, keep the expenses on the more frugal side, if you will—you know, in this realm, because I do know that if I'm spending a dollar from the members' allowance, that is potentially a dollar that could be spent on a young person in Manitoba. It is a dollar that could be spent educating a child in our province. It's a dollar that could potentially be spent offering palliative care to an elder. Could be a dollar diverted towards ensuring that seniors in our various constituencies have a good quality of life. And so I do take very seriously—not just the disclosure, not just the requirement that we

be open and transparent, but also the decision making that goes into these financial decisions and these spending decisions as well.

And, indeed, I would hope it is more than a dollar, right. I would hope that we can spend more than a dollar on all of these various initiatives. I wish that all of them could be adequately funded and supported to the extent necessary that every single Manitoban enjoys a high quality of life and has security of person and a great sense of well-being. Perhaps even more than that, that we might aspire, in this House, to encourage not just the maintenance of the sanctity of the individual but also that every person in our society might reach their full potential and find great meaning and a meaningful life; not just life itself but a great meaning to life. Whether such a person would find great meaning from debating Bill 14 in the Legislative Building, I'm not sure. The jury may be out on that. But I'm willing to give it a shot and, you know, report back on the findings thereof later on. Perhaps this will prove to be one of the real high points, perhaps not. Only time will tell.

So, while we're on the issue of disclosures and openness and transparency, you know, I'm reminded of a great English writer, George Orwell. You know, he wrote many classic works of literature; 1984 and Animal Farm come to mind. I read Animal Farm as a young boy living on the reserve in northwestern Ontario and, at the time, being a child—young child, I thought it was amazing to witness the allegory employed by Mr. Orwell. Of course, I didn't know what the word allegory meant at the time, but I was impressed nonetheless of how these pigs in the book Animal Farm had been so, you know, righteous and, you know, had been so upstanding in their rhetoric and, yet, had eventually taken to behaviours just like the former farm owner in the novel that they had sought to displace.

And then I think it was in high school where I read 1984 for the first time and, again, was brought to, you know, understand the greatness of this man's writing—Mr. Orwell's writing, and how he would, you know, introduce such concepts as Newspeak and doublethink into our political discourse. You know, ideas where people may have two cognitively dissonant ideas kept in their mind at the same time, but they would endeavour to entertain such fractious split thinking if they may be able to advance their position in a political party. Or, you know, the sort of Newspeak where, you know, propaganda may be deployed in the public sphere so as to divert attention

from, you know, the true intentions of a government. In this case, it was a dystopian government.

And, of course, far be it from me to try to, you know, employ these rather hearty adjectives that Mr. Orwell—or nouns, rather, that Mr. Orwell introduced into our, you know, contemporary discourse. But I do think that some of those theories might provide some insight as to how the current government is pursuing their very thin legislative agenda this session. I noted previously—the previous federal government, the Harper Conservatives, were said by many people to be Orwellian. They were said to be Orwellian in their operation because they would use language which suggested the exact opposite of what their legislation intended.

An Honourable Member: Doublespeak.

Mr. Kinew: So, for instance—yes. Well, doublespeak is actually a term that—I'm responding to a point raised by my colleague from Flin Flon who says the word doublespeak—it's actually sort of a compound of Newspeak and doublethink that was introduced by, you know, I guess political commentators based on the work of Mr. Orwell.

* (16:30)

And so, returning back to the point about the previous federal government, so—for instance, if something was unfair, they took to calling it fair. So, for instance, there was the—an act introduced at the federal level which many people thought was an unnecessary restriction of the franchise upon many people in our society, so they thought it was unfair to the electoral process. But this bill, when it was at the bill stage, was called The Fair Elections Act, so just a simple illustration.

An Honourable Member: Orwellian.

Mr. Kinew: That's right. The member from St. Boniface concurs that it is Orwellian, throwing his voice, casting his lot among the many others of those who have rejected that sort of policies.

Now, I'm not sure whether this, you know, particular bill falls under that rubric but, you know, it is concerning to see the current government pursue a tact where they, you know, have one agenda headed in one direction, but then they pursue messaging which diverts our attention towards another direction.

So, for instance, they pursue a piece of legislation which is clearly designed to reduce the rate of unionization in our province, but then they

tell us that it's about a secret ballot. But it's—we have to remember to cut through that sort of 'reddick'—rhetoric and remember that it is designed to reduce the rates of unionization in our province. Of course, we know that they repeatedly tell us that it's all about openness and transparency when, in fact, none of the public sector educational institutions believe that they are being dealt with in an open and transparent manner; rather, they found a very closed government who has communicated very little in the way of future plans to them.

We hear again about a government that talks about their financial acumen, and yet they've shown on repeated occasions that they're incapable of getting within \$100 million, plus or minus, of their fiscal projections, and so, again, you know, perhaps not Orwellian, but perhaps a shell game, perhaps tactics of distraction.

And so, again, I wonder, you know, the content of the bill being debated before the House today, Bill 14, is one that the NDP caucus is supportive of, the NDP caucus is willing to pass onto committee, the NDP caucus is willing to vote for. But, you know, we do have questions. Perhaps, you know, Bill 14 is being brought before us, you know, so that we can legitimately debate it here in the House, but all the while the true agenda of the new government is being designed not in the place of open and transparent and honest debate, but perhaps somewhere else: perhaps, you know, down the street, the Manitoba Club; perhaps in a boardroom somewhere else; perhaps, you know, amongst a group of friends and advisers of various people in power.

And so these are all questions that we have and, you know, we're happy to participate and carry out our democratic duty here today and debate this bill, but we would very much welcome the opportunity to engage with other substantive pieces of legislation and, again, carry out our duty as democratically elected officials.

I would note that this bill that we're considering here today deals, you know, I guess with some people that we may call political staffers. Again, I'm sure that the Progressive Conservatives brought this bill in so that they would have to disclose the fact that, you know, they are hiring their former campaign manager from the recent campaign on a contract basis and that they would have to disclose some of the other people that they've brought on under secondment and through various other

employment arrangements. And, you know, I'm sure that they're not, you know, doing this for the purposes of establishing a terrain on which to launch future partisan attacks against the NDP or against the three independent members who call themselves the Manitoba Liberals but, of course, are just independent members.

And so these are, you know, questions that we have and comments that we wish to put on the record—I wish to put on the record.

And, again, returning to the point about political staffers, you know, I recently read a book, rather academic, rather dry political text examining the critical theory around the role of political staffers in the Canadian parliamentary democracy.

It was interesting, I got this book from the Legislative Library reading room just outside the Chamber where we are gathered here today; I have to admit, Madam Speaker, it's a wonderful facility. It's a beautiful place to study and to educate yourself as to the issues confronting our society today. However, I'm told that I'm one of the very few members who actually accesses the Legislative Reading Room, so I'd encourage my colleagues to avail themselves of, you know, the fact that there's a subscription to The New York Times in the reading room, that there's all manner of new political titles, there's all manners of new biographies.

I was very happy to read a biography of Howard Pawley in the Legislative Reading Room, where he detailed how he unseated Sterling Lyon. He laid out the strategy through which he managed to take down a very popular Progressive Conservative premier after only one term in this, you know, province right here. But, of course, I'm not partisan, right; I also read a book about Christy Clark, the BC Liberal leader.

So all that to say that there is a tremendous amount of, you know, resources there that we can avail ourselves—avail ourselves of. I hear the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) wondering about science fiction, and I can tell him that they actually do carry the titles, the fiction titles which are published by Manitoba publishers. And so, again, if he wants to read up on science fiction, he can do so. You know, titles like the, you know, Progressive Conservative 2016 election platform, I'm sure they have a copy of that, might be filed under science fiction; he can check on that. Again, there's people more qualified than myself who could assist him with that query.

But all that to say, tremendous resources in the reading room. I got, you know sidetracked on a little tangent there. The reason why I was speaking about that initially was I did recently read a good academic text which examined the critical theory, the critical discourse surrounding the role of political staffers in the current Canadian political landscape.

And they offered up several theories as to the role of political staffers. One is, you know, a scenario under which political staffers work collaboratively with public servants to provide good evidence-based research towards the ministers of the Crown and the First Minister. There was another theory presented under which political staffers acted as insulation, if you will, and prevented the free flow of ideas and information between the ministers of the Crown and the public service. And then there was the model favoured by the authors of that report, which was really more of a blended model, which says that at various times political staffers may run interference, if you will, on the free flow of information and ideas in the minister of the Crown, and at other times they may collaborate effectively with the public service.

And so, when I was reviewing this, you know, it did strike me that, you know, these political staffers do fulfill an important role in our democratic system, in our, you know, parliamentary legislative system. And, as such, you know, I was reassured that it is important to compensate the people who fulfill these roles adequately and in a fair way. And so, you know, after having conducted some research into, you know, that matter, I am, you know, reasonably comfortable, you know, speaking to this bill here today and saying that, yes, the NDP caucus does support the fair and equitable treatment of these political staffers and other public officials. And, that being said, if we are going to compensate these people from the public purse, then we should be willing to make disclosures, you know, provided that certain other thresholds are met and that we do so across the various types of arrangements which are made, be they full-time employment, contract basis or on secondment.

* (16:40)

So, with all that in mind, I do want to reiterate our willingness to pass the bill on to committee to be able to move forward here. Again, we would love to move forward and discuss substantive pieces of legislation. We would welcome, you know, any sort of answer or any sort of plan from the government's

side of the House. But so far, we've seen no answer, no plan. But that's okay. We're very understanding and compassionate on this side of the House, and so, for now, we will just say that we're willing to support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns. Oh, pardon me. The honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I'd just like to put some words on the record regarding Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

You know, it's interesting, I think, to onlookers, that we're discussing this for so many days because, on the surface it seems like something we should all be quite quick to embrace and endorse. We're talking, of course, about the public sector; civil servants, people that serve the Legislature, serve our political parties, serve us. And these people's salaries, of course, are paid for by the public purse. Their compensation comes from—let's not forget, let's not sugar-coat it and call it tax dollars or even the government or anything like that. No. These people are paid for by the hard-working, tax-paying citizens of this province.

And it's so easy for us, I think, to forget that when we're seeing money go all over the place and, oh, yes. And we talk in huge numbers in this room. We talk about millions of dollars, and we talk about hundreds of millions, and we talk about billions of dollars. But let's not forget these are massive, massive numbers, and compensation is a huge line in all the budgets. Why would we not want to be open and transparent? Why would we not want to disclose those amounts? And that's really what we're wanting to do. That's what our government is advocating for. And I think that the members all across this House would agree. At least we would pay lip service to the idea that we should be open and we should be transparent and we should try to do what's in the best interests of the province. And I think it frustrates people, I think, on all sides, and probably in the media and onlookers when they see what feels like wrangling. And I think, on this bill, we should be able to get behind it, all of us, and say: Public sector compensation disclosure, this is one that we can get behind.

There is some history to this. There's history that goes back a long time. There's history that goes back

not so long ago. And I think that's left a bad taste in people's mouths when there's been ambiguity about how much money was paid to whom for what, and there's a lack of clarity there. That's what this bill is seeking to address. That's, I think, what everybody in our province could say yes to. I think that, hopefully, everybody in this House could say: Yes, people do have the right to know how much and for what and for what reasons—is this arbitrary? Are we compensating people in some kind of willy-nilly, throwing-money-around manner, or no, is there some reason to this, is there some logic to it?

And I don't think anybody here would object to the notion of compensation or of severance agreements. These are reasonable things which happen in the private sector and, certainly, in the public sector as well. That's not the discussion here. The discussion here has to do with what should the public know about those agreements. And what we're advocating for, on this side of the House, is that the public needs to know more than they have been—being told. That's what we are wanting to advocate.

You know, there are certain professions, aren't there, when—where people feel that they cannot trust individuals in those professions. Some would say, and I'm not—I'm neither disagreeing or agreeing with this, that lawyers are not a trustworthy bunch, and others would say that, oh, I don't know, insurance sales people are not a trustworthy bunch, and others would say that politicians are not a trustworthy bunch. And, you know, we need to take a look at that, and say, how can we combat that stereotype? What can we do to say, no, we actually do want to be known to be trustworthy? What can we do in those interests? And Bill 14, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act, is a step in that direction.

When trust is broken, it takes time to rebuild. When trust is questioned, it needs to be bolstered if it's to be restored. And this is true in all of our relationships at all levels. It's true in our families, it's true to those of us who are married, it's true to those of us who have children. And, when your children behave in such a way that you thought they were going to do one thing and it turns out not to be the case, often a parent will say, you know, you've broken trust, and it's going to take a while for me to get that back. I need to see some—I need to see you following through, and that's what this bill attempts to do at a provincial level—to tell the public: this is what is going to happen. And we're going to take the effort to be—to disclose these numbers.

An Honourable Member: Not a bad first effort.

Mr. Micklefield: Well, I appreciate the compliments from the member opposite.

I think that—in fact, I know that as I sit in various contexts with members opposite outside of this House, there are things that we can agree on. There are things that we share in common, and, dare I say, if we were neighbours and we knew nothing about each other's political leanings, we would most likely be friends and perhaps, with time, we would find those areas about which we do disagree and we would have good, healthy, robust disagreements, which I think all of us would welcome. And my plea, in this House, is that we could get behind those things which will increase the trust, increase the transparency, increase those things which we all claim to lay hold as near and dear.

I know that members opposite groan at those three famous D words, but the debt, decay and decline is not something which is a made-up story. Our province has gone into huge amounts of debt in recent memory and these things can be explained away or minimalized, but the truth is that we are spending huge amounts of money on debt-servicing payments. Friends, that should not be. These things came into play, in an acute way, in the last decade. This is not something that should be sugared over. This is not something that should be somehow ignored or minimized or oh, no, that's not a big deal. And what happens is trust is eroded when we see a Province spending \$800-plus-million more than it brings in, in the last year alone. That's not the kind of responsible government which people elected and hoped for.

* (16:50)

As we see decay, decline, we see many, many things, and that's actually what the election is about. And I don't want to review all of that stuff, though we certainly could. The point is that we need to take steps, as elected officials, to doing what is right and to doing what is going to increase the trust that people put in us, and feel about us.

With Bill 14 passed, Manitobans can benefit from clear disclosure. It's not cloaked, it's not obscure, it's not shrouded or convoluted; it's just there. We're not making arguments or excuses or apologies. We're just going to be saying: this is how much people were paid; in situations involving severance, this is how much was paid out. And, in principle, people do not object to that happening.

What makes people nervous is when the numbers are unknown or fuzzy or foggy, and we see large amounts—hundreds of thousands of dollars—paid out to a comparatively small group with, really, no clarity on what happened or the rationale for those payouts. Maybe it was, actually, quite above-board and reasonable, and maybe there's really nothing to be concerned about. But we don't know that. Why? Because it's not been publicly disclosed. And that's what Bill 14 is going to address. That's why this is something that we're putting forward fairly early on in our mandate.

Well, you know, some people might say: Whoa, whoa, whoa, this is a privacy issue. But the Manitoba Ombudsman has indicated that even senior civil servants should have some limited expectation of privacy when it comes to their salary benefits and severance. Certainly, everybody in this room, those numbers are public. Public money should be subject to public scrutiny.

We are actually stewarding other people's money. I understand it's so easy to forget that, but we should never forget that. It's actually not our money; it's other people's money. It's money from parents who are—it's money from parents who are struggling in a new country with a foreign language and their children are in a school that is completely new and unfamiliar to them. Those people pay taxes. That money ends up being used by us. We need to remember, it's those people we are serving. It's those people we are answering to. It's money paid by widows. It's taxes paid by hard-working people. It's taxes paid by business people who work hard to make money. That's not a bad thing or a wrong thing; that's a good thing. But let us remember it's these people, the people—as we drive home tonight—who are driving beside us on the streets. They are paying taxes. Those taxes flow through this building, and we are the ones who are the stewards and have the privilege of allocating those funds.

The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act is honouring those people by saying: What you have paid here is going to be public; we're not wanting to hide—or even give the appearance of hiding. And I think that sometimes the appearance of an evil thing is as bad, or possibly worse when you consider the dangers of suspicion as that evil thing.

Friends, I hope that we can all get behind Bill 14. There is much more to be said. I want to leave room for my colleagues on all sides of the

House, but I'm grateful for the opportunity to have put these comments on the record. I trust that we can move forward with a spirit of willing—[*interjection*—]co-operation—thank you—and partnership so that trust in government can be something that increases in our province because of the collaboration of all good members in this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): You know, oftentimes people will ask me, so what is it like being an elected official? What's it like being an MLA? What's it like being the first indigenous woman in—elected from an urban area?

And I often share with people that actually, the first couple of weeks when we were in session, our first session, it's actually quite shocking when you're in here. It's actually almost like a shock to your system, to your spirit and to your heart, and—because of the things that go on in this House, the back and forth. You know, when you've worked as long as I have in the indigenous community, we simply don't do that in assemblies or summits. We just don't behave like that. So it's kind of a little bit of a shock.

The other thing that I found that happened was I actually found myself really grieving, grieving for the work that I did. And why am I bringing that up? I'm bringing it up because when I reflect back on my 20 years of working for community in a variety of different capacities, I've worked advocating and supporting a mum, who her five-year-old daughter was raped. She was actually drugged, and while she was drugged by her partner, he raped her five-year-old daughter and that little baby was ripped apart. And when the mother found her baby—he actually held her captive for about three days.

So, here was this little baby, literally ripped apart, and she could not bring her daughter to the hospital. She had to care for her daughter at her house, basically kidnapped and trapped.

I've helped families that they're—I actually worked with Justice Hamilton on a community that there was—they weren't sure whether or not this youth had actually died of exposure or he had been murdered. I worked with a whole community trying to figure out what had happened here.

I've worked with people who have allegations of police brutality, who feel so scared and threatened. I work with children as young as 11 who've been sexually exploited on these streets.

And, of course, I've worked with, in Manitoba alone, over 200 family members of missing and murdered, who've had their loved ones chopped up, thrown in the river. One family out here, her—their sister was chopped up by her husband and her body parts were strewn all over different parts of their area in BC.

So, you can imagine, Madam Speaker, that when we sit here this afternoon debating, if that's what we want to call it, or is it simply just wasting breath on absolute minutia? It is absolute minutia. And, you know, the members from Southdale and the Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield) talk about our accountability to Manitobans. You know, in the midst of real harm and real hardship and real struggle that people go on—go through on a daily basis, and in some cases have no—absolutely no ability to get out of, here we are debating what I can only construct as minutia.

So we are changing the government, in all of the myriad of capacities that this government has to do in order to govern for Manitoba, we're sitting here wasting—I don't know how many—three and a half hours talking about a bill which literally just moves the time frame for something that we were already doing. People's severance packages are already accounted for in Public Accounts. That's why we have Public Accounts.

I don't understand, Madam Speaker, and I can't wrap my head around why we—[*interjection*]

No, I'm not going to sit down. You—I would ask the member that if he expects me to sit down and not talk about what's going on in Manitoba's lives right now, here and today, I will not sit down—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 25 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 24, 2016

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
		Hunger Free Manitoba	
		Klassen	2306
		Fielding	2306
Tabling of Reports			
Stefanson	2299		
		Mental Health and Addictions Services Review	
		Klassen	2306
		Goertzen	2306
Members' Statements			
Brooklyn Walker			
Lagassé	2299	Brian Sinclair Inquiry Recommendations	
		Klassen	2306
		Goertzen	2307
United Nations Day			
F. Marcelino	2299		
		Crown Corporation Management	
		Johnson	2307
		Schuler	2307
Child Abuse Prevention Month			
Smith	2300		
		Dauphin Correctional Centre	
		Swan	2307
		Stefanson	2307
Small Business Saturday			
Yakimoski	2300	Labour Relations Amendment Act	
		Lindsey	2308
		Cullen	2308
Oral Questions			
Standing Committee on Crown Corporations		MGEU President	
F. Marcelino	2301	Lindsey	2308
Pallister	2301	Pallister	2308
Liquor & Lotteries Head Office		Labour Relations Amendment Act	
Allum	2302	Lindsey	2309
Pallister	2302	Pallister	2309
Secret Path		Hydro Review Report	
Kinew	2303	Altemeyer	2309
Wishart	2303	Pallister	2309
Truth and Reconciliation Commission		Proposed Federal Carbon Tax	
Kinew	2303	Altemeyer	2309
Wishart	2303	Pallister	2309
Fentanyl Deaths		Petitions	
Wiebe	2304		
Goertzen	2304	Bell's Purchase of MTS	
		Maloway	2310
Shoal Lake 40 First Nation			
Fontaine	2305	Union Certification	
Pedersen	2305	Lindsey	2310

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Second Readings

Bill 17—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment and
Vital Statistics Amendment Act

Stefanson 2311

Questions

Swan 2312

Stefanson 2312

Maloway 2313

Lamoureux 2313

T. Marcelino 2314

Debate

Swan 2315

Cox 2318

Lamoureux 2319

Morley-Lecomte 2319

Debate on Second Readings

Bill 14—The Public Sector Compensation
Disclosure Amendment Act

Lindsey 2320

Smith 2324

Kinew 2329

Micklefield 2334

Fontaine 2336

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>