

**Second Session – Forty-First Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
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	Ind.
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
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 13, 2017

*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

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 21—The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 21, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act; Loi sur la responsabilité financière et la protection des contribuables, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, Bill 21 sets a principled course of sound financial decision making to ensure a sustainable financial future for the province of Manitoba. In 1995, Manitoba was among the first provinces to set out legislation and the requirement that governments must act prudently with a fiscal discipline. This bill reaffirms that commitment.

Starting in 2017, Madam Speaker, the legislation requires that each consecutive budget show progress towards balance through progressively smaller deficits. Furthermore, it establishes the individual responsibilities of members of Cabinet to staying on course. Each year, when the results of our efforts are demonstrated in the annual Public Accounts, if we've achieved that progress and the deficit's reduced, only then are salary allowances provided back to ministers.

Madam Speaker, the financial challenge faced today by all of us is great. This legislation calls for, then, an all-hands-on-deck approach and requires all

of our reporting entities to demonstrate efforts to stay on course with us.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The required 90-minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

#### MADD Canada's School Assembly Presentation

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services):** I rise today to share how honoured I was to attend River East Collegiate on February 23rd to participate in the provincial launch of Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada's school assembly presentation and to bring greetings on behalf of our government.

In the Blink of an Eye follows the fictional lives and decisions of a group of teenagers faced with the decision to drive after consuming alcohol and drugs. This powerful video cuts to the heart of the importance of teaching our youth to make responsible and safe decisions while driving.

The presentation also includes real-life testimonials from family members of victims of impaired driving, conveying the tragic, far-reaching ripple effect that these split-second, poor decisions have on others. The film is compelling, and I was amazed to see a gym full of young people—future community leaders, future parents and professionals—sit so quietly and attentively.

Between February and June of this year, this powerful film will be presented to thousands of our students in grades 7 to 12 in more than 100 schools throughout Manitoba. This public service project is funded in part by Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation under its road safety mandate and consistent with its mission of working with Manitobans to reduce risk on the road.

This issue is especially close to my heart as I am the parent of three teenagers and I know many of my colleagues in this Chamber are also parents of young

drivers or soon-to-be drivers. Opportunities to appeal to today's youngest and soon-to-be drivers, like through Mothers Against Drunk Driving's presentation, are crucial to changing high-risk driving behaviours that too often lead to broken hearts and broken lives.

These high-risk driving behaviours—driving drunk, driving while impaired by drugs, speeding, driving while distracted or not wearing a seatbelt—are choices that could have prevented the 112 fatalities that tragically occurred on Manitoba roadways in 2016.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada and the members of MADD's local Manitoba chapter for their tireless efforts to educate Manitobans around the dangers and consequences of impaired driving and for the work that they do in providing support to victims of this terrible crime.

I would urge all members of the Legislature to speak to the young people in their lives and communities about the importance of safe driving behaviour and how quickly one bad decision can change the course of an otherwise successful and happy future. We all have the power to improve road safety in this province, but we all need to take responsibility for making safe driving decisions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** I thank the minister for his statement today.

All Manitobans have a right to feel safe in their communities and on their streets. Far too often, road accidents caused by impaired driving result in loss of innocent lives.

When someone dies or is injured in a road accident, it upends the lives of victims and families forever, forcing them to live with the consequences of someone's decision to drive while impaired. This is what makes the work of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, in putting an end to impaired driving, so important. I applaud MADD's annual campaign to reach out to high school students.

MADD provides meaningful education and information so new drivers understand the risks and consequences of impaired driving. They are more likely to make the right decision to never get behind the wheel while impaired. MADD provides supports for victims and survivors, facilitates public education and awareness campaigns and works to expand

technology, like the alcohol ignition interlock, to change the behaviours of drivers.

\* (13:40)

I have had the honour to work with MADD Canada and MADD Winnipeg in the development of legislation and policies to reduce impaired driving. With the guidance of organizations like MADD, we put effective measures in place. For a long time now, Manitoba has been recognized among the most proactive provinces in dealing with impaired driving.

We've seen some steady progress, but we know there is more work to do. That's why we need to move forward with effective action against dangerous driving practices. We know how important these issues are to Manitobans and how much of an impact the work of MADD continues to have. MADD Winnipeg's volunteers put their heart and soul into the struggle against impaired driving.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, I want to thank MADD for their commitment and dedication to ending impaired driving and for making our streets safer for Manitobans and, indeed, all Canadians.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

**Ms. Klassen:** Thank you to the minister for bringing this ministerial statement.

Because I learned of MADD when I went to Teulon high school, I am proud to say that not once have I got behind the wheel of a vehicle after consuming alcohol. Now, this has caused me to lose my car a couple of times, as I would just walk away from my vehicle, but I would rather lose my car for a night than cause a life to be lost for eternity.

I was a young mother. I know how hard it is to carry a child—I've carried six—to nurture a child as they grow. Our children are priceless.

Impaired driving crashes are not accidents, but the direct result of a person's decision to drive after drinking or using drugs. According to MADD, at least one Manitoban dies in an impaired driving incident every five days and, according to the RCMP, alcohol or drugs play a role in 40 per cent of driving fatalities in the province.

MADD Canada has been the voice of reason on this subject for the last 28 years. They've worked continuously and tirelessly to change Canadian attitudes about impaired driving. They've fought to change legislation and enforcement, as well as improving treatment and rehabilitation. They have done amazing work for victim services, especially here in Manitoba.

I would like to thank the countless organizers and volunteers of MADD Canada. And, to the mothers and fathers who have experienced the worst loss a parent can ever experience, thank you for sharing your stories for the sake of all our children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Recognizing Rural Firefighters

**Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk):** I think all Manitobans will agree with me when I say there is no greater act of citizenship, no greater act of community, than risking one's own life to save that of another. Today, across this great province, hundreds of men and women volunteer to serve their communities, donning turnout gear and responding to the call of Manitobans in need. I am speaking of the approximately 3,500 volunteer firefighters that serve our rural communities.

In my constituency, we have Selkirk, East Beaches, Narol, East Selkirk and Brokenhead Ojibway Nation fire departments. The brave souls that make up these departments rearrange their personal and professional lives to serve, undertaking hundreds of hours of training, attending weekly practice and being on call 24-7.

The job is physically demanding and, I would imagine, at times emotionally draining, responding to emergencies that most often involve neighbours, friends or family. Rural Manitobans know it takes community support and commitment to keep these individuals supplied with the tools they need to be most effective. From their modest bucket-brigade beginnings they have evolved into elite teams of professionally trained, well-equipped and dedicated forces that we rely on today.

Thank you to the volunteers in every community for their exemplary service as they work tirelessly to make Manitoba one of the safest places in which to live. We salute you, your families and the employers who make it possible for you to attend emergencies in our communities.

Madam Speaker, I would like to introduce to the House some of the members of the Selkirk and St. Clements fire departments.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Selkirk.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask for leave to have the names of the volunteer firefighters who are currently active in my constituency entered into the record.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave?  
[Agreed]

*East Beaches Fire Department: Gary Drall; Bernie Froehlich; Harvey Lacroix; Arther Recksiedler - Deputy Fire Chief & Director of Training; Blair Sheane; Mark Sieradzki; Tom Thomas; Mark Sinclair - Fire Chief; Dustin Sinclair; Darren Zaretski; Lee Loudon; Randall Wiese; Trevor Dackow; Kyle Sinclair; Ken Wegner; Dan Letwin; Ryan Thompson. Trainees: Lori Fey; Glen Sinclair; Derick Vanlangagen; Heather Greenwood*

*Narol Fire Department: Glen Basarowich; Darryl Boychuk; Wally Fey; Robert Herda - Fire Chief; Keith Howanyk; Tony Hrycyszyn; Kim Johnston; Steven Striowski; Levi Vansteenbergen; Dale Lowen; Dale Klein; Linton Mounk - Deputy Fire Chief & Director of Training; Cory Porhownik; Jim Powney; Randy Schwab; Dave Simpson; Robert Wiebe; Scott Wilson; Daryl Lucyshen; Tyler Younger; Brad Chalus; Hugo Heidinger; Greg Sippel; Brian Hrom; Ray Michalenko; Ken McKay*

*East Selkirk Fire Department: Graeme Beattie; Blake Burnett; Sean Callewaert; Rob Couture; Theo DeBoer; Thor Erickson; Keith Ginther; Scott Kelbert; Robert Kennedy; Lawrence King; Tim Kostaniuk; Jason Laferriere; Luke Macfadden; Kirk Monkman; Derrick Paul; Derrick Reykdal; Scott Schofield; Jim Schukis; Ryan Shead; Daryl Smuttell; Gary Sternat; Robert Ullmann; Bryan Vermeulen; Kevin Watson; Kevin Zacharkiw*

*Selkirk Fire Department: Craig Fiebelkorn - Fire Chief; Dave Milner - Deputy Chief; Kelly Helgason; Joe Craig; Brent Scherza; Rick Wur; Corey Gagne; Ian Fey; Linton Fredborg; Glenn Leskiw; Ian Stewart; Sean Lewis; Doug Scramstad; Joe Bukoski; Adam Keye; Rob Perry; Brad Honke; Bill Bowman; Ryan Sicinski; Chris Anderson; Keith Smith; Jason Northwood; Duncan Bowman; Adam Bowditch; Shaun Deboer; Daniel Katykhin; Kyle Portree; Ted Wur*

*Brokenhead Ojibway Fire Department: Raymond Bear; Jerry Bear; George Bear; Fran Freeman; Jodi Chief; Eldon Chief; Brent Desjarlais; Mervin Galvin; Lawrence Raven; Lily Thomas; Ashley Straight*

### **Political Rhetoric and Increased Violence**

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Madam Speaker, I stand today to raise awareness of the deaths of three people who had an expectation of safety in the community they lived within and contributed to. One Indian national and two Indian-origin US citizens were attacked in that country recently.

On Friday, March 3rd, 39-year-old Deep Rai was shot and killed while working on his car in his own driveway in Kent, Washington. A masked individual yelled at him to go back to your own country, before carrying out the attack. Harnish Patel, a store owner in Lancaster, South Carolina, who had lived in the US with his family for 14 years, was shot and killed outside his home on Thursday, March 2nd. And in February, a 32-year-old Indian engineer, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, was shot and killed in Kansas when a man opened fire on him and his friend at a bar before also yelling, get out of my country.

There is little doubt that the current US political rhetoric on immigration provokes these violent attacks on innocent people. I am deeply concerned about this and I believe that it is something for all politicians here to be acutely aware of. This is not an issue far removed from where we sit. We must not ignore the connection between identity politics and the spread of hatred into our communities.

There can be significant negative impact that trickles into the community when identity politics are used. It is especially harmful when used by politicians focused too much on their own ambition. Politicians who spread misinformation and incite anger in an effort to benefit their own for political gain, do incredible damage to the community.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members present here today to keep top of mind that we serve the people of a wide-ranging community, real people of a variety of identities, all needing our support. We are not here to only benefit one group or another. And no one here should be focused solely on his or her own ambition, ignoring or blatantly stepping on others to get there. I hope to see all of—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

### **Ian Grant**

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** As a member of this Legislature, we have the opportunity to rise in the House and recognize individuals and groups who have made an improvement to our communities and the lives of our residents. Today is no exception, as I stand before my colleagues and recognize an individual whose life has been dedicated to serving his community.

Brandon Police Chief Ian Grant has had a distinguished career in law enforcement, and the citizens of Brandon have been extremely fortunate to have him at the helm. Madam Speaker, the City of Brandon has some big shoes to fill this year as Chief Grant has announced his retirement.

Chief Grant began his policing career with the RCMP in 1980 when he served in Brandon, Wasagaming and the Flin Flon detachments. In April of 1985, he became a member of the Brandon Police Service, and on January 25th, 2013, he was sworn in as the chief of police.

I have had the distinct pleasure of calling Chief Grant a friend for almost 30 years and even had the pleasure of working with him in my position as the vice-chair of the Brandon Police Board.

Madam Speaker, Assiniboine Community College recently awarded Chief Grant with an honorary diploma at a police studies program due to his active leadership and commitment to serving the community. Previously, Governor General David Johnston presented Chief Grant with a Member of the Order of Merit of Police Forces in Canada award.

One of Chief Grant's most notable contributions to the Brandon community is the development of the community mobilization approach to policing. This method brings together human service providers from across the city to share in a collaborative manner to reduce crime.

His commitment to our city and our province has been truly remarkable and I am honoured to publicly thank him for his service and recognize the contribution to our province.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome Chief Grant, along with his wife Eleanor and his daughter Robyn, to the Legislature today, and ask all of my colleagues to please join me in recognizing a true community leader and a true community hero.

\* (13:50)

### **Mitch Bourbonniere**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** Madam Speaker, Mitch Bourbonniere is a founding member of the Bear Clan Patrol, a university instructor and a mentor to many young indigenous men. But recently, Mitch went from role model to hero.

On December 4th, Mitch was counselling a suicidal young man. Just then, volunteers from the Mama Bear Clan patrol called. They had seen a young woman jump into the Assiniboine River. She wanted to end her life.

Mitch and the young man raced to the Midtown Bridge. When they got to the riverbank, her face was all they could see above the dark waters. They called 911, then Mitch jumped into action. Tearing off his parka, Mitch grabbed a rope and waded into the water with his winter boots still on. The people on shore held the other end of the rope as Mitch swam out to the young woman.

He called her name, but she did not respond. He shouted, but she ignored him. As he began to convulse with shivers, he yelled again. She turned towards him but was still out of reach and floating away. Finally, Mitch stopped swimming. Then he called to the girl a final time. Only now he yelled, help me.

The cry for help broke the spell and she swam to his aid. He grabbed her collar and with his other hand held tightly to the rope. The young man on shore had tears pouring down his face as he and the others pulled Mitch and the young woman to safety.

All three are healthy and feeling better. Mitch saved the lives of these young people, Madam Speaker, and along the way he also gave them a powerful gift. He showed them what it feels like to help another person. May that nourish them for years to come.

Miigwech, Mitch.

### **Manitoba Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede**

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations):** I rise in the House today to recognize a remarkable event which took place this past summer in my constituency of Agassiz.

Most of you will be familiar with the Manitoba Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede, Canada's largest pioneer heritage festival and a Manitoba STAR Celebration. On July 31, 2016, the festival created the world's largest pioneer harvest by

bringing together 760 volunteers and 139 vintage threshing machines to thresh 30,000 wheat sheaves in just 15 minutes. And I'd like to acknowledge several colleagues that were—in this House today that were there and actually participated throwing sheaves.

Participating machinery came from as far as way as Iowa and northern Alberta. Event volunteers came from seven provinces and eight US states. In total, there were 39 cylinder inches of harvesting capacity in the threshing machines and they were powered by tractors and steam engines with over 6,100 horsepower. This was enough to clinch the Guinness world book of records for the largest number of antique threshing machines operating simultaneously.

Thanks to the generosity of businesses and individuals, this event raised over \$134,000. These proceeds are being split between the 'magtoba'—Manitoba Agricultural Museum and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a partnership of 15 churches and church agencies working together to end global hunger.

Events like Harvesting Hope are a shining example of the community spirit of rural Manitoba. People from across Manitoba came together to help the less fortunate, celebrate their agriculture heritage and enjoy themselves in the process. That's a win-win for Agassiz and for the world. I commend the organizers, especially Elliot Sims of MacGregor whose vision it was—and he was the overseer of this project—and to everyone else who participated.

We need more events like Harvesting Hope in Manitoba.

Thank you.

### **Introduction of Guests**

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, we have some more guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce you to.

Seated in the public gallery from River East Collegiate, 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Anita Stephaniuk, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you to our Manitoba Legislature.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Health-Care Transfers Funding Cut Concerns

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Before we begin today, I would like to pay tribute to Harvey Smith, former city councillor and MLA. Harvey was an advocate for working people and a strong voice for Winnipeg's inner city. He was willing to challenge authority and he would encourage us to do so if he is with us today.

And today, we want to highlight the Premier's approach to health care. His approach in negotiations with Ottawa have, unfortunately, not borne fruit, and it is unfortunate that both Liberal and Conservative governments have decided to reduce the rate of transfer to the provinces for health care.

But these negotiations mask that the Premier has already made up his mind. Weeks, if not months, ago the Premier decided to make massive cuts to our health care.

Will the Premier fess up that his plans were always for cuts in health care, no matter what?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** *Au contraire*, Madam Speaker, the commitment of this government to health care is tremendous and at a record level. There has never been a greater commitment by a government to health care than the commitment this government is making.

So the member is wrong in her preamble, but right to praise Harvey Smith, right to praise him because he spoke up for those who didn't have a voice, just as we are doing on this side of the House by fighting against chronic deficits and debt that are handed to young people, like those in our gallery today, to pay back with no reward of the investment being taken from them, the opportunity being taken from them.

So I applaud Harvey Smith today for his tremendous contributions to those who are vulnerable in our society. And we, most of all, will stand for those people and with those people as we fight for a fair share of health-care support and a sustainable health-care system going forward, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** The Health Minister stood in this House on March 2nd. He said over and over that there had been no negotiations with Ottawa. He said that there had not even been discussions with Ottawa. Yet weeks, if not months, before, this government had already made up its mind: a \$1 billion cut to health care and \$130 million cut to regional health authorities.

Now, I know that it's been hard for the Premier to keep on top of issues on his two months away in Costa Rica, but he really can't blame his decisions on anyone else. He made the decision to cut our health-care system and he had done so before negotiations with Ottawa had even taken place.

Will the Premier just admit that today?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, again, the member couldn't find truth town with a map, Madam Speaker.

The reality is that no one has stood stronger for health care for Manitobans than this government and this Health Minister. And I am honoured and proud to serve with him and to serve with people who care deeply about a sustainable health-care system that serves the needs of us today and tomorrow. No government has made a greater contribution or commitment to health care than this government.

So while we stand up for Manitobans on health care, the members opposite sit on their hands, which is a little bit better than the Liberal members of this Chamber clapping their hands for what Ottawa is trying to do to our health-care system.

Madam Speaker, we'll continue to stand up for a sustainable health-care system and we continue to support the ideas of making—of what Tommy Douglas once stood for, even though the members opposite fail to remember his legacy today.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** Madam Speaker, the government cuts to regional health authorities alone are \$130 million this year, so let's stop this charade the Premier has been playing. He made up his mind a long time ago, and he was going to cut deeply into health—\$1 billion worth of cuts to projects like CancerCare, personal-care homes and community clinics, and a cut of \$130 million from the budgets of regional health authorities.

Will the Premier admit that his plan was cuts to health care, no matter what?



\* (14:00)

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, the motto of the new NDP should be misinformation no matter what. The budget has never been higher for health care. Our support for health care is going to remain tremendously strong in spite of the NDP opposite sitting on their hands, refusing to even object to these cuts from Ottawa, which is what they are. We are going to continue to stand strong for health care.

The fact remains, Madam Speaker, that the program that the federal government is proposing, a my-way-or-the-highway proposition, not a negotiation of any kind, is one which threatens the sustainability of our health-care system for years to come. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** Why the members opposite have forgotten about our vulnerable seniors, why they have forgotten about the indigenous people of our province is beyond me. It's a puzzle to former Deputy Premier Eric Robinson, as well, who has proposed that they give up on that party and start a new one, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** The Premier packed up his suitcase to jet off to Costa Rica. He made sure to throw in a copy of financial reports that he won't share with Manitobans. He wanted to review his blueprint for making cuts.

The Health Minister tells us there was no negotiations, not even discussions with the federal government on health care, and, honestly, how could there be with the Premier off in Costa Rica and out of touch.

Yet, while the Premier was away, every single other province and territory in Canada came to agreement with the federal government on health care. The Premier is using these negotiations to mask his cuts to regional health authorities and health capital.

Will the Premier explain to Manitobans why he is making such significant cuts?

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, I recognize that the questions that the member is reading off are written for her in advance and that she is forced to read them, but the fact remains that the simple dull

repetition of false information into the record makes it no less untrue.

And this government is committed to health care, to record degrees of investment in health care, and we are committed to working with the federal government to achieve sustainable funding that is partnering properly to make sure that vulnerable people are protected going forward.

Here's a quote, Madam Speaker, the members opposite should do just a modicum of research before they read false information into the record: It's dictatorial federalism by brute force. Who said that? The current Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale when the Conservatives proposed these cuts.

Who said its unilateral refusal to extend the funding agreement can be attributed to the Prime Minister's unwillingness to work with the provinces and territories. Who said that? Well, the former minister of Foreign Affairs and former Liberal leader, Stéphane Dion.

Now, why is it that the Liberals were so against these changes when in opposition and so for them now, Madam Speaker? I invite the NDP to, once and for all, instead of exhibiting excessive partisanship in this Chamber, why not demonstrate a willingness to support the people of Manitoba.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** Each and every question we ask is to keep this government to account for the people of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the Premier has tried to have it all ways, but the reality is he had already made up his mind to make massive cuts to education and health, and cuts to health, education and road infrastructure, and he made those decisions even before he engaged in negotiations with Ottawa.

It's a broken promise to Manitobans, and it's especially unfair when he takes a 20 per cent pay increase and spends two months a year in Costa Rica.

Will the Premier get to work and stop his plans for cuts to our health-care system?

**Mr. Pallister:** Again, a total demonstration of detachment from the facts and the truth, Madam Speaker. The preamble is completely false.

Here is what—here's what Dominic LeBlanc, current Minister of Fisheries, former government House leader, said of the proposals to reduce transfers. He said there was no negotiation, no discussion, no acknowledgement of the demographic realities of each province. Absolutely correct, Madam Speaker, in respect of this Prime Minister's mishandling of this file. My way or the highway is not a negotiation, and we will stand for Manitobans and for health care for Manitobans, even though the members opposite do not.

Now, I understand the Liberal members and their adulation for all things Ottawa. I understand that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) actually supported gutting the transfers for health care back in the '90s. So I get that this is déjà vu all over again for them, but I don't understand why the NDP doesn't join with us and stand up for Manitobans for a change.

#### **Kelvin Active Living Centre Dakota Alumni Field Funding**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** Seventy-five per cent of Kelvin High School students can't get their mandatory gym hours in at school because their gym is too crowded. They have to go outside of school, at their own expense, to places like GoodLife, then get their teachers to sign off on it. That's why they fundraised over \$1 million for a new Active Living Centre so all students will be able to do all their phys ed credits at school.

But then the government pulled the rug out from under them and announced that the Kelvin Active Living Centre was cut.

Will the minister reverse his decision and restore funding to the Kelvin Active Living Centre?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** It'd be nice, Madam Speaker, I suppose, if one didn't think about the future, to say yes to every application for infrastructure funding. But we're not going to do that because we care about the future. We care about the future of education for our young people in this province, and so we'll do this sustainably.

Now, the member may—used a turn of phrase there. He said pull the rug out from under. Now, that's what the NDP government did for a decade, Madam Speaker, when they were last, 10th out of 10 provinces, in investing, in education, infrastructure—10th of 10 provinces.

We got a lot of catching up to do, Madam Speaker. We're not going to do it all in one year, but we'll do it.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** In this case, the rug was the funding working its way through the Treasury Board process, and it is the Premier who did the pulling.

Another valid project, out at Dakota Collegiate, also saw tremendous community support behind it: the Alumni Field project. They've had gala dinners with guests like Jay Onrait and Jon Montgomery over the years. They've even had another gala dinner planned later this spring. What's more, the Dakota Collegiate community has been trying to work with this government and they actually reduced the amount of their ask. But apparently that wasn't good enough, because the minister and this Premier still cut the Alumni Field project.

Will they do the right thing and restore funding for the Dakota Collegiate Alumni Field?

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** I thank the member for the question.

There are many worthwhile projects that come in every year to the department from across the province. And we are pleased to have invested \$44 million in 72 projects across the province.

We are proud to in—to be repairing the services in Manitoba and focusing on the safety and security of Manitoba students now and into the future.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Of course, the fundraising to date on these projects represents countless hours. In the case of the Kelvin High School community, students there were going door to door canvassing and asking for donations.

The situation, the status quo that we're left with, is that you have students who can't fulfill their mandatory phys ed credits at their public school. We're sending students the wrong message. Public school students should be able to fulfill all their public school credits in public schools—makes sense.

\* (14:10)

Will the minister restore funding for the Kelvin Active Living Centre and for the Dakota Collegiate Alumni Field?

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member for the question.

We are very focused on making sure that Manitoba students have the best opportunities available. I wonder which one of the 72 projects the member across there would say is not worthwhile: would it be the ACCESS projects, or would it be the roof projects so that we can keep the water out of schools?

We have to focus on what is the highest priority in terms of offering Manitoba students a safe and secure environment—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wishart:** —now and into the future. And I am pleased—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wishart:** —to have done that.

#### **Fiscal Performance Review Request for Results of Review**

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I know you had to wait for the Health Minister to finish his off-to-the-side commentary. You know, when we opened a brand new, state-of-the-art high school in Steinbach, he didn't have the decency to show up.

At least, when we ordered—when we opened up a brand new high school in Morden-Winkler, at least the Finance Minister had the decency to attend.

You know, Madam Speaker, we've been asking—asking the—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order. Order, please.

**Mr. Allum:** We've been asking the government to release the results of their fiscal performance review to the public. After all, the people of Manitoba paid \$1 million for that report.

But we now know that the only reports that the government's willing to release are those that undermine the confidence of the Manitoba economy.

The government asked for a review from Moody's investors group—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

Order, please.

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I'm presuming, Madam Speaker, that the member was

going to ask me an important question about why it's important to go into the direction of fiscal sustainability, and I submit it would be his best question this session.

Madam Speaker, in response to that question, I do want to say that even the University of Ottawa's Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, led by former Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page, expressed last week strong concern about the size of deficit finance spending across the board. He said all Canadians should be concerned about ongoing deficit-financed activities.

Madam Speaker, we will fix the finances.

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

**Mr. Allum:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd of had more time for questions if you would ask the members to give me the opportunity to ask them.

But in—prior to the event—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order, please.

**Mr. Allum:** We just learned last week that the government—the Finance Minister, I mean, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—had requested a very unusual review from Moody's Investors Service in advance of the budget.

Would the Finance Minister be a good sport: Tell us, what were the results of that review?

**Mr. Friesen:** The member for Fort Garry-Riverview seems to have had a Damascus-road experience and has adopted a new-found interest in the opinion of bond rating agencies.

Madam Speaker, that member had no concern about bond rating agency opinion—when they first warned in 2014, they did nothing; they downgraded, the NDP did nothing. As a result, Manitobans pay millions and millions of dollars more in debt-service charges.

Where was his concern at that time?

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

**Mr. Allum:** You know, the Finance Minister doesn't want to answer that question because Moody's says that, in fact, Manitoba has a strong fiscal framework. And Moody's says also that Manitoba has a solid debt affordability.

In fact, Madam Speaker, Moody's says that this is the time to invest in our economy, not engage in a reckless austerity agenda.

Will the Finance Minister stop the presses on this budget, go back to the drawing board and start investing in the people of Manitoba?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, had the member for Fort Garry-Riverview actually read the report, he would realize that Moody's actually warned against a high debt burden. He—they warned also that things could still go south very quickly.

Madam Speaker, this Province pays millions of dollars more now on debt-service charges than just a few years ago. What's the result? Less money for education, less money for health care, less money for front-line services.

We need to turn that around. We'll do it in time. We are not out of the woods, but we will fix the finances.

#### **Minimum Wage Increase Poverty Reduction**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** The facts are clear. Minimum wage is one of the most effective tools at combatting poverty. 'Innuberrall' research shows that raising the minimum wage results in a direct increase in income available to those who need it most.

Clearly, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) haven't bothered to read any of these reports, when, instead, in December, the Premier argued that raising the minimum wage doesn't reduce poverty.

So does the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding), a self-declared numbers man, agree that raising the minimum wage does not reduce poverty?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** I do appreciate the question from the members opposite.

Madam Speaker, we are taking an approach—we are consulting with Manitobans, something the previous government did not do. We asked for an understanding of minimum wage from Manitobans during our prebudget consultation. We also asked our Labour Management Review Committee take a look at the issue.

Clearly, there's not a consensus on this issue. There's a broad range of ideas on minimum wage.

But we have consulted with Manitobans, and we will take this advice under advisement.

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

#### **Inclusion in Budget 2017**

**Ms. Fontaine:** Economists across the political spectrum agree that raising the minimum wage reduces poverty. Curiously, though, the Premier can't even bring himself to acknowledge this well-established fact and refuses to make use of one of the most effective tools available to fight poverty by raising the minimum wage.

And, at the same time, this government admitted that they will not include a comprehensive plan to fight poverty in their budget.

Will the Premier finally see fit to raise the minimum wage in their upcoming budget for Manitobans who deserve it most?

**Mr. Cullen:** Again, I appreciate this question.

I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that this previous government did the most damage to people on low incomes than any other government in history by raising provincial sales tax, by never increasing wage levels. [*interjection*] There was damage done—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Cullen:** Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House, on our first budget, took almost 3,000 people off the tax rolls. That's a step in the right direction.

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

#### **Creation of a Living Wage**

**Ms. Fontaine:** Regular raises to the minimum wage, like we did in our years in government, can mean all the difference in fighting poverty for Manitoba families. But, unlike the previous government, this Premier has shown giving workers a hand up by increasing their well-earned wages is not his priority.

\* (14:20)

Madam Speaker, the Premier sees no problem taking a 20 per cent pay raise for himself, because, clearly, the Premier needs this more—this hand up more than the rest of Manitobans.

Minimum wage is only but one stepping stone: Will the Premier commit to work towards the

creation of a living wage so that all working Manitobans can live life fully and equitably?

**Mr. Cullen:** I would say the facts speak for themselves: 17 years of NDP government, the worst record in poverty across this country. That's the record the NDP have left.

Madam Speaker, let's talk about optimism. Let's talk about business optimism and putting people back to work. The recent announcement from CFIB says Manitoba small-business owners are now the most optimistic in the country. Will the opposition join us in that optimism? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

#### **Need for Kelvin Active Living Centre Future Reduction in Health Costs**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Budgeting wisely means recognizing opportunities and where a short-term investment can produce long-run savings. Such is the case with the Kelvin High School gym and Active Living Centre.

Improving the physical and mental health of children and youth through exercise and sports can keep children and youth healthy, can reduce health-care costs, can improve students' performance in going to school and can improve how students do later in life.

Physical education is a necessity, not a luxury. Why is the Premier cutting funds which are there to help keep Manitobans healthy physically and mentally?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I recognize the member wants to ask a constituency question in the House, but it is—it smacks of irony in no small way that he stands up and talks about the health of Manitobans at the same time as his colleagues in Ottawa are cutting the transfer support for health care in our province and across the country.

Madam Speaker, I would ask the member to reconsider his position. I'd ask him to take a look at what's going on here in terms of the risks to sustainable health care in our country, in terms of the needs of Manitobans—in particular, indigenous Manitobans—for better quality health care, a constitutional responsibility of the federal government, Madam Speaker. I would encourage the member to stand up, stop clapping his hands for Ottawa and start reaching out with us for better

health care for vulnerable Manitobans now and in the future. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable member for River Heights, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, the Premier needs to stop making false statements about the increase in health-care transfers from Ottawa. The Premier himself said a year ago that the budget should not be balanced on the backs of children, because they are our future.

The new gymnasium and Active Living Centre at Kelvin High School has been in development for nearly 20 years and has a very strong community support, including fundraising of more than \$1 million from the community.

Why is the Premier trying to balance his budget on the backs of children and youth by cancelling the funding for the Kelvin High School gym and Active Living Centre?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member makes a serious charge in the House, Madam Speaker, when he accuses me of putting false information on the record.

Here is a direct quote: Cutting health transfers to help the sick in no way—is no way to pay tribute to the people who built this country. When are these attacks on our seniors and our most vulnerable going to stop? Judy Sgro, former minister of Citizenship and Immigration in the Liberal government in Ottawa.

Madam Speaker, his former colleague recognizes what we recognize and what vulnerable Canadians recognize, and will more and more have in evidence as the years go by.

Madam Speaker, the federal government is proposing to take \$100 billion off the table and put less than \$20 billion back on and is asking us to sign a 10-year deal to verify that that's fair, right, logical or makes sense. Not one study says it does anything but place our health-care system in jeopardy going forward.

I'd encourage the member to stop putting partisanship ahead of the people of Manitoba and support us here.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for River Heights, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, our interest is in putting Manitobans first.

Today, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) tabled The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act. Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance will have great difficulty in balancing the budget if he doesn't focus on keeping Manitobans healthy as a very important part of reducing the demand for, and the cost of, health care.

I ask the Premier and the Finance Minister: When will they reverse the decision announced on Friday and decide to proceed with building the much-needed Kelvin High School gym and Active Living Centre, which can do so much for the health of young people and to reduce future government health-care and other costs?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, the member limits his concern to young people in the constituency of River Heights. We do not make that mistake, Madam Speaker.

Preventative investments by the federal government in on-reserve health care would do a tremendous amount to assist young people, outside of River Heights, I grant the member, but around the province.

Bob Rae isn't wrong. Ralph Goodale is not wrong. Stéphane Dion, Judy Foote, Scott Brison, Joyce Murray, Dominic LeBlanc, Judy Sgro, Geoff Regan, Hedy Fry and Scott Simms—all proud, strong federal Liberal members of Parliament, many of them Cabinet ministers—say that what they are now advancing is an injustice, dictatorial and unfair and ineffective in sustaining health care for the future of our country.

Madam Speaker, on this occasion, all these Liberals aren't wrong. That Liberal is wrong.

#### **Fiscal Responsibility Legislation Taxpayer Accountability**

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, the government was elected on a platform of fixing Manitoba finances. At the doors, we heard that Manitobans wanted clear rules to protect taxpayers from mismanagement, mismanagement that we have seen from the past government. Today, the minister introduced an important legislation that will keep governments accountable.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us about the legislation he has tabled, and how it will keep politicians accountable to the taxpayer?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I thank the member for the question. It gives me an opportunity to say how this government is working to restore fiscal stability and principled protection for all Manitobans.

The previous NDP government left a mess. They ignored being accountable to Manitobans, and they removed prudent fiscal protections after years of mismanagement. The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act establishes a clear path toward achieving a balanced budget, demonstrating the individual responsibility of Cabinet ministers. It reinforces—it reintroduces Manitoba taxpayers with enforceable protection, including the restoration of their right to vote on major tax increases.

Our government is leading by example, and, together, with all hands on deck, we will tackle the financial strategies of today as we proceed on the road to recovery.

#### **Northern Health Region Funding Consultation with Northerners**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Madam Speaker, the Northern Regional Health Authority serves over 74,000 northern Manitobans. The ministers told the NRHA to cut \$6 million without consulting with northerners or the front-line workers.

Will the minister for health step back from this ill-advised course of action, commit to consulting with northerners, including First Nations people, on what is best for their health-care needs?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, we've been pleased to announce and make investments in the North: recent announcements in the North for Thompson—several in Thompson—in The Pas, in Gillam.

We believe in investing in the North, but we also believe in ensuring that there is sustainability for the health-care system in Manitoba, not just for today, not just for tomorrow, but for our kids and their grandkids.

And I believe that northerners understand that. I believe that those living in southern Manitoba, those in the east and the west and in Winnipeg, they all understand the health-care system needs to be sustainable. That is something the previous government never understood during their 17 years in government, Madam Speaker.

\* (14:30)

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

#### **Request to Table Non-Insured Services**

**Mr. Lindsey:** Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is forcing unrealistic budgets on the RHAs, cutting non-insured services for thousands of northerners. We know that cutting non-insured services means cutting mental health supports, but we don't know the full extent of what these cuts mean.

Will the Minister for Health table a complete list of those non-insured services that he's planning to chop so that northerners have an accurate sense of how much damage this is going to cause them?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, this year there are hundreds of millions of dollars more being invested by this government in health care than was ever invested under the previous government in 17 years and, yet, for some reason, the member—now I recognize that he's a new member to the House, but for some reason he feels that having hundreds of millions of dollars more in health care than the previous government that it is somehow unrealistic. We consider that to be a strong investment.

But we also recognize that there has to be sustainability going forward. I think all Manitobans recognize that we need the health-care system not just to be there tomorrow, but it has to be there in the future as well. That is the path we are going on to a sustainable health-care system, Madam Speaker.

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

#### **Transportation Costs**

**Mr. Lindsey:** Cutting primary health-care projects in the North means that more northerners will have to travel to Winnipeg to get the right kind of treatment.

Will the government commit to ensuring that patients who require both insured and non-insured services will get the care that they need without having to worry about the transportation cost?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, Madam Speaker, we recognize that transportation is a significant issue for many Manitobans, not just in the North, but in different places in Manitoba when it comes to health care and getting to the facilities that they need to get that health-care service.

But, in particular with the North, we've been very concerned that the federal government refuses

to pay the bill that they are required to be paying when it comes to transporting patients from the North to southern Manitoba. Perhaps the member wants to join us in calling on the federal government to ensure that they actually make good on the commitment that they've made and that they're not paying for, Madam Speaker.

#### **Crown Services Legislation Responsibility for Policy Direction**

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** Madam Speaker, a bill introduced last week puts absolute control of our Crown corporations in the hands of the minister. If his bill passes, the minister can direct policy, organization and auditing directly from his desk without lifting a finger.

Madam Speaker, this minister says over and over that he won't interfere in the activities of our Crown corporations, but now wants to direct all major activities within the Crowns.

How can anyone take him seriously?

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services):** Well, Madam Speaker, over the last 17 years it was the member opposite who was writing on his desk, working on his desk, and now we have a Keeyask project that's \$2.2 billion over budget. It's exactly that kind of thing that Bill 20 will help to mitigate. We believe that Bill 20, The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act, will prevent the kind of thing that happened under the NDP—not that anybody would know in the public because the members opposite are stonewalling and filibustering this Legislature.

We would like to start debating Bill 20. Why don't they start?

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a supplementary question.

#### **Appointments to Secretariat**

**Mr. Marcelino:** The bill before this House dismantles the Crown Corporations Council. Much of that council is currently non-political appointments and includes automatic appointments from the faculty of management at the University of Manitoba and appointments from professional accountants.

Now the minister intends to do away with such expertise and establish a new secretariat.

My question: Will this new secretariat be staffed by civil servants or by appointments made through order-in-council?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Madam Speaker, the mess we inherited at Manitoba Hydro was largely due to the political machinations of the members opposite, who disregarded and ignored experts both within Manitoba Hydro and outside of Manitoba Hydro, as well, in their great desire to Americanize our public utility. And so what they did is they took the ownership away from the people of Manitoba and they gave it to 35 NDP MLAs instead.

We're giving it back to Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations Funding

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Since 2001, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program has supported stronger neighbourhoods and communities in Manitoba.

(2) Neighbourhoods Alive! uses a community-led development model that partners with neighbourhood renewal corporations to fund projects that aim to revitalize communities and build local capacity.

(3) Neighbourhoods Alive! and the neighbourhood renewal corporations it supports have played a vital and important role in revitalizing many neighbourhoods in Manitoba through community-driven solutions, including: employment and training, education and recreation, safety and crime prevention, and housing and physical improvements.

(4) Neighbourhoods Alive! now serves 13 neighbourhood renewal corporations across Manitoba which have developed expertise in engaging with their local residents and determining the priorities of their communities.

(5) The provincial government's previous investments into Neighbourhoods Alive! have been bolstered by community and corporate donations as well as essential support from community volunteers, small businesses and local agencies.

(6) Late in 2016, the minister responsible for the Neighbourhoods Alive! program said that new funding for initiatives was paused and that the future of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program was being reviewed, bringing hundreds of community projects to a standstill.

(7) Neighbourhood renewal corporations and their communities are concerned this funding freeze is the first step in a slow phase-out of the Neighbourhoods Alive! grant program, which would have severe negative impacts on communities and the families that live in them.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support the Neighbourhoods Alive! program and the communities served by neighbourhood renewal corporations by continuing to provide consistent core funding for existing neighbourhood renewal corporations and enhancing the public funding available for specific projects and initiatives.

This petition is signed by many concerned Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

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

Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, this afternoon we'd like to continue with Interim Supply.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the House will consider Interim Supply this afternoon, resuming debate on second reading of Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Boniface, who has 25 minutes remaining.

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

### Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017

**Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface):** We return to the Interim Supply bill which was our opportunity to raise potential concerns in the upcoming budget, and every day since we've started discussing Interim Supply bill we've seen new surprises of projects that



have been eliminated, things that have been put on hold or cancelled outright altogether.

I want to start with the Moody's report that the government asked for just recently. Very unusual to ask for a Moody's report from a credit rating agency before a budget is presented, usually that is a statement made by the credit rating agency after the budget is presented.

The report said that the Manitoba economy had a good record and would continue to have a good record because of its diversity. It also made the point that the debt-servicing costs in Manitoba were the lowest they had been for many, many years, and continue to be stable at around 6 cents on the dollar, or 6 per cent of the budget, which is less than half of what they were when we came into office in 1999 and significantly lower than the reference here that they mention in the report of 2002.

\*(14:40)

So the member opposite saying that interest costs have dramatically increased and gone up is not borne out by the Moody's report. The Moody's report indicates that debt-servicing costs, in part due to lower interest rates, have remained relatively stable which is a healthy sign.

And, when you can maintain your debt servicing costs at 6 per cent of your budget, that's an indication that you are in pretty good shape, particularly when you have a good deal of liquidity. And the Moody's report also indicates that there is a good deal of liquidity within government. There are cash reserves, there are sinking funds, there are credit facilities of up to half a billion dollars available to deal with any untoward events which might occur in the short run, Mr. Speaker.

So I think we have to stop the fear mongering that Manitoba is in extremely challenging fiscal crisis, Mr. Speaker. That's certainly not the point that the Moody's report makes. It makes a report that shows that the Manitoba government has sufficient flexibility to address its concerns and to do it without having to be draconian in the measures it takes.

Of course, we have to manage towards fiscal prudence in the medium- to long-term, but it also indicates that that is completely possible within the current context of Manitoba, and that the credit rating that they maintain as stable is one of the best in the world, Mr. Speaker, probably the one of the envy of just about every country in the world—and most sub-national governments, as well.

I also wanted to talk a bit about capital because there's been a lot of capital projects which have been cut lately, whether it's Kelvin High School, whether it's primary health clinics in The Pas, whether it's recreational facilities for schools out in Dakota Collegiate, whether it be other facilities that will make a real difference. Those projects are—been stopped right now, Mr. Speaker, even though the communities have raised, in some cases, over \$1 million to support those projects, which would leverage investment in our communities.

Now, we have to ask ourselves: Is it the best return on investment to halt the willingness of the community to raise its own funding to do these kinds of things? And the short answer is: probably not.

So, rather than saying they've cancelled projects, it would be better if governments put forward a five-year capital program to show where these projects might fit into that capital program and, if they're not in there, why they are not in there, Mr. Speaker. That applies to schools; that applies to hospitals; that applies to infrastructure for flood protection, strategic road projects such as the inner ring road in Winnipeg, the major highways which move goods and services to our export customers.

All of those matters could be part of a capital plan if they were properly put together. That includes rail relocation and investments in the cities. That includes the Community Places program, a relatively modest program in terms of the grants that it gives, but it allows community clubs, it allows daycare centres, it allows cultural centres to make investments in partnership with their communities, which leverage jobs and increase the quality of life in all of these communities, Mr. Speaker.

It also allows us to do projects which are good for the environment, Mr. Speaker, and we need to do those kinds of things. Whether they are tree-planting projects—I have a school in my area that's raising money to do a major greening of their playground, and it involves the planting of dozens of new trees which will make a tremendous difference, not only for the neighbourhood but for the environment.

Now, the member who's responsible for the Crown corporations says that Hydro is \$2.2 billion over budget. What he doesn't say is that they put an additional \$900-million-contingency fund in place, Mr. Speaker, a contingency fund on top of the over \$500 million of contingency money that they already have—\$1.5 billion of money has been put in place for the very simple reason of dealing with unforeseen

cost increases. That is a measure of prudence that they need to acknowledge, but it's also a measure that does not speak to overspending; it speaks to the reality that some of these major capital projects have things that occur that are not budgeted for, so there is major money that's been put aside.

Will \$900 million be needed in additional to half a billion in the base for contingency? Only time will tell. Presumably not. And hopefully not, Mr. Speaker, which allow those projects to come down in cost.

The other thing I wanted to talk about, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that we are going to, and we are, in Manitoba, working towards a green economy. The federal government has brought in a carbon tax. If provinces do not come up with their own plan on how to deal with carbon emissions through a carbon pricing mechanism—whether it's a carbon price directly, a carbon tax, or whether it's a cap-and-trade system—the federal government has indicated that they will impose an equivalent form of taxation and turn all the revenues over to the province.

That could mean up to an additional \$300 million a year for investments in green economic growth in Manitoba. I hope the budget will identify that as a revenue source when they put that forward, but it does indicate that the need to make the draconian budget cuts that they are proposing may not be necessary with that additional source of revenue which has not been able—been available to any other government in Manitoba before this coming decision by the federal government.

In addition, we have the long-form census, which has been reinstated in Manitoba. And that has indicated there are 70,000 more people living in the province now, over the last 5 years. That will have a significant impact on the level of per capita transfers we are receiving in this province, and it will probably overcome the shortage—or the shorting of Manitoba by about 14,000—12 to 14 thousand people that occurred under the short-form census, which cost Manitoba revenues of over \$100 million a year.

So, if you'd look, the carbon tax, \$300 million a year; if you recover the additional hundred million dollars a year that was lost to the short-form census, I hope the budget will show the additional \$400 million of revenue, which could be available in Manitoba, and which could go a long way towards reducing the need for the kind of austerity that's being threatened in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So those are some comments I have to make on population numbers and carbon pricing in Manitoba. But 70,000 newcomers for immigration refugees really lays—raises the question why we need a \$500 a head tax for newcomers coming to Manitoba. Is that really necessary? And will that reduce the desire of people to come and live in this province?

Now, the fiscal performance review that was done by KPMG, who have been in the news for other issues lately, Mr. Speaker, including off-shore accounts that allow people to avoid taxes. The question there is: Will that fiscal performance review be released so that all Manitobans can see how that million dollars was spent, and will we be able to get that with the budget, before the budget, or immediately after the budget? I think the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has indicated that he's going to release those reports. We look forward to receiving them. They will allow us to make a proper assessment of the quality of the work done and what the fiscal situation is in Manitoba.

The other thing that would be really helpful to see in the budget, Mr. Speaker, is five-year projections. And I note that the new fiscal responsibility act indicates the need for putting out a fiscal plan—a fiscal responsibility strategy. I hope they have a five-year forecast on growth and revenues, on growth and expenditure so that we can judge what the plan is for the government of Manitoba going forward. So that will—that is indicated in their new bill, Bill 21, under section 3(1). That was eliminated last year in the budget. We had no idea of what their five-year projections were. It would be very helpful to have that back into the budget again.

In addition, we used to have what was called the Manitoba Advantage, something brought in by the previous Conservative government, which showed the cost of living in Manitoba relative to other jurisdictions. Not just the cost of living on taxes, but on daycare fees, on tuition fees, on utility rates, housing costs, the costs of running an automobile, including gas taxes and gas costs.

The fiscal advantage—or, the Manitoba Advantage needs to be restored in the budget so people can have ability to judge whether Manitoba's cost of living is remaining competitive with other jurisdictions when you look at all the key factors which drive the cost of living in the province of Manitoba. I hope to see that going forward in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, we see this new legislation, which is legislation called The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act. Well, what does that mean going forward? It seems to be that there are no penalties required of the new government if they have a deficit, as long as that deficit is lower than the previous deficit in the reference year, which will be identified as 2017. So that gives them the time they need to reduce the deficit without any penalties for their salaries. But once that deficit is eliminated, then the penalties cut in. So what happens if we have another recession? Does that mean the ministers again, and the Executive Council—whoever the government is—will have to take a salary penalty, even though a recession is occurring in Canada—and probably globally if it's occurring in Canada at the same time? It appears to set that situation up once again, Mr. Speaker, and that would be unfortunate.

\* (14:50)

We need a more robust approach that balances the budget, as the former government did for 10 consecutive years, but then has the ability to use money that they've put aside—we had \$800 million put aside in the good times—or, the better times—to reduce deficits during the fiscal—during the recessionary period, Mr. Speaker. And that allowed the deficits to be a smaller number and the accumulated debt to be a smaller number while we continued to keep the economy going and growing and people employed.

So we'll have to take a look at whether or not they're prepared under this legislation to allow any kind of deficit during a recession. It does appear that they will be able to take money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and count that there, but that is a limited resource and may or may not be sufficient to deal with the types of recessions that occur on a regular basis throughout the global economy, Mr. Speaker, and that will be something that we have to take a look at.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we see within the new balanced budget legislation that there is the ability to keep those salary increases which were brought in last year by the new speakers and a new speaker which is a—and a new member of the Cabinet which is appointed for up to three years. That's in stark contrast: a \$14,000 increase for ministers, a \$22,000 increase for the Premier (Mr. Pallister), at the same time there was no increase in the minimum wage at the same time that average wages in Manitoba grew by about 50 cents on an hourly—or

the average increase of a salary in Manitoba was about 50 cents, a very modest increase.

So the wealth gap or the gap between those that have and those that are struggling to make a living continues to grow, and the example we're seeing is not a particularly good one from this government when they're willing to give themselves a very significant increase in salaries, hold back the minimum wage, and wages in Manitoba are stagnating even as the economy continues to—continue to grow, Mr. Speaker, not a particularly good message for the future going forward.

Now, I want to talk a bit about the school funding that we saw this year. The school funding was argued to be an increase of 1 per cent, but then the government said that a 3-plus per cent increase in health transfers was a decrease. We seem to have two different approaches to this idea of what is an increase; a 1 per cent increase after inflation can arguably be seen as a decrease in the real spending power of a school division, Mr. Speaker—

**An Honourable Member:** It's Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Selinger:** And when you have—sorry, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the member from The Pas for correcting me on that.

The reality is that a 1 per cent increase is a de facto shrinkage of resources available to school divisions after inflation, and that puts school divisions at a very difficult position in striking their budgets to maintain a high degree of educational quality—which the members have criticized, but they've never mentioned that the graduation rate for Manitoba students has gone from about 72 per cent a year to 87 per cent a year. And graduation rates is the single strongest indicator of the ability of a young person to go on to further training in a skills area like a trade or post-secondary education in college or university. And that ability to increase the number of young people in Manitoba graduating from high school is something that should be considered a very positive story in Manitoba as we continue improve the quality of our curriculum in the maths, in the sciences, as well as reading and language arts, as well as helping young people become good citizens through Manitoba having one of the best environmental studies programs and green programs for understanding sustainability of any of the public schools in the world—at least according to UNESCO.

So—and then there's health-care funding that is the single biggest part of any single budget and

health-care funding is always a challenge no matter who the government is. And the members rightly were pursuing a better deal from Ottawa, although they seemed to have not collaborated with other jurisdictions in doing that by being the last person standing when it comes to the ability to strike a deal with the federal government. We would've hoped that they would've found a way to move forward on that.

Money, more money available for mental health is very important. More money available for home care is very important. These are, for the most part, non-insured services. To have the federal government commit to funding in areas of non-insured services is a positive requirement. But the total amount of their transfer is less than what the previous Liberal government had made available, and that is unfortunate. It's higher than what the Conservative government under premier-Prime Minister Harper had made—had promised: 3 per cent. It's higher than the 3 per cent if you take the money for mental health and for home care, but it's less than what the previous Liberal government had made available.

So that will be a challenge for all governments, but the—everybody needs to put in perspective the need to invest more health care money—and social service money, for that matter, and justice money, for that matter—into prevention programs, because the more we move—and education—the more money—we move money upstream to help people live healthier lifestyles. The more we move money into things that reduce violence in our communities, whether domestic violence or community violence, the more we help people develop healthy lifestyles, to recreation and phys. ed programs and healthy living programs, the better off we will be—not only as a population, but the less pressure that will put on the health-care system.

And, in that regard, Mr. Speaker, we need to see the health funding in this budget move more money into the prevention side of the equation. That would be extremely helpful. And that includes daycare. The government made an announcement last week of some investments they're putting into daycares. That is positive from the point of view that it carries on what had been started under the previous government, but we have to match up the investment in daycare with the demand. And the demand is strong. And where we can do that, that allows children to be properly looked after, but it also allows families to have the parents participate in the

labour force, which increases growth in the economy and reduces the unemployment rate. So all of these programs require a commitment on the part of government to make more investments in early childhood education, daycare, education, social services, as well as healthy living initiatives.

And when you do that, that's how you get the long-term pressure off of health care. Whether it's diabetes, whether it's mental health issues—all of those things can be mitigated by properly, well-researched, evidence-based approaches to social development and health development and educational development, Mr. Speaker.

And that includes a poverty reduction strategy. This government is the only government in Canada that has a requirement under the legislation for presenting a budget that you have to have a poverty reduction strategy as part of your budget, and we look forward to seeing that poverty reduction strategy put forward by the government. Last year they were new, the poverty reduction strategy was really—really wasn't a poverty reduction strategy. It was just a few short lines in the document. They have the opportunity this year to pursue a poverty reduction strategy. That includes RentAid, that includes support for families in terms of additional benefits. The members talk a lot about the increase in the indexing, it's taking people off the rolls, but the evidence shows that that benefits mostly people of higher incomes and has disproportionately less benefit to people of lower incomes, particularly if people aren't earning enough money to be taxed.

So we need a poverty reduction strategy that looks at how we can work towards a living wage, that looks at income supports that allow people in a precarious economy—a precarious labour market to have the supports they need for housing and food and the basic needs as they move from one job to another and try to get themselves into less precarious work, better career drawl then better opportunities to make a living for themselves. So we will be looking for a poverty reduction strategy, Mr. Speaker, in the upcoming budget.

And so—when you put it all together, Mr. Speaker, if we could get away from the rhetoric of fiscal crisis leading to austerity and look at an approach based on what we saw from Moody's about the need for a stable approach to debt management, recognizing that the costs are very reasonable at 6 cents on the dollar—if we could have a forward-looking approach to infrastructure

investment, not only for schools, health care, flood protection, strategic roads and infrastructure and community-based infrastructure such as through things like the Community Places Program and programs in partnership with the federal and municipal governments, we can have the ability for Manitobans to take the initiative at the local level to do things that'll improve their quality of life. When you freeze the Community Places Program, when you take away the ability of citizens to raise money through bingos—when you thwart that kind of local initiative, you're taking resources off the table. You're taking volunteer dollars off the table. You're taking community fundraising efforts and making them harder to achieve their goals. And all of those things are a damp—have a dampening effect on local, community development, Mr. Speaker.

\* (15:00)

If you look at the future of Manitoba in terms of a green energy province, there's lots of opportunities under the climate change initiative with the additional revenues that will be coming to Manitoba, and we look forward to seeing something in the budget about what will be done on the climate change file, Mr. Speaker. There has to be mitigation work done in terms of providing flood protection in Manitoba, because we know that, this spring, like most springs in Manitoba, on a more frequent and volatile basis, there are flood threats out there. We saw that up around Fairford in Manitoba, where the folks up there are worried about ice jamming. We see it in southwestern Manitoba, in the Souris valley and the Assiniboine valley, particularly along the dikes, that we have to be ready for potential risks to communities there. And the best way to be able to get ahead of that is to have a strong program of investment in flood mitigation as we reduce greenhouse gas emissions not only in the province, but across the country as part of a pan-Canadian strategy which ties into the climate change agreement achieved in Paris just over a year ago, because addressing this climate change challenge will be one that allows us to create a new economy with green jobs, allows us to educate people for the future, allows us to protect our environment and, at the same time, make sure that we keep the planet but also our part of the planet in healthy shape as we go forward.

So, when you take a look at climate change, when you take a look at health care, when you take a look at education, when you take a look at social services funding you can see that the direction that

we have to take in a province no matter who the government is is a move towards prevention, is a move towards partnership with communities, is a move towards reconciliation on addressing these long-standing historic issues that have left people out of the economy, that have left people out of our school system, have left people out of the health-care system until their situation is serious.

By putting money into the front end upstream investments in health care, education, infrastructure, climate change, we can do things that will make a real difference in the lives of Manitobans. And, when we do things that make a difference in the lives of Manitobans, that will allow our economy to be more sustainable; it will allow it to grow more and it will also allow us to do it in such a way that we have a healthier population, a healthier environment and a healthier world that we live in, Mr. Speaker.

And, as I look through the Interim Supply bill and now the latest legislation that's brought forward here—and I'm sure the member from River East will come—Riverview will come out on this as well—the fiscal responsibility and tax protection act, it seems very clear that there are no accountability measures on themselves in terms of salary reductions, but, as soon as they achieve a balanced budget, all of a sudden the penalties cut in forever and a day for whoever is there after they achieve a balanced budget.

But, in the interim, you can come in and you can just have a deficit slightly lower than the year before, which shows a tendency in the right direction, for sure, but not have to pay a salary penalty for that, Mr. Speaker.

So it is a new kind of approach to fiscal prudence that seems to give a break to the people that are in government at the moment, but have a harsher discipline for people in the government in the future, even if a recession occurred. And even if a recession occurs, we saw the last time around that balanced budget legislation all across the country was amended, changed or removed. Whether it was a Conservative province or a Conservative federal government, a Liberal or a New Democrat province, all governments had to abridge or breach their balanced budget legislation to do the necessary things to keep the economy going, to do the necessary things to keep people employed, to do the necessary things to keep essential services funded, Madam Speaker, and that—this legislation may create that crisis again as we go forward. And in that regard

it's not a particularly helpful piece of legislation because it just sets up future generations for problems as they go forward when it comes to doing the right thing, keeping our communities safe, our economies growing and people looked after—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, who has unlimited time.

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** As a rule in here there's usually so much to say and so little time. Today, finally, there's a lot to say and lots of time to do it, and I'm honoured—honoured—to be able to have this time in order to speak to the motion put on the table by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) related to a supply bill.

*Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Of course, we've taken the position right from the beginning that it would have been better, more prudent, more helpful to Manitobans if the Finance Minister had actually done the homework he's supposed to do and has brought in a budget in order to give the people of Manitoba a clear idea of what exactly the Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) have in store for them going forward.

We've had enough hints about what might be in store for them, for the people of Manitoba, that we are concerned, and I'm going to have an opportunity to talk about that at length over the next many hours and days, I think. But—that was for you guys—but for now, let it be said that it would've been much more useful, much more productive, much more helpful had the Finance Minister done the right thing and brought in a budget sooner rather than later. Instead, he's delayed it until April 11th, and we know the reason for that. One is that he's demonstrated an inability to come prepared to the House. And so it seems clear to us that he wasn't prepared, and that's not right. He's had a year in order to get this budget together, and yet he knew full well we were coming in on March 1st, because that was a schedule that we'd all agreed to, had been—new rules had been set and new schedules had been set that were different than other years. So it wasn't like he didn't know, he wasn't—and he wasn't sure, he couldn't figure it out. He knew very well that March 1st was the day that we would be returning to session.

It would have been, as I said before, more helpful, more productive for him to have brought a budget in and for this Legislature to begin to debate the real agenda of the new government, and instead,

we're left to deal with a phantom 'agenta.' But that seems to be sending out very, very clear signals to the people of Manitoba that the pain is on the way and people of Manitoba are going to be on the receiving end of that pain, and at that very same time, the chosen 12—12 and a half, actually—will have locked in their 20 per cent increase, we find out now, just as of a few hours ago, not only this year but for next year as well. And this is something that I think we, on this side of the House, and I think across Manitoba, in coffee shops and in living rooms across the homes of Manitobans, they also take exception to.

You can't deliver mixed messages and mixed signals in the way that the government has done by saying everybody needs to pay a price because, for no other reason than that's the ideological position of the Finance Minister and the Premier, and at the same time, lock in—and I use that term because that's the correct term—lock in an increase for themselves at a considerably higher rate than they should be receiving had they just accepted the rules as they were under the old legislation, but more than anybody else across the province is getting. I don't know anyone in my circle, in my constituency, really, in many walks of life, whom actually get a 20 per cent pay increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And not only that, to lock it in not only for one year, but as a result of the new legislation passed today, to lock it in for at least two years, and then to set the bar so low in terms of whatever penalties that there might be that it might result in never actually having to take the kind of pay cut that they're preparing to impose on working people across this province.

And I have to say I don't really understand why the backbenchers of the government accept this kind of approach to governing, why they would sit back and allow the Premier and his chosen 12 and a half to give themselves that kind of a raise at 20 per cent, likely up to 40 per cent next year, certainly locked in now, there's no doubt about it, it's right there in the legislation. Why they would allow that to happen and at the same time accept a pray—pay freeze for themselves, and that's good—good. I mean, if there's sacrifices to be made, then we'll all do our part, of course. But some aren't doing their part. And that's the front page—front bench of the government. And I can't understand why my friends in the backbenches of the new governments would sit idly by and allow that to happen.

\* (15:10)

There appears to be a very large and growing class divide within the government itself. And that strikes me as a very unusual position for a—for any government to be in, because governments succeed, we know, when there's a consensus and the ability to move together as one. And yet the government has set up a position in which 12 and a half members give themselves a raise this year and again next year. And, at the same time, every backbencher takes a pay freeze.

So it makes no sense to me why the government backbench would allow for that to happen. I've asked them on any number of occasions during our time together since the last election, as we've gotten to know each other a little bit, I've asked them to exercise their own personal sovereignty as an MLA, to say that there are some things that they're not prepared to accept. And I've asked them to show a little backbone from time to time in order to show that they have a determination to be here and represent the very people that elected them and not simply to do the bidding of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the chosen 12 and a half.

And so it goes without saying that we're tremendously disappointed, not only with the Premier's actions and the Finance Minister's actions, in relation to their 20 per cent pay increase which will be locked in for not one but for two years now, but we are equally—equally—disappointed with the government backbenchers who have simply rolled over for the Premier, have rolled over for the Finance Minister, have rolled over for their Cabinet colleagues and said, yes, go ahead, you take the big pay increase and meanwhile we'll take a pay freeze.

And so we have incredible disappointment in that regard when it comes to how the government has operated to date. It's certainly setting up the very kind of elitist approach to governing that didn't serve this government well the last time they were in government, in the 1990s. In fact, it backfired and failed quite dramatically because it created a province in which there was a very small class of haves and a very large number of Manitobans, the vast, vast majority, who were the have-nots. And, if that's the path, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government is going down, again, I think they're going to find themselves in trouble in very short order.

And it may well be—it may well be—that what should be a government that should be in a position to be re-elected in four years' time may well find

themselves back on this side of the House because the—on the one hand, the Cabinet, or the Premier and his Cabinet colleagues, have shown themselves to be above the rest of us, and that's never a good place to be in politics; and it may well be the result that the government finds itself on this side of the House in four years because the backbenchers of the government, who should have done their job, who should have exercised some sovereignty of their own position, who should have showed some backbone and said in a caucus meeting straight to the Premier: this is unacceptable; this legislation is unacceptable; Mr. Premier, you can't lock in a raise for yourself for not one but for two years and probably for many more years, you can't do that at the very same time that you're asking Manitobans to suffer the consequences of an austerity agenda that actually is not going to do anybody any good.

And what we're going to find increasingly is Manitobans out of sorts and only 12 and a half people on the government side actually benefiting from the actions of the government.

And you're not going to win another election. You're not going to keep your seat if you have to go knocking on doors and try to defend that kind of elitism, that kind of me-first attitude, that approach to governing that sets Cabinet apart, not only from their own caucus, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but sets them apart from working men and women across this province.

And I think it's fair to say that we're going to keep reminding the government of this intellectually dishonest position, this politically uncertain position, and we'll do that because we want to show the radical unfairness at the heart of this particular agenda and, in fact, at the heart of a much broader agenda that's only going to send Manitobans back, not forward.

And we've said, on this side of the House, routinely, that our obligation is to fight for a Manitoban—Manitoba that's more equitable, that's more fair, that's more just and more inclusive. Those are our values; those are shared broadly among New Democrats.

And yet it does not appear to be the government is—cares for any of those things. They have demonstrated an insensitivity to equality that is quite stunning. And it shows itself up—it reveals itself in this most basic situation where the Premier and Cabinet ministers give themselves—have locked in pay hikes for themselves, and quite exorbitant pay

hikes for themselves, while asking everybody else to take the very painful medicine.

The government has also not shown any sensitivity toward a more fair Manitoba, and it continues to divide Manitobans, to indicate areas where some will benefit and the vast majority won't. And I don't think that's a good place to be for any government. It's not a good place for any politician.

Our obligation is to fight for a fairer Manitoba, so that everyone enjoys the benefits that society has to offer. And that's what the foundation of our party has always been, from the—its origins in the CCF, through the creation of the New Democratic Party in 1961, and what will remain so. Fairness has to be at the heart of what it is to be a political figure, whether that's as a municipal representative, as a councillor, whether that's as a school trustee, whether that's as a provincial MLA, whether that's as a federal MP, whether that's if you're a elected board member on a community—at a community club.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, fairness has to be the heart of decision making. And what we see instead is a government that has actually dedicated itself to inequality and unfairness.

We're also committed to justice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that justice is social justice. It's economic justice. It's environmental justice. Those things have to be seen to be done. They have to be done and they have to be seen to be done. They're—we need to have, as a former prime minister once said—the—in fact, the father of the current Prime Minister—we need to fight for a just society.

And we're not seeing that in Manitoba. In fact, we're seeing quite dramatic injustices being perpetrated by the new government that is only going to increase the divisions and divides between us that will result in a—in neighbourhoods and communities, towns and cities all fighting with one another, rather than trying to get together and find common cause so that everyone has the idea that they are part of a just society and a—you know, in NDP circles, you know, what we want for ourselves, we want for everyone else. That's as true for New Democrats and CCF from its very origins—it's as true then as it is now today. It's a core principle.

\*(15:20)

And then finally, you need to govern—when you're going to govern, you need to govern in an inclusive manner that includes all of Manitobans. And, instead, we've seen a government, as I said just

a few seconds ago, that really has built a foundation on division, on the things that divide Manitobans for one another—from one another, and ones that ensure that some few folks will benefit and others won't.

And that's not the kind of world that we envision on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's—there are so many examples of the failure to be inclusive by the new government. It's quite astonishing to think about it. From the very first moment that we entered this Chamber together in the very first Throne Speech, there was no reference to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or to the 92 recommendations that were made in that very important report. That was inexcusable. That's not an example of inclusiveness. And in fact it's quite the opposite. It says that there's no place for First Nation, Metis and Inuit people in our community. If you're not going to be prepared to talk about reconciliation in your Throne Speech, then you're not prepared to practise it in your governing life.

And so that's a mistake, and then we have the failure of inclusion when it comes to newcomers as well. The proposed \$500 head tax on newcomers is really a throwback to the head tax of a hundred years ago that now is quite astonishing. I never thought I would see the likes of it again because the head tax had been so discredited in the past, had become such an obvious lightning rod for division. We never thought we would see such a thing ever proposed in Canada again.

And so who resurrects it? Who brings it back? A government that's stuck in the past, frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so the failure to be inclusive of our newcomer community I think is a terrible indictment of the new government and only reinforces what most Manitobans are beginning to understand about this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Finance Minister, that they're prepared to govern for the few at the expense of the many. And this has been the tried-and-true Tory way since time immemorial and, sadly, the government appears not to have learned the lessons of the history or the lessons of the past. I don't know why that is.

When I talk to each of the backbench members of the government individually, they strike me as quite smart and intelligent folks who have strong values and strong commitment to this province, and yet at the very time they've allowed the Premier and the chosen 12 and a half to set themselves apart, set themselves apart from other Manitobans, and that's unfortunate.



And I know that when you're new in the House it's hard to get your bearings, and especially when you're over here on this side, not even on the government's side of things, it's even harder to get your bearings. And so I've been trying to be helpful to the backbench members in trying to give them the benefit of my experience and my advice—*[interjection]*—and my friend from St. James complimenting me on my mentorship to date, and I thank him.

Of course, it's equal opportunity as an Education Minister. He provided me with good guidance as a school trustee in St. James—*[interjection]*—and, yes—no, very good. And, so what I'm having a hard time understanding then is that you have these calibre of folks, newly elected to this Legislature, suddenly acting like jellyfish with no spines, not really being able to stand up and speak forthrightly to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), to say, I'm sorry, member from Fort Whyte, I'm sorry, Mr. Premier, this is not why I, as a Tory backbencher, ran in this election.

I didn't run to allow you to lock in your raises and ask at the same time the rest of us to take pay freezes, which is fair, I have no problem with that, and then to ask Manitobans to lose their jobs, to have less programs and services to rely on, to lose really, really important projects in our communities as well. I would've expected more from them, and I would've expected more from them to stand up—stand up—for a fairer, more equitable, more just, more inclusive society—to stand up.

**An Honourable Member:** We are. We're standing with him.

**Mr. Allum:** But—well—if—the member, my friend from St. James, says that you're standing with him. So you're standing with the Premier, but you're not standing with Manitobans, and that's a terrible mistake. That's misguided politics that can only lead you—and I don't want this to happen because I like it—only lead him to being a four-year wonder. And I don't want that to happen.

I'm trying to give them the benefit of my advice. *[interjection]* Well, I may be on the doorstep for any colleague who runs in St. James. I was on the doorstep in St. James for our former member there. She was an extraordinary member of this House. She was an extraordinary Cabinet minister and, of course, I think we all miss her as we miss all of our colleagues that aren't here. But we accepted the verdict of the election despite what the Premier said. We certainly accepted it and we lost some

colleagues. But I know that the former member of St. James would have been the first to say that she stands up for a fairer, more equitable, more just, more inclusive society.

I know the—certainly, the former member for—St. Vital, the honourable Nancy Allan, former Education minister, my predecessor on the K-to-12 side—certainly stood up for a fairer, more equitable, more just, more inclusive society. And so it's disappointing to me that we have got to this stage in a government's life so soon. Usually Tories take a little while to play their—show their cards, to show themselves who they really are, to show that they're only interested in governing for the elite at the expense at the rest of us, kind of a counter-utilitarianism there.

And I think that that has been a great disappointment to me. And I have to tell you, I just want to say when I am out in my community talking to my constituents—I'm not sure what you're hearing in yours, and that's fair. But in my—I sense an ever-increasing disappointment with the government bordering on an ever-increasing fear, bordering on ever-increasing hostility. And that's not a good place for new backbenchers to be. That's not a good place for a new government to be. And so I would advise them, advise the government to walk back from where they've led us to, from this precipice that they've headed Manitoba toward.

And, before we were forced to jump off that cliff, that fiscal cliff that seems to be standing there waiting for us, this yawning, deep darkness that the government has us heading toward, I'd ask them—ask the government to take a second look, use some sober second thought here, ask the government backbenchers to demonstrate some backbone and demonstrate some courage, stand up to the front bench of their government, do the right thing and say first and foremost: Mr. Premier, Cabinet ministers, you have to step back from your locked-in raises over not just this year, but the next year. It simply sends the wrong signal to the people of Manitoba.

Now, for us, being an opposition party, you want to go send the wrong signals to the people of Manitoba, be my guest. I've tried to give you my best advice on this matter, because you really don't have to do the things you're doing, and we would advise against it for the very, very simple reason that you're taking Manitoba in the wrong direction, in a counterintuitive direction. You're walking Manitoba back to the failed policies of the past, and that,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a tremendous, tremendous disappointment.

\* (15:30)

Now, I have to say, I wanted to be fair in making my remarks today that I owed it to the government members, especially backbenchers here, who have had a muzzle on them through this debate. I don't know why the Finance Minister doesn't let anybody else on the government side get up and speak to these—get up to speak to these critical issues. But he's—for some reason feels a need to give a gag order for 40 members so that they can't speak, they can't say a thing. And I have no doubt that he took that direction from the member for Fort Whyte, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), to say, nobody get up, nobody talk, don't debate the issues that are of central importance to the people of Manitoba. And I'm sorry that they failed to do that, but I feel the need, then, since government members aren't going to get up, at least to say that there have been some things that have been accomplished by this government that—well, I feel, anyways, in the interest of fairness, because I just talked about fairness, that there are some things that have happened that have not been as egregious as they thought there might be.

For example, I have to admit to being quite surprised by the government's response to refugees coming in from the United States. I thought they would take a page from the Tory—federal Tory leadership candidates who are out there really railing against very vulnerable people, making their way into and finding safe haven in our province, in our country. And so I was pleasantly surprised, I think, that the government, at least in the short term, stepped up to the plate and provided some supports for refugees. I believe it was in the order of maybe \$140,000. And I don't think—I think that's a lot of money in most contexts. In the context of governing, in the context of the refugee crisis that we're currently encountering, in the context of what yet might happen as a result of the politics to our neighbour to the south, it's not much of a commitment, but it's better than we would have expected. And so, you know, I'm willing to give government some kudos for that. They got some good press for 140 grand, and that's not a bad thing if it means that people are getting the support and the assistance that they need.

Now, having said that, I want to say that—and this will become a theme as I go on—that even though the government made an initial sort of step up in

that regard, then the Premier goes out and starts immediately complaining about all the other costs and asking the federal government to step up to the table to help to handle the costs, and creating a big hoo-ha. And the media says, well, how much has it cost you so far? And says the Premier, well, I don't know. I'm not really sure. How—what are the resources that are being stressed to date, and the Premier says, well, I'm not really sure. They said, what are the personnel costs, labour costs that have been encountered by the communities so far? And the Premier says, well, I'm not really sure—and this is a quote from the media—he says, well, it's all a moving target. So, on the one hand, while he's willing to reach into his pocket and give a few pennies to support the heroic efforts of those receiving refugees in first—in Emerson and then across the province, at the same time, he held his hand out and says, yes, but I want more if I'm going to continue on this path.

That's no way to run a province in the first instance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But, more importantly, it's no way to be a proper human being that says the well-being and the welfare of these folks who are coming from really, really difficult circumstances from 'across'—across the globe, the first order of business is to see to their well-being and their welfare and not to, in the same breath as you're sort of giving a few cents in that regard, to hold out your hand asking for others. The point is, it's first of all, get the job done, put a hand out to those who need a hand of assistance and ensure all the supports are there and, of course, at that point, then start to do some of the accounting and start to provide the information to the federal government on what expenses have been incurred. It's simply not good enough, however, to go out and to, on the one hand, provide some modest supports on a temporary basis to begin with, but over the long term say, well, I'm not sure what's going to happen, and really, the feds ought to step up and we don't know what the future might hold.

That's not a good place for refugees to be. That's very un-Manitoban, that's very un-Canadian and I really, really, have grave concerns about where the Premier might take this file in the future if left to his own devices.

So, again, I would call on my friends in the Conservative backbench, in the government backbenches, to show a little courage, show a little spine, stand up to him when he starts along some very scary paths, and make sure—make sure you don't

lead the people of Manitoba over a cliff that they don't need to go.

But I did want to give the government some kudos for that.

At the same time I think we were all pleasantly surprised to see some very modest investments in child care—publicly funded child care. My friend from Kirkfield Park, of course, made that announcement and I'm pleased that he did so. I—730-odd spaces, I think. Most of those, we know, were already in the queue, ready to go. It wasn't like he actually went out and did any work to create these spaces because that work had been taken care of by the previous government, but kudos for at least making a small dent in it, throwing a small pebble and making a little bit of a splash. Anytime the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) wants to invest in affordable, universal child care for families in Manitoba, we're all behind it.

What we have very grave concerns is that the commitments he's made won't be realized, but time will tell on that, so I'll give him the benefit of the doubt when it comes to that. But, as I say, we have some concerns about whether any of that'll be realized. And, more than that, we're really concerned that there won't be any other spaces after that, and that will be a tremendous disservice to working families across this province.

Government needs to remember that when we came into government in 1999, child care was not part of their vocabulary. I don't think that there—if there were any, and I stand to be corrected on that, if there were any affordable, publicly funded child-care spaces in Manitoba during the 1990s, I'd be very surprised. I don't think it happened, and it was only us, our government, starting in 1999 and every year after that, who put affordable, publicly funded child care on the agenda for Manitobans.

In that time, over those years, we built literally thousands upon thousands upon thousands of child-care spaces. We built new child-care centres in places all across the province and we also leveraged our educational institutions, our schools, to start building them right in schools which, of course, in the 1990s would have been—was unheard of because government, at that time, didn't really believe in child care. We actually don't think they're all that committed this time, but I felt I owed it to the Minister of Families, at any rate, for—to give him some kudos for some child-care spaces and, as I said, I want to reiterate that offer: any time he wants to

create more 'universable'—universal, affordable child care for Manitoba families I think we're going to be okay with that. Go ahead and do that. Go ahead and do it.

And I have to say there's been a few pieces of legislation—a few pieces of legislation over the life of the government. Most of it has not been worth the paper it's written on, but there's been some pieces of legislation, some pieces of legislation that—*[interjection]*—yes, as my friend from Flin Flon said, you know, we'd like to see some legislation, but there has been some legislation. It didn't go over particularly well for us in some ways, but the legislation on sex assault on campus, which we, of course, had tabled on this side of the House during the life of the last government and couldn't get the opposition to actually debate it at that time, we were genuinely glad to see that legislation come forward. It wasn't materially different than what we'd done, but if imitation is the sincerest 'florm' of flattery, then we ought not to make a big deal about that. We should make sure that those things that are good things, that ensure safety on our campuses, especially for women on our campuses, then we're all for that.

\* (15:40)

And so even if it's imitation legislation, that's okay. We're not about credit on this side of the House. We're not in here for our own egos. We're in here to serve the well-being, the welfare of the people of Manitoba. And so when there are some things that happened that are good, I want to try to acknowledge that. My friend from St. Johns has made it pretty clear that the Children's Advocate act that was tabled, I believe, a little while ago, last week or so, was pretty much a mirror image of the one that she had tabled and she pointed that out in the media. But, more importantly, I think, from our side of the House, if it's substantial, substantive legislation that does good things for children, we want to see it happen. It's really not that hard to understand that when things happen that are in the interests of the people of Manitoba, we're going to be prepared to support them, and when they're not good things we're prepared to stand up shoulder to shoulder with the people of Manitoba and oppose them because they're simply wrong for families, wrong for this—and wrong for this province.

So, you know, I think I owed it to the members of the backbench to know that there are some things that they've done okay on, and there's lots of others, and I'm going to have some time to talk about all

the other areas that they failed miserably on. But in some small ways they have made a positive contribution—[interjection] I was being positive. In some small way, some minute way, un peu, have made a small beneficial contribution to Manitoba. But overwhelmingly it appears that the government's agenda is a tsunami of bad things for Manitoba, bad news for Manitobans, and so we'll stand on guard to defend the interests of Manitobans every single time and we're not afraid to do so. We have backbone on this side. We have courage on this side. We're prepared to fight for Manitobans all along the way in order to ensure that their interests are preserved and, in fact, enhanced over time, and not to be walked backwards.

Now, I want to take a moment, if I could, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also, to acknowledge the great work of my colleagues in this House since we've returned not only from the last election but from—in the year we've spent together. I think their speeches on the interim supply bill were dead on, were right on, were quite exact in their critique of the government, critique of the Finance Minister's inability to get very few things right and to get most things wrong. And so I want to pay tribute to each of them for the work that they do in their constituencies and in this House to ensure a brighter, better future for all Manitobans.

Of course, I'd start with our interim leader from Logan, who each day, day in, day out, gets up and holds the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to account not only on behalf of her constituents, not only on behalf of the community from which she comes from, but on behalf of all Manitobans. And, yet, she—every day she asks very succinct, very direct questions of the Premier, and what she gets back, really, are some of the worst answers in political history since the dawn of time. And sooner or later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sooner or later—it may not happen today and it may not happen tomorrow and it may not happen in a month from now, but sooner or later, Manitobans are going to get a handle on what the Premier's actually saying to them—that when my friend, the interim Leader of the Opposition from Logan, asked direct questions about minimum wage, about health care, about the head tax for newcomers, on a whole range of issues, she wants a direct answer. And, instead, what the Premier generally does is engages in personal attacks and artificial information—alternative facts, as we're calling them more and more—and that's very distressing. It will catch up to the Premier sooner or later.

And so while I'm rendering advice to members of the House, I render advice to the Premier as well. When we got up to answer questions, we gave forthright answers to the questions posed to us. And it's been disappointing; it's been quite disappointing to be receiving the kind of answers we've been getting from the government. We're going still keep asking direct, pointed questions. The leader, our interim leader from Logan will continue to ask pointed questions. She is a wonderful contrast in her being to a very—to the avuncular Premier, who really engages often in the lowest common denominator kind of politics. There's no place for that in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will take the integrity and sincerity and commitment of our interim leader over the insincerity of the Premier every single day.

I also want to pay tribute to my other colleagues who have spoken so wonderfully. My friend from Tyndall Park, who kicked off this debate, left no stone unturned in exposing the government's agenda for what it was. He was followed by my friend from Minto, who gave 30 minutes of some of the finest speech you'll 'fing' in this province, and dissecting an agenda that is only, only going to hurt people. And whether it's the—our interim leader from Logan, our member from Tyndall Park, our member from Minto—we're not going to stand for that kind of thing. We're going to fight back, we're going to point out what the facts are and we're going to advise Manitobans on a better way forward. And we're going to continue to do that.

And my friend from Minto was followed up—if memory serves—by my sister from The Pas, who has done an extraordinary job in putting the interests of northerners front and centre in this House over the past year—and, in fact, since she's joined this House. She comes from, of course, an incredible family in the political history of this province, a dad who I didn't actually know as personally well as others in this group, but I know that he was a hero of mine, as he was for so many others, in fighting for the agenda of fairness and inclusive and social justice that I talked about earlier. And she continues to set the standards for doing that. Her pointed critique of the abandonment of Churchill, or the northern health authority has been spot on. Dead on. And I know she's going to continue this work, regardless of the very poor answers coming from the Minister of Health.

And so I want to applaud her, as well as my friend from Flin Flon, who's a new member of this

House, but it doesn't seem like it. He seems like he's been here for, you know—

**An Honourable Member:** I don't feel new anymore.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, yes, that's right. Well, that's something about being here for a while. You lose your newness rather quickly.

But I have to say that he has been an incredible addition to our caucus, and I'm glad to get to know him politically, I'm glad to get to know him personally. He has been front and centre in talking about the government's inexplicable war on organized labour in this province. It has been an inexplicable direction that the government has taken. And so, when we did Bill 7 in the House last year, the member from Flin Flon set himself apart in ensuring that there was a fair deal for working men and women in this province. And even though the government legislation passed, even though they have made it extraordinarily hard now—for labour to organize, we're going to continue to fight for a Manitoba where we raise the bar for everyone rather than doing what the government wants to do, which is to send that bar right down to the bottom of the basement, the lowest common denominator.

That's not the way to do it. If there's a disparity about pensions between the private sector and the public sector, then let's work to make private sector pensions better. It's that simple. You don't go the opposite way, or you don't invent pooled pension plans, as the Finance Minister has put on the table. That's fine, I mean, it's not going to achieve much, it hasn't achieved much across the country to date. It has been shown in other instances to be an abject failure but, if he wants to do that, okay. But his obligation is to actually improve the pensions of all Manitobans, not to drive some pensions down because others aren't served by a good pension.

\* (15:50)

And I'm going to return to the subject of pensions in a while but, suffice it to say that my friend from Flin Flon done an extraordinary job in putting the interest of working families first in this Legislature, even as they're pushed aside by the government side.

Of course, I have to—want to give, again, credit as well to my friend from Concordia, who has the very difficult portfolio of Health critic. And we can all acknowledge, on our side of the House, it's no fun to deal with the Minister of Health from Steinbach. He's been around here for a long time; he's rehearsed

his talking points in front of the mirror, I'm sure, ad nauseam. I'm not sure what the mirror's saying back to him, but I know that he's—

**An Honourable Member:** Pretty sure it's broken.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes. That's for sure.

And it—so he's a cagey politician and I give him credit for that, but our Health critic has done a sensational job in putting the needs and interests of Manitobans first, above anyone else's, on the subject of opioids and its harmful, painful, tragic consequences in this province. He's been a leader on that. When the Health Minister brings \$1 billion worth of health cuts into the capital infrastructure of our health-care sector, my friend from Concordia's been a leader in pointing out the terrible consequences of that for Manitobans, both now and in the future.

And I know and I'm quite confident he's going to continue to be a very powerful advocate for a health-care system for every Manitoban, rather than the path that the Health Minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Finance Minister are setting us on, in which there'll be health care for some and the rest of us will be simply out of luck. We're not going to let that happen, and I know the member from Concordia will continue to fight in that regard.

My friend from Wolseley has also done an extraordinary job on the question of environmental questions.

**An Honourable Member:** More to come.

**Mr. Allum:** And he reminds me that there's much more to come, and he reminds me all the time that he would have much more to say if the government had an environmental agenda at all. But, sadly, they don't.

We know that the Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox)—it's such a—like a '90s term. It's even hard to remember it. But anyways, you always want to go back to the past. We can go back there. I think he just reminded us today that there—we haven't seen any legislation from that minister. She's had a year in a portfolio; you would think that there would be a legislative agenda there waiting for her. I know we left one behind. She could pick up on that as they picked up on so many others of our pieces of legislation.

But I want to thank him for the work that he does, fighting for a healthy planet and a sustainable world into the future, not only for ourselves now but

for generations to come, and he's done an extraordinary job in that regard.

I also want to pay tribute to my friend from St. Johns. I've known her for quite some time, both as—in the community and, of course, her former role as special adviser on missing, murdered indigenous women and girls—extraordinary job. I got to see her, as all of us did, as members of the government previously, do an extraordinary job in that regard, and she has continued to make that issue core to this Legislature.

But she has done more than that. When she gets up and speaks on very important women's issues, I listen very closely. I take her very, very seriously. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she knows what she's talking about, and I would advise members of the government, members of the front benches especially, to listen quite closely to what she's saying. She has a big heart, a great imagination, and I know that she'll not only be a great advocate for the indigenous community going forward, a great advocate for St. Johns, but she'll continue to fight on behalf of a fairer, more just, more inclusive Manitoba for all of us.

In the same regard, I want to compliment the member from Fort Rouge, who has also done an extraordinary job in his short time last—in the House in this last year since the last election. He has walked a path that I think is both impressive and extraordinary. And I have the utmost regard for the work he's done on the education file, of course, members will know that's a subject very close to my own heart and I'll have more to say on that as we go forward. But I know that he's not only been a passionate critic for a solid inclusive education system for—that serves the interests of all Manitobans, but he has been an effective critic on a number of issues raised by the government, and we're lucky to have him on this side of the House as we are every other member. And so I welcome him to our team as well and look forward to his contribution to Manitoba going forward.

And I guess then I want to, of course, have said a final word just on the great work that my colleagues have done because there's a—it's very dismissive on the other side of the House in terms of the work we do, the effort that we put into it, the research that we do, the conversations and communications that we have with our constituents and with Manitobans all across the province. But I can't end this section of the—of my speech, which is really just on the first

paragraph at this point, without acknowledging the fine work by the former premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger).

He has taken a role in this House, which is not unusual for former premiers to take. It's the right thing to do, but I have to tell you for me personally, as I think for members on our side of the House, it was great to see him get up and speak to the Interim Supply bill to display his incredible grasp on the issues of the day, on political economy, on the status of Manitoba's economy, of the things and measures that you need to 'dow'—need to do in order to keep the economy going.

So I think people know that I feel strongly about the member for St. Boniface. I know he's done an extraordinary job. I want to thank him for the work that he's done in the past. I also want to acknowledge the extraordinary work that he's doing in St. Boniface each and every day since the last election. Doing community work is in the member for St. Boniface's DNA, and that he's returned to it now gives me great pleasure and can only help build a stronger, safer more sustainable community in St. Boniface as well.

So I wanted to acknowledge the fantastic work that had been done by members on this side of the House starting for the interim leader. I'm very happy to be with these—be on this team with this group of people. I have a feeling that we're going to continue growing and getting bigger and better as we go along. And, as I said at the outset of my comments, if the government is going to continue down the path we're going, it won't be long until we've all moved over to the chairs we actually belong in on the other side of the House.

Now I do want to say that I want to get now to the Interim Supply bill because really I'm only at the first paragraph there's so much to go.

We had the—last week the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) introduced the Interim Supply bill and he came into the House as though there should be no debate on it, there should be no discussion about it. I think the Interim Supply bill was well over \$4 billion, and what he wants is for us to come into this House and not talk about it, not debate it. As I said earlier, he put a gag order around his own members so they couldn't speak about it, which is disappointing.

But then he expects that that same gag order should be extended to us on this side of the House. And, sorry, we're not taking directions from the

Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) about how we operate in this House or the issues that we want to debate, and I say that to him in the friendliest manner that I can. We're going to do the work that we—we're going to continue to do the work that we have to do on this side of the House.

\* (16:00)

You know, when the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), now the Finance Minister, sat on this side of the House—and I believe he sat in the chair right in front of me, never a moment went by when he didn't take the full amount of time to debate every issue in excruciating detail, and he would say—he'd look over and he—I was sitting where the House leader is now, the Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield), and he'd look across and he'd say feel the need, I feel the obligation to unpack this bill.

And I think everybody will remember that. He's going to unpack this bill. And he would unpack and unpack and unpack in excess of excruciating detail, down to the minutiae, and then he moves over to that side of the House, he brings in a \$4-billion bill and he says: Let's get on with it; let's move on. Nothing to see here, let's just keep moving.

Well, I'm sorry, there is something to see here and we are going to talk about it and we are going to debate it. And he's going to have to accept that we have a job to do on this side of the House and we're going to do it 24-7, 365 a year until the next election. And then we change seats and he gets back into his proper place on this side of the House.

And I have to say when we did the question-and-answer session during the—when he introduced the bill, I was discouraged by the way in which the Minister of Finance answered the questions. I know him, actually, to be a very fair individual. I know he's a great dad and with—very, very proud of his kids. I have a lot of time for anybody who's like that, for sure. I saw him and his wife in the newspaper today looking splendid, and I give him kudos for looking good.

But there's more to just looking good when it comes to being Finance Minister of this department. You have to actually demonstrate some understanding of the work that you're involved with and you have to actually understand the details associated with the files. You have to demonstrate some sensitivity to the issues and to the consequences of your actions. And, in that regard—

although I have the highest respect for the Finance Minister—he hasn't demonstrated the kind of preparedness, the kind of detail-orientedness, the kind of sensitivity that he needs to in order that he should do his job well. And, as I said earlier, doing his job well means creating a more fair, more equitable, more just, more inclusive society here in Manitoba.

And we know that he got off to a very rocky start as Finance Minister last year. It was hard for him, and I think it's important to review that rocky terrain that the Finance Minister stumbled over last year because I know that, given another year, he might be a little more well-versed in the work that he's going to do. He's not giving out a whole lot of positive signals in that regard but I give him the benefit of the doubt, at least temporarily.

**An Honourable Member:** Very generous of you.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, I'm nothing if not generous when it comes to wanting to give rope to those in the hope that they'll use it for the benefit and not for some other purpose.

But we know, when the Finance Minister started last year, the political operatives in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office said to him, the first thing you have to do as Finance Minister is pour gasoline on your head and then light your head on fire. And that's exactly what he did. He came out and he said, for all Manitobans to see, oh, my God, we have a terrible, terrible deficit crisis.

And then the truth of the matter is he didn't even have the right deficit number. He didn't know what the deficit number was and so he made one up. And that's unfortunate; I don't like to see a Finance Minister making up numbers—making up numbers. It's not taking names and making up numbers, just making up numbers and then taking it out into the media and saying—

**An Honourable Member:** It was a number.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, he just—it—just pulled that number from the air. I—he might have invented it while he was sleeping. It didn't bear any reality—any closeness to reality. He wasn't even remotely close in what he was talking about. And so the ball was handed off to him and he immediately fumbled it. He bobbed it. He wasn't sure what to do with it.

And so then he gets on to saying, well, I may have got the deficit numbers all wrong—I really, honestly—he said to the people of Manitoba—I'm not

really sure what that is. But I may have gotten it wrong, but let me tell you, he said, I found \$125 million and everybody'd be happy about it. So we said, well, what \$125 million? What are you talking about? And he said, well, I'll get back to you on that. And so we said the next day, what \$125 million did you find? He said, well, I'll get back to you. And then later that day, he didn't do it, but some operative in the communications department put out a list. And I'm telling you, that was quite a list. That was some kind of list, I'll tell you. He didn't find \$125 million; he found \$108 million. He couldn't even get that number right.

That's how inexact, imprecise the Finance Minister has proven to be in his role. But not only that, he tried to pass them off as savings, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they were nothing of the kind. They were cuts. They were cuts. He goes out and he says he doesn't know the—maybe we'll get him a thesaurus so he can know the difference between a saving and a cut, but at that point he appeared not to know the difference, and what he had found with, like \$108 million in cuts that hurt the people of Manitoba. And he went out and bragged about it.

So strike 2, you know, strike 1 on the deficit, strike 2 on the cuts. Nine million in cuts to education. Unconscionable. They had midwives, midwifery students who were down here with the path forward. Then suddenly, the rug had, as my friend from Fort Rouge said earlier today, had been pulled out from underneath those students. A whole bunch of stuff happened in the interim. They tried to deny that that had happened, and then it did happen. And so, ultimately, in order to save face, the Education Minister contracted out to McMaster in my home town of Hamilton, or just outside my hometown in Hamilton, with no path forward, no intake, nothing. Midwives in Manitoba were told, essentially, at least midwifery students were told, don't come here; there's no education for you in the future. We'll somehow fumble together a one- or two-year program to help you to complete your studies, although we were entirely insensitive to your circumstance in the first instance and at the end of the day, a makeshift solution but with no permanent solution like the one we had in place, going forward. That's unfortunate to moms, to families. It's especially unfortunate to the midwifery community.

So strike 1 on the deficit, strike 2 on his cuts, and then, well, he was walking back to the dugout, strike 3 on his budget, which was a mishmash of initiatives, most of which were held over from our

government with some very imprecise, inexact and unfortunate cuts along the way with some terrible decisions at the time. And there's no more obvious terrible decision than the decision that the government made, that the Finance Minister made in collusion with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and probably the Minister of Growth, Enterprise—of course, there would be enterprise, yes—and Trade (Mr. Cullen), probably in collusion with him as well, not to raise their minimum wage—minimum wage. It's going to turn into a minimum wage if they don't do something about it, but for now, I'll just try to keep it under control; it's the minimum wage. And the failure—the failure—to increase the minimum wage, I think spoke volumes about the government, spoke volumes about the values of the Premier and spoke volumes about the absence of a backbone by the Finance Minister and the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, who failed to take the Premier on and say, that's not right, that's wrong. Mr. Premier, if we're going to lock in raises for ourselves for not one but two years, and probably a whole bunch more, at 20 per cent, at a minimum, the least we could do is add 25 cents an hour, as we had done for 17 consecutive years. In fact, we had—were prepared—were prepared to raise it by 50 cents an hour, and, in fact, were moving in the direction toward a living wage for all Manitobans so, as I said earlier, everybody can enjoy the benefits of what this society has to offer. And, instead, the Finance Minister made a terrible decision not to 'maise'—raise the minimum wage. I would advise him, and I say this in the most-respectful-way fashion, to make sure that he doesn't make that mistake again. Don't do it. Don't go there. Don't fail those who are the most vulnerable in our society.

\* (16:10)

So I would encourage him, if he has made that mistake in his budget, to go back, get some kind of marker, put in a minimum wage raise increase so that at least those on low-earning the lowest in our communities and in our neighbourhoods will have the opportunity for a little bit better standard of living.

As my friend from Wolseley has done the math for us on more than a few occasions, really, some suggested that might have been worth \$400 a year. If you go by a basic workweek of 37 and a half hours a week, you add that extra 25 cents an hour, you get actually \$900 more a year. That's really, really, important. It may not mean anything to the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), the Premier of this



province; 900 bucks is probably pocket change. I don't know what it translates into Costa Rican currency, but, nevertheless, I don't think it means that much to them. But to people who are earning the least in our society, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it means a lot. Don't—whatever they do—don't make that mistake again.

But that wasn't the only mistake in last year's budget. Then they had—they turned around on seniors who, they were told during the election, that education property tax relief, universal, 100 per cent, that every Manitoba senior had the right to enjoy after a lifetime of contributing to our public education system, they pulled the rug out from under that as well. And not a word was mentioned of that during the election campaign. In fact, I think quite the opposite. It wouldn't be touched.

And then the first thing the Finance Minister does is raises taxes on seniors, which was quite, quite a dramatic—not only deception, which is bad enough because you shouldn't deceive in an election campaign—but, more than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't—I never expected the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) to raise taxes on seniors, to allow them to stay in their homes just a little while longer—such an incredibly important initiative for the member who talks tough about taxes, and then to turn around and raise taxes on seniors, was quite extraordinary.

And I would advise him to revisit that particular commitment in order that he can get on a path for seniors that's respectful, respects their role in our communities, in our society, respects their contribution to the world in which we live for many, many years. Get on board with them. Do the right thing, and if you can't revisit it, if you don't want to do that, at least admit your mistake, be honest and forthright, tell the seniors of Manitoba, I'm sorry that I did this to you. I'll promise to try to do better in the future.

We had in the last budget as well, and I've spoken about it briefly, but this very terrible war on labour that's being waged by the government side. And the Finance Minister as well as the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) have been partners in crime when it comes to disservice to working men and women of this province. I've said a fair amount about that. I won't say too much more except to say that it's our obligation in this House to lift the floor for everyone, not simply to reduce

everything to the lowest common denominator so that some can benefit while others suffer.

I think one of the worst things that—and it's not a huge amount of money, but one of the worst things that happened in last year's budget was the freezing of Neighbourhoods Alive! and Community Places. My friend from Wolseley, during his speech, talked about not only the important things that happened out of Community Places, for example, but that it happened in every single constituency—in 57 constituencies across this province, across governments of all stripes. So it makes no sense to me at all that they would pause, freeze, and potentially cut a program that has been instrumental to building community capacity in our neighbourhoods.

Now, I, unfortunately, had a really long list that, sadly, I forgot to bring with me—

**An Honourable Member:** Do you want me to get it from your office?

**Mr. Allum:** Well, no. The member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) would like to get into my office. He'd like to see all the things that he could educate about himself, but, no, it's not necessary.

I actually did want to spend some time on Community Places, just for the fact of that extraordinary capacity that gets built as a result of a program that doesn't actually result in a whole lot of money in total but nevertheless does a world of good as a result. And, in Fort Garry-Riverview, there are a multitude of examples, whether you go to the local legions, whether you go to any of our community clubs, whether you go to visit some of our schools or any other community organization that has utilized that envelope of money, has levered it against other fundraising efforts that they've undertaken, in order to ensure that there is a new kitchen at Riverview community club, that will keep it operating for the next decade or more. That will result in more community groups wanting to come to Riverview to rent it out to hold their function, and if that kitchen wasn't rebuilt, the odds are that those community organizations are going to find someplace else that meets their needs. The community club will suffer, community residents will suffer, as a result. And, before you know it, the community club itself, the most vibrant, most amazing part of our communities, will cease to exist.

I have to tell you, and as members of the House will know, I'm not a born-and-raised Manitoban, and

so when we moved into Riverview, we had never experienced a community centre before like this. It was staggering how fantastic these facilities were. That's how we got to know people to begin with. That's where we began to grow roots in our neighbourhood, by—I went on to serve as hockey convener and then sit on the board. And I always say that nothing prepared me for a life in politics like being a hockey convener for a couple of years. *[interjection]* Well, it's true. Yes, it's a tough place to be, I'll tell you. And anybody else who's been a hockey convener, I think, will know it.

**An Honourable Member:** Got to be a few skaters over there.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, yes. Maybe you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who, I understand, has laced on the blades more than a few time, also been a hockey convener.

And I have to tell you that when we pause or freeze Community Places, I think that sends a great fear through our communities.

The right thing to have done, the right thing for the Finance Minister was done—because he was unprepared and he was unsure what to do, that was pretty obvious—was, at a minimum, is to keep it going for this year and then to find a way to enhance it in the years going forward. That he took the opposite tack of freezing or pausing it for a year with the very real potential of cutting it going forward is a tremendous disservice to our neighbourhoods and our communities. It's a tremendous disservice to 57 members in this House. And I said at the outset of my comments, if there's ever a time for government backbenchers to show some backbone, show some courage, to stand up to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the Premier (Mr. Pallister), Community Places is that time. Don't let that happen. Don't let it happen. Don't drop the ball. Pick that ball back up, run with it, put it under your arm, even if you have to do a Heisman pose, I don't care, just make sure that program survives into the future. Don't let it happen.

We have also had an extraordinary year when it comes to multiple failures in infrastructure investment. One of the great, most entertaining pieces of news I read in, while we were not in session, was an all-persons beware or something notice put out looking for the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen) because he had gone missing in his own constituency. And that's not surprising. We knew that already because he'd gone missing in the House, as well, when it came to being

a minister who invests in the very infrastructure that creates the economic well-being of our province, creates jobs and ensures that the programs and services that we rely on are there. *[interjection]* And my friend from Tyndall Park says he was busy running with scissors, making draconian cuts to the Infrastructure budget that will only hurt the present and future of this province. But, worse than that, was a kind of an uncaring about the consequences of the Infrastructure Minister's actions.

\* (16:20)

Listen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every reputable economic organization in Canada and across the globe has said that infrastructure spending is at the heart of renewing, rebuilding, developing and diversifying our economies. And, when you don't do that, your economy, going forward, is going to be in great trouble. So I would ask the Finance Minister: if he's found the Infrastructure Minister—and he may still be missing—if he's found him, could he ensure that the two of them put their heads together and find out how they make an actual, dramatic improvement in their commitment to infrastructure, rather than leaving this province in the same state they left it in when we came into government in 1999, when there were very few things—if anything—being built in this province at all. I'll never forget the former Premier Doer saying, you know, we'd reintroduced the heretofore missing building crane—

**An Honourable Member:** Ah, yes. The endangered species.

**Mr. Allum:** The endangered species building crane—the virtually extinct building crane back into the downtown of Winnipeg, because it had been missing during the 1990s. And I've taken members of the Tory backbench through a kind of a travelogue of downtown Winnipeg, and I'd be happy to do it again sometime in the future. I may save that for next week, because, as I've often said, when we arrived in Winnipeg, though we loved the community, it was a giant doughnut with a great, big hole in the middle of it because nothing was happening downtown.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

Today, you go downtown, you see an extraordinary difference in our downtown, to the point where even the—one of the few remaining sports columnists at the Free Press wrote about the new arena downtown just last week. Now, I know that that—I don't know the sports columnist specifically. I know that I don't always share his

political opinions when he ventures them. I don't always share his sports opinions. But I do know that he gave credit to our government for the work we had done in investing in the downtown arena. And then he talked about the many, multiple direct and indirect benefits of that investment as well for the downtown.

It's not surprising that we have more growth, more development and, most importantly, more people downtown than at any other point in our history. And that's a by-product of our commitment to investing in our economy and investing in the future for generations to come. And it was really unfortunate, now, to see that the government has turned tail on those kinds of investments.

Madam Speaker, the first thing they did, of course, was to—we had a fantastic deal on a new HQ for Liquor & Lotteries. Absolutely a spectacular deal, with the idea of bringing them all together, consolidating the organization so it would work more efficiently, putting people in the same place, bringing those jobs to downtown and—as well as continuing to recreate the infrastructure of Winnipeg's downtown in the 21st century. And the government hardly had been in power for more than a mere few days when they just pulled the plug on it. That's because their first instinctual thing to do is to always pull the plug on a good idea, and that was a classic example of that—did a tremendous disservice to the downtown.

They went on for the liquor—lotteries gaming authority—LGA—and actually had it put into the tender that the bidding should not include the downtown of Winnipeg. Who makes that kind of tender? Who says that? Who, thinking rationally, thinking carefully, would direct that kind of clause to be inserted into a tender? It's not that surprising that later on they actually had to pull that clause out, because they weren't getting the kind of tenders and kind of bids that they wanted. And, suddenly, there was exactly a good reason for investing in the downtown. There was a value for money for doing. There was an economy of scale for doing it. And what it'll do is bring more people downtown.

My mechanic is in the downtown for our car. Really love the guy; he's fantastic. I don't know much about cars—well, okay, that's a stretch; I don't know anything about cars, so I rely on his wisdom. And we don't talk politics at all. Particularly, we generally talk about the state of my vehicle. But I walked in there the day after the government had made that decision and he said to me, what are they

doing? Why did the new government do that? I was hoping to have 400 more employees downtown in order to try to build my business, because it made sense to drop it off at my place, walk a couple of blocks to work, come back and get their car afterward. And his business would only improve.

And so, he was a guy—I don't know that he's a supporter of the government's side or our side or whose side—but he understood the basic economics at play in—when you do the kind of investments that we did year over year. And when you pull the plug on those kind of investments, as the new government has done, it not only hurts the development of downtown, it actually hurts people working in the downtown, people creating businesses in the downtown. The heart and soul of any city is its downtown, Madam Speaker.

And so those are the kinds of actions, whether it's been on infrastructure or any other of a host of investments that they've pulled the plug in—on that we've taken great exception to. And we're going to continue to ensure that we'll hold—to hold the government to account for the actions that they've taken. That's our role, that's our responsibility, but we also think it's the wrong thing to do.

And we're going to be out on doorsteps, you can be sure, all across this province, whether it's our constituency that we represent or not, talking about how the government's actions, how the Finance Minister's actions are going to hurt their families. And when they begin to realize it, when they begin to feel their pain, that's when we're going to see a new consciousness in Manitoba and a new willingness to engage in a kind of politics that makes sure that everybody has a place, that there's a fair, more just, more equitable, more inclusive society where everyone benefits and no one, and I mean no one, is left behind.

**An Honourable Member:** Time out.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, the House leader will forgive me for taking a drink of water. It's only something that you have to do from time to time, and—[interjection]

Yes, I'm still on the first paragraph. The Finance Minister is asking where I am in this speech because he's glued to his chair. He's on pins and needles wondering just what's coming next. He can't wait for the more to come. He keeps telling me—he keeps giving me signals to stretch it out, amplify, say more and I'm not going to disappoint him in that regard. I'm going to continue to try to provide him with the

best information and advice that I can as a duly elected member of this House.

But I was—I've been talking about some of the weaknesses/failures of his budget. I don't think that there was a more egregious action taken in the budget, and that's going some—when you freeze the minimum wage, when you cut—make cuts to health care and infrastructure and education, when you make freezes and pauses on Community Places. That's going some to say this may have been the worst action of all.

But I say this because—not because it has an impact on people's lives necessarily; I say this because, in the interest of telling a correct story, of making sure the context is right—and nobody likes to talk about context more than the Finance Minister. He rarely gets that context right. In fact, he usually gets it wrong. But, when he took the whole affordability section of last year's budget that ran at, I think, 15 or 20 pages in previous budgets—I'll be stand to be corrected—it could have been longer, and it showed comparisons by province by province, year over year, of what exactly—where Manitoba families stood.

\*(16:30)

And because it didn't fit with his central narrative about the state of our economy, he just took that, those 20, 30 pages and he ripped them right out of the budget. And that may not be as egregious than—as freezing the minimum wage, I'll grant you that. That's not as bad, because it doesn't have an impact on people, necessarily. It does Manitobans a great disservice when you're prepared to rip factual information out of the budget so that Manitobans can see how they're doing by way of comparison with people in other provinces and how they're doing. So, to make that comparison by province, but over year over year, as well. That's a real disservice to the people of Manitoba.

I'm encouraging the Finance Minister not to take that path again. He'll probably make excuses about how he didn't have enough time—and, frankly, he didn't know what he was doing last year—to include that section in the budget. Frankly, that's—because that's factual information, that's generally left up to the very, very great public servants he has in his department—because I know them very well myself. I can say that they are fabulous people—so they had that information ready and he made a really bad decision not to include that affordability section in last year's budget. And he didn't include it, Madam

Speaker, precisely for the fact that he didn't—it didn't fit with his invented narrative about the state of our economy. And so, in order to ensure that the facts were nowhere to be seen, he took that section and he ripped it right out of the budget.

But, then, that wasn't the only problem there was with the preparation of the budget last year. And here, again, this isn't something that actually hurts people directly, but nevertheless reflects the integrity of any government, and that was the failure to include year-over-year projections going forward. He put in one year, the current year, and then wouldn't give anybody any insight as to what was to come into the future. That's not how you budget, Madam Speaker. You, being a member of this House for a long time, you know the proper pathway to appropriate budgeting, and not including year-over-year projections was a terrible disservice to the people of Manitoba. We hope that he, in thinking, I hope, more clearly this year, in learning from what we—the advice we've given from this side of the House, will include those year-over-year projections to ensure that Manitobans exactly understand what he has in store for them going forward.

And, again, it's not the kind of thing that directly impacts people, but, on the other hand, when you play fast and loose with really critical information, it can only mean that you're doing a disservice to the people of Manitoba. And I remind the Premier (Mr. Pallister), I remind the Finance Minister, is that we're here to serve the people of Manitoba, not to do them a disservice by playing politics with the budget, by ripping out the affordability section of the budget, by not including year-over-year projections and then by having a poverty reduction plan that was, I think, about a page and a half in last year's budget—and that may be giving it too much credit, it might not have been that long.

All of those indicators that were in there, the goals, the values implicit in a poverty reduction plan, which, by the way, is something that our government has included as a piece of legislation, he can't not include it. It's actually the law to include it—and so we'll—we know that he'll respect the law, I'm quite confident in that, but what we want from him this year is a real plan, not the thing written on Kleenex that he included last year, but a real plan for addressing real needs in our community.

You know, the government members always talk about, oh, spend, spend, spend. I think now when

they're out in their communities, they're beginning to appreciate the colossal need in our neighbourhoods, in our communities, and that's why we invest, in order to try and address the colossal need, especially for those most vulnerable in our society, not only those living on minimum wage but those who for circumstances almost always beyond their control find themselves in very difficult position. That's why every member of this caucus entered into politics, is to fight for those folks.

That's in my DNA growing up; that's what I was taught in my house growing up. I can say for sure that in every other house, on this side of the House, growing up, whatever their circumstances were, they recognized that that's the ultimate objective of being in politics and it's something we're—we take very, very seriously.

And so we're calling on the minister in his budget going forward to ensure that there's the affordability section is built into it so the people of Manitoba can compare with other jurisdictions in an apples-to-apples way, I mean so that the comparison is true and fair, in an apples-to-apples way, that the affordability section be built back into the budget. And I'm counting on the Finance Minister to do that very thing.

We're asking him, of course, to include year-over-year projections in the budget so that we can get a sense of what his plan is for Manitobans and we can see the path that he's churning out. That's only fair, that's only fair for all of us. And I would expect—the Finance Minister strikes me as a fair individual—to live up to that very essence or fairness.

And then, of course, finally, as I said, we're looking for him to make sure that they have a comprehensive poverty reduction plan in the budget, not just the page and a half that we saw last year, but something much more extensive, something much more substantial, something that actually is built on addressing the very great needs in several parts of our province.

So that's what we're looking for in the budget coming up and, as I said earlier, I think we're all quite disappointed that the Finance Minister didn't bring in a budget to begin with. We're still waiting. We're going to be waiting for another month. The—going through the motions, apparently, yet nevertheless going through the motions that the government may be giving themselves locked-in raises for another couple of years, which—while at the

same time keeping minimum wage frozen, and we don't want to see that.

But what we really want to see is a government that identifies a plan and underneath that plan is substantive things for the people of Manitoba to try to digest and understand. And then over top of that is a greater vision about how you get to achieving a fair, more equitable, more just, more inclusive society. We haven't seen anything remotely like that in the year that we've been in this House. In fact, what we've seen is something quite the obvious—opposite, which is a government which apparently has no vision, no plan, certainly no answers, and it leaves us in the position of concluding that they have actually no idea what they want to do, besides their ideological fixation on preserving the well-being of the few at the expense of everybody else.

**An Honourable Member:** And their 20 per cent raise.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, and the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) reminds me, and I don't think I've spoken about it, about the 20 per cent locked-in raise, but I think that that's something that we'll be talking more about in the days ahead.

I want to turn my attention now, Madam Speaker, to the government's quite remarkable record on federal-provincial relations.

They'd already struck out once, as I said earlier, I went through strike 1, strike 2 and then walking back to the dugout, and here we have another, yet another strikeout. And it's really quite remarkable how we've got to this point. We remember their first foray into federal-provincial relations. My friend the Finance Minister went to Vancouver ostensibly to attend an interprovincial conference with the federal government on enhancing the CPP, and the minister I know went there with a great big briefing book in his hand that weighed a lot, weighed him down, but he got there.

\* (16:40)

Canadian provinces came together to say, for the first time in a generation, we're going to take steps. And they weren't, like, radical, over-the-top, dramatic steps forward, but we're going to take steps, for the first time in a generation, to enhance and expand the CPP. And the Finance Minister went to that conference unprepared. He didn't know what to do. He was like a deer caught in the headlights. They held a media briefing after the conference was over where everybody was signing to it, and he ducked

out the side door. Couldn't find him. He raced to the airport, got in a—into the plane in Vancouver, flew directly back to Winnipeg, landed in Winnipeg, immediately had his driver take him to Wellington Avenue, to that great big mansion—

**An Honourable Member:** Crescent.

**Mr. Allum:** —or, Crescent—on Wellington Crescent, in River Heights, to talk to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to say, oh my God, all Canadians are agreeing to expand and enhance the CPP, what do I do? And the Premier says, well, I'm not really sure what you will do. I don't have an answer for you today, so we're going to take seven days and we're going to think about it and we're going to ask our political operatives what to do with this very thorny problem we've got ourselves into by being the only government in Canada to be offside on enhancing and expanding the CPP.

And so what the political operatives do in their—wherever they are, whatever they're doing—they say, you know, the only way out of this is for us to pretend that we're New Democrats. So we're going to write a letter to the federal Finance Minister. We're going to give him a few suggestions that we could also do for the CPPP—for the CPP, but—and then we'll sign on and we'll do what all those who are beaten in a battle do: we'll claim victory. Well, it was no victory. It was, ultimately, a victory for the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

It was certainly no victory for the Finance Minister, who found himself in over his head, uncertain to how to proceed, had to come back and get his walking orders; didn't know that; had to wait for the political operatives to come up with a New Democrat plan to expand and enhance the CPP. We're glad they did. We hope that he's getting back to the table asking the federal Finance Minister what's next on the CPP. We hope he's holding his feet to the fire. I doubt it, I'm skeptical, I'm uncertain, but I would advise him that if—he should get back to work on that particular file since he doesn't have much else going on federal-provincial relations because, then, we had the next federal-provincial meeting around climate change.

And so all the governments in Canada, again, get together. And these things aren't easy. I've been to my share of fed-prov meetings, as I know other members on our side of the House have been, and we know that they're not easy. They take a lot of willingness to be engaged, to roll up your sleeves, find areas of common interest, and work together.

And I think that's what happened with the climate change accord. It's not the be-all and end-all of accords, but it's a start. It's a start; it's something. And so what happened: governments from across Canada—provincial governments—sign on, and the only one who doesn't—surprise, surprise—

**An Honourable Member:** Manitoba, Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, it's Manitoba and Saskatchewan. One of—in particular, the Premier of Manitoba, who says I have this really great idea that's going to go over really well: I'm not going to, he says, I'm not going to sign that climate change accord until I have a deal on health care.

How long ago was that? How long ago was that?

**An Honourable Member:** Months ago.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, it does seem like a long time ago, but he's not going to sign that climate change accord until he gets a deal on health care, says the Premier.

Well, funny thing happened on the way to that climate change accord and that health deal. We still don't have a health deal. It has been a singular failure on the part of this Premier who we have no doubt—and I see the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler) asking me to expand and enhance on my comments today and I never want to disappoint him. He's a senior member of this House, and if he wants more I'm going to give him more, to the very best that I can.

And he well knows, or he may not, about the health—unsigned health accord, but what we had is a federal government who, in fairness, did a divide-and-conquer maneuver, started to pick off provincial governments. So, at first, the Health Minister stands shoulder to shoulder with eight or nine other provinces, I think, to begin with, and he's feeling emboldened and he's feeling strong and then one by one they start signing their own deals.

The first one to go, or almost the first to go—it wasn't the first, but almost the first to go was their friends in Saskatchewan, their buddy Brad Wall, who said, yes, I'm with you all the way to—no, I'm not there. Ain't going to do it. I'm going to sign on and I'm going to cut a deal for Saskatchewan and come what may. And slowly but surely we were down a couple of weeks ago how we were going to debate a resolution in this House about standing shoulder to shoulder for the vast majority of the population of Canada because smaller provinces had signed on, and Quebec and Ontario and BC and Manitoba were

still hanging together representing—I think that resolution said something about 80 or 90 per cent of the country, and so we debate that bill one day. We didn't really have enough time because they never revisit their resolutions. Once they put them on the table, they don't really want to go back there.

So here we're debating this bill, this resolution, about standing shoulder to shoulder with the—well, actually just three other provinces, but 80 per cent, 90 per cent of the rest of the population, and about five minutes after I've left this House and we've left this Chamber, the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) out in the media saying he's prepared to cut his own deal. And then few days later we find out that Alberta, Ontario and BC have also cut their own deals. So what do we have? We don't have no—a signature on the climate change accord and we don't have a health-care deal.

So what kind of governing is that, Madam Speaker? That's actually a failure to govern and has been, maybe in the history of this country, the worst federal-provincial strategy ever invented and has left Manitoba as an outlier in a country where we have played a traditional and historic role of being at the table with other Canadians in order to build this country—

**An Honourable Member:** Well, maybe when the feds killed Riel that was worse.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, okay, that would be worse. My friend from Fort Rouge says that there's a—there are tragic moments in our history that we need to reconcile about and there have been worse events. But in terms of a federal-provincial strategy, this has been among if not the worst ever undertaken in the history of this country.

I would invite the Finance Minister to talk to the Premier, talk to the Health Minister and see if they can't get together to get on the path of province building and nation building, because that's the most important thing to be doing from the federal-provincial point of view. Strong provinces, strong country, strong player in the international community, so that we can make a fair, more just, more equitable, more inclusive world for everybody in the world, let alone in Manitoba and in Canada.

And so, if the government is going to go down that path, I think they need to strongly rethink it, get a better strategy together. We don't necessarily think that they just have to go out and sign any old deal. Of course not, but we would expect a better performance from the Premier, from the Finance

Minister, from the Health Minister, from the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) on these interprovincial files.

\* (16:50)

The only thing that they've done is to provide us with a balkanized regional trade deal—protectionist trade deal that does nothing to enhance the trade across borders in this country. It just creates a balkanized Canada. I've never believed in that, Madam Speaker. I never will believe in that kind of balkanized regional idea of Canada. One Canada for all Canadians, wherever you may come from; not regional balkanized centres of protectionist trade that actually has no real predictable value to it. They—neither the—no minister can articulate one thing that's resulted from that agreement to date that's done anybody any good anywhere. Go on to the website: three press releases in about five or six years, the most recent one being about Manitoba's participation, the one before that 2011, 2012, something like that.

So, Madam Speaker, my point is here is not the quantum, to use a word that the Finance Minister liked, quantum of press releases, but if you're doing something, you want everybody else to know about it—[*interjection*]-quanta—so you put out a press release to tell the world what you're doing to get your message out, and if you only have three and five years, that tells me not much has happened, nothing is going on. I, personally, will never subscribe to these kinds of trade deals. I don't even know why we do trade deals that don't include very important elements of environmental and social deals as well. You can't start thinking about trade like that anymore. That's why we're in the mess that we're in: trade deals need to be much more comprehensive and much more focused on community and neighbourhoods than they are in doing favours to the rich and the well-to-do in our society.

Now, Madam Speaker, we had the Finance Minister—this time now getting on to paragraph 2, for those keeping score, just on to the second paragraph—we had the Finance Minister introduce a new piece of legislation in the House today on—[*interjection*] No, on the—

**An Honourable Member:** Balanced budget.

**Mr. Allum:** The balanced budget and something, something, something. Yes, I don't know, they—one of the things I used to say in my classrooms is, a catchy title is really important to making the reader

want to read the rest of the paper. And, as catchy titles goes, this really doesn't do it.

But we had the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) introduce this piece of legislation, and I had the chance to get up and ask him, well, two out of three questions, Madam Speaker. Didn't quite get to the first one, but we were asking him about the government's request to have Moody's come in and do a review of the Province's financial situation. And they asked them—Finance Minister went out and asked them to do this ahead of the budget, which, government backbenchers should know, this usually happens after the budget so that the groups have something to actually evaluate. And so Moody's came back with a report. And what it—that report, did was blow a colossal hole in the government's narrative that they started from the first day of the last election campaign, through the election campaign, through every, every day since that last election that they've been in government, blew a cavern-size hole in the government's position.

And so I thought it was important that I should read at least the summary into the record so—from Moody's Investors Service so that members opposite will see what the reality of the situation is here in Manitoba instead of the torqued-up, untrue, inaccurate narrative that the government day in and day out tries to propagate.

So this is dated February 21st, 2017, and it's from—it says Moody's Investors Service, rating action, "Moody's assigns Prime-1 short-term debt ratings to Manitoba." And then it goes on to state the ratings' rationale. And it says: The P-1 ratings reflect the credit strength of Manitoba, AA to stable, including the Province's strong fiscal framework and the presence of sizable liquidity sources, totalling approximately CAD \$3 billion in cash, short-term investments and portfolio investments, excluding sinking funds, as of March 31st, 2016.

And then it goes on to say, Madam Speaker, and I'm quoting again: Although the Province's liquidity levels are relatively low, total cash and investments comprise 19 per cent of expenses and 12 per cent of debt in 2015-16. Cash and investments fully cover the Province's ongoing short-term liquidity needs and debt-servicing costs, supporting the P-1 ratings.

And I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, that I don't have the full attention of members opposite on this, because it's really important that they understand this information.

So the—Moody's goes on to say, the Province also maintains CAD \$1.2 billion in sinking funds and approximately CAD \$5 million in uncommitted revolving bank credit facilities. Moody's expects that Manitoba's debt burden will remain elevated at about 170 per cent of revenue over the next two to three years—[interjection]—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Allum:** —primarily as a result of the Province's capital borrowing program and to partially finance operating deficits. Despite the accumulation of debt—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

There's a number of conversations going on in the House, and I am having some difficulty hearing the member. As you know, it's important that the Speaker does hear the member in case there's some comments being made that might not be appropriate for the House. So I would urge all members, if they are having conversations, to take them to the loges or just bring down the level a little bit please. Thank you.

**Mr. Allum:** I'm surprised they're not on the edge of the seat listening to Moody's report because it's really important. It would certainly clear up all of the misconceptions shared by the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler) every single day he's in this House or walking around the province of Manitoba. He's got it wrong, and Moody's is telling us that he's got it wrong.

So let me continue on where I was there. It says, and this is really important, despite the accumulation of debt, the Province will maintain solid debt affordability with interest expense measuring around 6 per cent of revenue, less than half of the comparable level in 2002. Moody's anticipates that the interest burden will remain close to current levels in the medium term if interest rates were to rise modestly and assuming a gradual increase in debt. Manitoba faces refinancing needs of around CA2 \$2.2 billion in 2016-17, around 9 per cent of outstanding net direct and indirect debt, a level which Moody's considers manageable.

Let me say that again for the Finance Minister's benefit. It is not often I find myself getting all jazzed about what moody has to—Moody's has to say. A level which Moody's considers manageable—a level which Moody's considers manageable—and so the Finance Minister—and I only have a few minutes left today before we go back—get back into the real detail



tomorrow when we get on to paragraph 3 and 4 and move on.

The Finance Minister needs to take this piece of advice, and this time it's not coming from me. It's not coming from me; it's not coming from members of the NDP on this side of the House. It's coming from Moody's at his request. And so, from now on, I will ask him not to go out and tell Manitobans that the house is on fire and things are burning to the ground. A very reputable 'crating' agency says quite the opposite, and I would ask him not to continue such a tortured, inaccurate narrative into the future and speak honestly and openly and frankly and clearly to the people of Manitoba so that there's a clear understanding of what's really happening in the province.

It was our goal to continue to make Manitoba a vibrant place for every Manitoban so that there's a place for every member of this community to build a

fairer, more just, more equitable society for all of us. That was our objectives. That was always goal. We didn't always meet them, but we did the best we did. We're never going to turn from those values, Madam Speaker. We're going to continue to fight for them.

And no matter where the Finance Minister takes this province, wherever he wants to take it, we're going to stand with Manitobans shoulder to shoulder to make sure that there's a place for everyone in our society and everyone has the opportunity to succeed and do better and have a real life and—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have unlimited time remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 13, 2017

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