

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
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

Thursday, March 16, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 24—The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, Bill 24 would remove outdated, contradictory, complicated or ineffective regulatory requirements imposed on business, non-profits and local government. Under this legislation, over 15 pieces of legislation will be amended or repealed to allow Manitobans to focus on their priorities, rather than focusing on government red tape. Bill 24 makes necessary changes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government regulatory requirement, while maintaining legitimate public policy goals.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to table, in accordance with the provisions of section 28(1) of The Auditor General Act, the report of the Auditor General on the follow-up of previously issued recommendations, dated March 2017.

Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Tyler Klassen

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, today, on what would be his 17th birthday, I would like to recognize a young man who I consider to be a hero in the riding of Dawson Trail and in our province.

On October 22nd, 2016, 16-year-old Tyler Klassen was involved in a fatal car accident near Steinbach, just two days after receiving his licence.

Tyler's death was tragic and heartbreaking. What makes this story remarkable and heroic was that, at the time of his death, Tyler was an organ donor. He had said, just a few months before the accident, that if anything ever happened to him he would want his organs to be used to help as many people as possible. Because of this decision, Tyler gave 45 people a second chance at life.

Madam Speaker, I think I can safely say that not many teenagers would have the foresight and determination to make this decision. Tyler was an amazingly compassionate young man, and the gift that he gave these 45 individuals is one they will surely never forget.

Today we are joined in the gallery by Tyler's mother, Lisa Boyd, and father, Jason Klassen. I'd like to ask my fellow members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing the heroism and life of their son and to let them know that his legacy will not soon be forgotten.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Snoman's Making Tracks Event

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, on February 17th, I, along with my colleagues, the MLAs for Lac du Bonnet, Radisson, Southdale and Riding Mountain, as well as the Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox), had the opportunity to participate in Snoman's Making Tracks event. Snoman is a consortium of 53 members clubs that maintain designated trails in all regions of the province.

The first annual Making Tracks snowmobile ride was hosted by Snoman to introduce MLAs to snowmobiling and enjoy some of the beautiful scenery. It was also about ensuring that Manitobans have a wider understanding and appreciation of the economic impact of snowmobiling.

A study commissioned by Snoman reported that the economic impact of snowmobiling in Manitoba has increased by 38 per cent since 2009. Snowmobiling has a \$300-million impact on the economy and creates over 900 jobs locally. There is

\$37 million collected annually in tax revenues for local, provincial and federal governments, with approximately 36,000 snowmobiles registered here in Manitoba. As well, clubs spend almost \$2 million annually to maintain a trail system.

The day began with an overview of the equipment by Enns Brothers, who generously supplied them. Then, joined by the RCMP to ensure a safe ride, we, along with a number of local riders from Springfield Pathfinders, got to experience the trails alongside and through Birds Hill Provincial Park, where we stopped for a light lunch.

Manitoba is truly a four-season destination and for many people winter is the primary draw. Thanks to the efforts of Snoman, more and more people are having that opportunity.

Snoman also encourages its members to be environmental stewards of the regions where they ride, to stay on designated trails to reduce their environmental footprint, to make sure that they are keeping their distance from wildlife, and promoting new, cleaner, more efficient technologies.

I would ask that all members join me in thanking Snoman, including Yvonne Rideout, executive director, and Wayne Lambert of the Springfield Pathfinders, who are with us today, for all they do promoting snowmobile safety and developing snowmobile trails and associated facilities here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Concordia Health & Fitness Centre

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, the Pallister government has recklessly cut \$1 billion in funding for a wide range of important health-care projects throughout our province, including the Park Manor Personal Care Home, northern health clinics in Thompson and The Pas, the community clinics in St. Vital and the QuickCare clinic in St. Boniface.

The affected communities were counting on these critical investments to improve health-care outcomes for their families and for generations to come. One particular project, which is still awaiting approval, is the Concordia Health & Fitness Centre. Families are now waiting to find out whether or not this much-needed project will be built.

The previous government was committed to this initiative and took steps to move the project forward. We heard from the board several times, and though we recognized it was an ambitious project, it was

clear that the project had to go forward for the sake of the health of future generations.

The provincial funding was in place and the process to secure federal funding was then in motion. The Concordia Foundation also worked hard to raise their portion of the funds. The whole community truly came together collectively to ensure that this project would succeed.

Initiatives like the Concordia Health & Fitness Centre are an important part of the continuum of care from prevention to treatment, to recovery and rehabilitation. Modelled after the centre at Seven Oaks, this centre would provide a much-needed location for those needing wellness programs. Concordia Health & Fitness was further meant to be a hub for other services, like child care, nutrition counselling and physiotherapy.

To shut down this project now, without any alternative or plan, is deplorable. This government's actions were ideologically motivated by an austerity approach to health care that places outdated economic myths ahead of patient care.

Madam Speaker, this is unacceptable. Manitobans expect and deserve a government that will act in their best interest, not one that cancels vital health projects and doesn't provide alternatives. Our NDP team will continue to fight for Manitobans and the services that they deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Education Governance Agreement

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): First of all, I would like to thank the Klassen family for coming out. I know it spurred conversations amongst many of my friends who—and family who live in the Steinbach area, and we've had discussions with our own children, so I appreciate you coming here today and thank the member.

I would like to share with all members about my own community's upcoming heritage week, which starts March 20th and runs until the 23rd and will be held at our schools. It's an important way for our students to learn and relearn local customs, values and teachings of our people. The collective knowledge and skills of our own people will be shared and celebrated with the youth.

Some topics are: traditional games, sacred teachings, teachings of the church, oral history, language, arts and crafts and living off the land, to name a few.

* (13:40)

It is so reassuring to know that what we learned watching our nomishooms and nookims is finally being given the merit it deserves after centuries of assimilation policies.

On December 16, 2016, MFNERC signed a historic Education Governance Agreement, and I was proud to bear witness to those chiefs' signing.

I would like to quote Chief Jim Bear: To be the architects of our own fate goes a long way, and in doing that, we—then we know that we will succeed, because we will have more of a vested interest, rather than trying to administer someone else's imposed system, which has never worked for us.

I would also like to quote the Honourable Carolyn Bennett: First Nations' control over First Nation education is critical to support indigenous pedagogy and learning environments that foster the secure personal cultural identity of its students.

Today we celebrate the vision and determination of First Nations in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Portage District General Hospital Foundation

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I rise today to celebrate the amazing work of the Portage and district hospital foundation—has achieved over the last 30 years.

The Portage District General Hospital Foundation was incorporated in 1986 to benefit the Portage District General Hospital. In 2001, their focus expanded to include Douglas Campbell Lodge and Regency House. Over the years, the foundation has raised millions of dollars and is currently on track to raise nearly \$1 million annually.

These funds have been used for countless improvements in the three facilities, including a renovation to the emergency room in 2007 in the Portage hospital and the chemotherapy room in 2012 and '13; the purchase of new surgical instruments for the operating room and new outdoor furniture for the residents at Douglas Campbell Lodge to enjoy. Most recently, the foundation purchased six new chemotherapy chairs for the chemotherapy department at the Portage general.

No organization can be so successful without the dedication of a group of people committed to making health care in the region better. I'd like to commend the board of directors for their hard work. And I'd

like to take this opportunity to thank board member Jim Knight for his 30 years of service and dedication to the foundation. And I'd also like to commend the executive director, Erin Miller, who is with us today, for her tireless efforts to raise the profile of the foundation and to make it more and more successful with each passing year. The teamwork and commitment to community demonstrated by the foundation is appreciated by all in the Portage constituency.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have the—some guests coming into our gallery right now that I would like to introduce you to. We have seated in the public gallery, from Mitchell Middle School, 80 grade 5 students under the direction of Dave Johnson. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Goertzen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls Need for Programs and Policy Development

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I want to take a moment, Madam Speaker, to acknowledge the horrific murders of Shania Chartrand, age 21, from Lake Manitoba First Nation, this past Sunday, and Jeanne Fontaine, age 29, from my home community of Sagkeeng First Nation, this past Tuesday. Both women were shot, and Ms. Fontaine was further set afire.

I want to offer my sincere condolences to both the Chartrand and Fontaine families.

Madam Speaker, I spoke with my chief, Derrick Henderson, this morning, who wanted me to share with the House his sorrow, his anger and his concern on the continued violence against indigenous women and girls.

Can the Premier tell Manitobans what measures, by way of policy, programming and legislation, he's put in place to address violence against indigenous women?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, it's impossible to imagine the depths of sadness that the families involved in this—these horrific actions can—are experiencing right now.

But we, all of us here, know that every effort we can make in the direction of a safer society for all, and in particular for those of our most vulnerable citizens who all too frequently experience the consequences of violence in their communities and their lives, every action we can take to alleviate that harm and that future possibility, is good action.

I, in my quarter of a century of public service, would say that the most satisfying activity I was able to engage in was working alongside First Nations women on and off reserve and many others—many others—as well, who joined in the challenges of facing up to the sad continuation of violence. The legacy of past mistakes must not be something we sit back and accept, Madam Speaker. We must together face the challenges of making things better for all of us, and in particular, for indigenous women in our country.

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

Ms. Fontaine: In the last 24 hours, I've received messages from Canadians across the country expressing their condolences to the Chartrand and Fontaine families, while also expressing their concerns at the inaction of this government to fully understand and appreciate the grave levels of violence against indigenous women and girls, and their inability to put forward any concrete steps at addressing this critical issue.

As well, Madam Speaker, I've spoken with many social service development agencies across Manitoba who have advised that, after 11 months, they still haven't heard a single word from this government in respect of programming initiatives or policy development.

I ask the Premier: Where is this government on concretely addressing violence against indigenous women and girls, and what dollars have they put forward to these programs and services?

Mr. Pallister: I encourage the member not to attempt to seek any kind of short-term political advantage as a consequence of the horrific actions of the last few days in our province. I think that it is important that we set aside political differences on these issues, that we make sure that we join together, that we focus together, on these issues.

I endeavoured to do that in Ottawa, as I was blessed to have had the chance to meet and hear from women around the country, First Nations women, who wanted action and who got, finally, some

progress in terms of their matrimonial property rights after years, after over 20 years of fighting for those things.

And I was proud of Eric Robinson and proud of the NDP when they stood and joined with us in the last session. And we, all of us together, decided that we would unanimously support matrimonial property rights for Aboriginal women in our country. I think that was a proud moment, and I encourage the member to help us here, on all sides of the House, create more such moments in the future.

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

MMIWG National Inquiry Outreach for Families

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The murders of Ms. Chartrand and Ms. Fontaine provide this 'houth'—House with a concrete example of the importance and critical need of the national inquiry. The federal government earmarked \$11.3 million for the family information liaison units, to provide MMIWG families with a myriad of supports as they navigate through the national inquiry.

I've also spoken with many, many MMIWG families who have also advised that they have not heard from this government. Can the minister—or can the Premier advise what's been done to reach out to families in respect of the national inquiry?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, as opposed to other files, Madam Speaker, where we have had less than satisfactory progress thus far in terms of working with the federal government co-operatively because of their decision to make threats such as health-care funding, we are eager to work with the federal government and have seen some progress in respect of moving towards expanded family liaison contact programs to support the families of missing persons.

We have, as a new government, endeavoured to reach out ambitiously to First Nations communities and groups who are acting in support of First Nations communities in an unprecedented way.

We have been encouraged, in fact, in the comments we've received, supportive comments we've received, from those who share our concerns that—and I think the concerns of all members of the House, that this is an action—that this is a problem, a social challenge, worth co-operative action.

* (13:50)

And that is why, again, I encourage the member to take, as I have always encouraged members opposite to do, to take a non-partisan approach and to take a co-operative approach in addressing these issues together.

I am open to all her ideas. I'm open to the ideas of all members of this House. Our government is listening and we are ready to work with you.

Provincial Negotiations Government Strategy

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, it seems obvious that both Conservatives and Liberals are playing games with the health care of Manitobans.

Negotiations have once again spilled into the headlines. We disagree with Ottawa's approach, but it also portrays a pattern of behaviour from the Premier: public fights on the pension, public fights on climate change, public fights on flooding, public fights on health care.

Manitobans want to see the Premier do the hard work to get results. There simply has to be a better way.

Will the Premier commit to real negotiations, not just chasing headlines?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition speaks about games. The game, unfortunately, that the NDP members are playing is hide while we seek, and we are seeking a better deal for Manitobans.

We're standing up for Manitobans. We're standing up for vulnerable Manitobans, indigenous Manitobans, Manitobans who suffer from kidney disease, who suffer from diabetes, who suffer from a lack of mental health services, who suffer from a lack of home-care services.

We continue, Madam Speaker, to be very effectively advancing the cause of better health care for Manitobans, while the members opposite simply hide and play political games.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Besides capturing headlines, the Premier's negotiating style is not helping Manitoba. His tactics simply don't work.

The Premier challenges his friends in Saskatchewan over flooding, and they turn around and approve yet more drainage that is going to come down on Manitoba during flood seasons.

The Premier should be engaged in doing the hard work of negotiating.

When, Madam Speaker, is the Premier going to stop grandstanding for headlines and start actually governing for results for Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we are in pursuit of results, Madam Speaker. And I must give the members opposite some credit for getting results.

Theirs were all bad. Ours will be good.

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

Ms. Marcelino: There are real challenges here in Manitoba that the Premier seems to be ignoring.

As our team has highlighted, the Premier is cutting \$130 million from the regional health authorities and he cancelled \$1 billion for CancerCare and personal-care homes. This affects the future of health care in this province. It affects real people.

I only wish the Premier would display the same determination in fighting to preserve health-care services, rather than the cuts he has already announced.

Will he reconsider his approach?

Mr. Pallister: Well, there wasn't a single challenge that the previous government faced up to, Madam Speaker, apart from just the challenge of raising taxes on Manitobans, working families, seniors and so on. That, they were very good at.

Every time they had a challenge, they had the same answer: let's jack up taxes on Manitobans. Every time they had a challenge, they had another answer: let's run up a higher deficit and a higher debt.

We inherited a debt that had doubled under the previous administration, and now we have—because of two credit rating downgrades—we've got \$30 million less going to happy moneylenders down in Toronto and that area, that should be here, helping people like the hospital foundation in Portage la Prairie to be doing their good work.

Madam Speaker, this is the legacy of the NDP who ran and hid every time there was a challenge,

and they're doing it again. Instead of standing up for Manitobans to get a better deal on health care, they're hiding, they're blame placing, they are not doing any good work for the people of Manitoba.

And this weekend they'll have to decide whether they should come into the 20th century or not, and let their leaders be elected by their own members for a change, instead of three or four union bosses down the street at the union hall on Broadway.

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

Capital Projects and Services Government Commitments

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yesterday, the Premier condemned others, saying, quote, the withdrawal of previous commitments is not something that emboldens character or smacks of integrity, unquote. Madam Speaker, the Premier is doing just that. He is breaking his commitments to Manitobans.

The Premier committed to build 1,200 personal-care-home beds right away. He called the issue a crisis, one that he would get going on right away and proceed with action. He has broken his promise to Manitobans and gone back on that commitment. Madam Speaker, how can the Premier attack the character and integrity of others for behaviour he himself is engaged in each and every day?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate advice from people who have expertise. The members opposite have great expertise in breaking commitments, so I appreciate their advice. The fact of the matter is, they walked around the city of Winnipeg, they knocked on the doors of the people's homes, they looked them right in the eye and they said, we promise you—we promise you—we won't raise your taxes. And they knew. The member for Minto (Mr. Swan) knew full well. He knew that he was going to raise their taxes while he looked into their eyes and told them that he promised he wouldn't. Now, that is breaking a commitment, Madam Speaker.

We have promised, after a decade of decay, to repair the services of this province of Manitoba we love. And we will do everything in our power to do that, Madam Speaker, with or without the help of the members opposite, who break their commitments all the time.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier said yesterday the withdrawal of previous commitments is not something that emboldens character or smacks of integrity. So, let's talk about the Premier's commitments. The Premier committed many times that he would protect front-line services and the people who provide them, yet now he has betrayed that commitment.

Madam Speaker, the Premier couldn't even bring his caucus to support our legislation today that simply recognizes the right of workers to collectively bargain—rights that are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Why does the Premier have one set of rules for himself and another one—another set for everyone else?

Mr. Pallister: Let's look at the record of the NDP. They went to the doors of the people of this city and all over the province, they looked people right in the eyes and they made a solemn vow. They said, we won't raise your taxes. Then, they went and raised people's taxes by record amounts, including jacking up the PST.

Now, when we talk about broken commitments, Madam Speaker—and the member has some experience with this, personal experience with this—let's not stop there. Let's remember that to get their way, they broke their own rules, the rules they made which guaranteed Manitobans would have the right to vote on this proposed PST hike. They went to court to fight against 1 million Manitobans. *[interjection]* They fought against 1 million Manitobans—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and took away their right to vote on this measure that they were taking, which they promised they would not take.

* (14:00)

One million Manitobans weren't important to them; they broke a commitment to 1 million Manitobans; they took thousands of dollars out of every household in this province, Madam Speaker. They know about breaking commitments; we know about keeping our word.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Whether it's personal-care homes or front-line services, the Premier is abandoning the commitments he made to Manitobans. What's worse, is that he stands outside this Chamber and says the withdrawal of previous commitments is not something that emboldens character or smacks of integrity.

I ask again: Why is it one set of rules for himself and one for everyone else?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, I appreciate the advice from the member on breaking rules, because I know the members opposite broke the rules around the balanced budget law to give themselves \$1-million bonus pay for their Cabinet ministers. They broke the laws around the referendum and took away the right of a million Manitobans to vote, Madam Speaker. So they know about breaking laws.

They promised the people of Manitoba they wouldn't raise their taxes: they jacked up their taxes on cars, on hairdos, on cottages, on home insurance, on benefits at work, and the list goes on and on and on, Madam Speaker.

They know about breaking their word; we know about keeping ours.

Personal-Care Homes Construction Commitment

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about walking away from commitments when he has, in fact, squandered the first year of his mandate, running away from his—the commitments that he made during the election.

This Premier pretended to care for seniors when he made announcements at—about new personal-care homes in the election. He pretended to care about seniors now when he said that his cuts won't affect those personal-care-home beds that are being built.

It's time this Premier and this minister demonstrate exactly how much they care about results and share with this House exactly how many personal-care-home beds have been built in the last year.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member asking a question about the squandered 17 years that he spent in the NDP government. In fact, that is an important question.

It's an important question to ask him why it is that he went around to Manitobans, along with all of

his former colleagues, and asked—and told them that they were going to be making commitments, commitments they had never put money aside for, they'd never budgeted for, they'd never done anything to ensure that they were going to happen.

He might want to define that as compassion, but I don't think it's compassion or caring to go to people and tell them that you were going to put money aside for something and then never do it, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I know the Premier has shown difficulty in the past, focusing on exactly what the word year means. Maybe his time in Costa Rica is playing tricks on his notion of what a year is. But I'd expect more from the Minister of Health.

Will the Premier, or will the minister, tell the House today how many personal-care-home beds will be committed to in this upcoming budget?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the member opposite spent the first half of that question on a personal attack. And I know that he's had lots of experience of personal attacks in his caucus, having engaged in them for many years prior to the last election.

It's actually now about a week of the anniversary of the election being called last year, and you would think after a year—or sorry—a year after the anniversary of the election, you'd think that after a year, after a year they would've learned that personal attacks don't work in Manitoba, that Manitobans aren't looking for personal attacks.

It's one thing when they attack each other, but they shouldn't attack anybody else in this House, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I take it the answer to the first question was zero. And, certainly, the answer to the question—the second question appears to be zero, as well.

Ultimately, the Premier made commitments to Manitobans in the election, and he's breaking them. But it's not the Premier that matters, it's not his 20 per cent pay increase, his months away in Costa Rica, it's not his well-being that matters, it's—what matters is the impact that his cuts are going to have on seniors and on families in our province.

Will the minister simply commit to reversing his decision to cut the personal-care-home projects and actually fund these much-needed beds in Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I am shocked that the member would again put in his question a smear against a member of this House. I think that's unbecoming of the member, and I hope that that's not indicative—I hope that that kind of attack isn't something that he's looking to warm up for the weekend.

Now, I recognize the NDP have a convention on the weekend, so maybe he's just warming up for the attacks that are going to happen at the convention. I would encourage him to try to get along with each other and maybe Manitobans will want to get along with them too, Madam Speaker.

Dakota Sports Complex Funding Kelvin Active Living Centre Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): We want Manitobans to get the best deal when it comes to health-care funding, but we're not sure the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) right when he says he's standing up for Manitobans.

He says he's doing that in the House, but then he turns around and he cuts the Kelvin Active Living Centre and the Dakota Collegiate LRSD sports complex. That's not standing up for Manitobans, Madam Speaker; that's hurting Manitobans. That's hurting students, organizers and volunteers at Dakota Collegiate who have been fundraising for years, hoping to start construction this May.

So, will the Premier really stand up for Manitobans and restore the funding for the Dakota Collegiate LRSD sports complex?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, I'm glad that the member wanted to talk about health care and the negotiations in health care. And let me tell you that all members on this side have been disappointed by the actions of the federal government, not just in the last few days, but in particular in the last few days, when they are threatening to take valuable things away from Manitobans that were previously committed.

And I want to tell you that every member of our caucus is proud of our Premier, who is standing up for every Manitoban, proud of our Premier, who is making sure that the federal government keeps its

commitments now and into the future, and we stand by our Premier, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Premier has painted himself into a corner, or more accurately, he's cut himself into a quandary. He said yesterday that the withdrawal of previous commitments is not something that emboldens character or smacks of integrity, yet he went ahead with his withdrawal of funding for the Kelvin High School Active Living Centre. There is a disconnect between the Premier's words and his actions, actions which harm Manitobans.

But he still has a chance to turn things around and live up to his own words, Madam Speaker. So, will the Premier restore funding for the Kelvin High School Active Living Centre?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, again the member refers to the negotiations that are happening in health care. And I recognize the member has said publicly, he said it in the Free Press, that he might consider running federally in 10 years, that he's interested in going to Parliament, but he's starting a little too soon. He's starting a little too soon if he wants to defend Ottawa.

As long as he's in this House, he should do what our Premier is doing and what other members of this side of the House are doing, and stand up for Manitoba. If he wants to accelerate that timeline and go to Ottawa now, then go to Ottawa now, but while you're here, stand up for Manitobans, sir.

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

Tuition Rates Indexed to Inflation

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Proud to have the minister's support, proud to stand up for Manitobans, proud to stand for constituents in Fort Rouge, proud to stand up for constituents at St. Vital, Seine River, and Riel, who are all flooding their email inboxes asking for the funding to be restored for the Dakota project and the Kelvin project.

Standing up for Manitobans also includes ensuring that students are able to pay for university—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —without being saddled by a decades-long debt sentence. We know that keeping tuition

affordable is the best way to make sure that the greatest number of students in Manitoba get a chance at post-secondary and that hard-working families can afford to send their kids to college.

* (14:10)

So, will the Premier stand up for Manitoba students and their families and keep tuition tied to inflation by keeping the legislation—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Unconvincing, Madam Speaker.

The member speaks about standing up but sits on his hands, sits on his hands when he has the chance to defend Manitoba's best interests, sits on his hands when he has the chance to improve sustainability of our education programs in the province, sits on his hands when he has the chance to advocate for improved health care—people across our province, sits on his hands.

Madam Speaker, we're negotiating with a federal government that said that there was no deadline; there was a deadline. We're negotiating with a federal government that said there were no linkages; there were linkages made. We're negotiating with a federal government that said there were no threats made; there were threats made.

And all the while we've stood up for Manitobans the members opposite have been sitting on their hands supporting Ottawa to us when they should be representing Manitoba in this negotiation just as we are. I encourage them to get on side in standing up for Manitobans, for a change.

Performance Review Government Record

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I would like to send my condolences to the families in Lake Manitoba, my mom's home reserve, and in Sagkeeng. All I can say is, horribly tragic.

Ministers, all I have seen from this government is take, take, take, with no plans to show how our—to show our Manitobans of what you are giving in return. No concrete plans, just rebound budgets you have accumulated over the years. This will be your chance to inspire Manitobans.

Minister, can you please state on the record what this government has given Manitobans this entire past year?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Hope.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just encourage the member, when asking questions, to please do them through the Chair.

Child-Care Wait Times Introduction of Tax Credit

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I apologize. And I knew the list would take less than 45 seconds.

We are all too familiar with income inequality in Manitoba. We are also aware of the fact that it will take governmental intervention to close this gap. Sadly, our new government has said nothing reassuring on this front.

Let's talk about investment tax credit for child-care spaces, as we are in dire need and no one provincially seems to have an answer.

Minister, has this government considered such a child-care space tax credit to reduce the 15,000-kid waiting list?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): This government makes a priority repairing some of the services that were lost and broken under the NDP government.

We have a strong place to address the child-care needs within this province. We think the first item is in terms of the red tape. The red tape that was left by the NDP is the first step to encourage and promote child-care spaces for Manitobans.

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

Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit Program

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I rather like the orange tape concept.

It—but I am committed to spurring economic growth here in Manitoba, but I need help.

So before this tax credit gets eliminated, for the record: Minister, can you expand on how a helpful Manitoban can claim a Manitoba Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit?

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding, I would again have to caution the member to please pose her questions through the Chair.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Surely we've witnessed 17 years of NDP government, and certainly they've ignored northern Manitoba.

We are out having discussions with northern Manitobans as part of our Look North strategy, and we're excited about the future for northern Manitoba and the rest of Manitoba as well. Going forward, we have some great ideas engaging Manitobans, and Manitobans are providing us some great ideas as well.

We look forward to working with our partners to grow our economy here in Manitoba, and we know positive partnerships will lead to prosperity here in Manitoba.

Spring Flooding Concerns Government Preparations

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Madam Speaker, would the Minister of Infrastructure please provide this House with the update of our government's action and—to monitor and prepare for the potential for flood issues?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for the question.

We had an additional meeting this morning as part of our ongoing work to monitor and prepare for the potential for spring flooding. I thank our dedicated public servants and municipal partners for their ongoing work.

The question also gives me the opportunity to announce we are exploring options for an independent review of Manitoba's flood-related procurement processes, something the previous government failed to do.

Collective Bargaining Constitutional Right

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This morning, this government turned its back on workers once again, blocking a bill that would've required the Province to recognize and honour the constitutional right to collective bargaining.

Does the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade believe that there is a constitutional right to collective bargaining?

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

I don't certainly agree with the premise of the question.

We certainly agree with collective bargaining. There is collective bargaining in Manitoba already. It was certainly an interesting piece of legislation the members opposite brought forward.

We know the mess that we've inherited from the NDP government. That's why we're working with our partners in labour to move forward. It's a long road to recovery, but we're ready to do the work that has to be done in Manitoba to get us back on that road to recovery.

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

Mr. Lindsey: The Supreme Court of Canada; Bill 217, The Labour Relations Amendment Act; and we in opposition all recognize that section 2 of The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees that all employees have the right to meaningful process of collective bargaining. A deal's a deal. You can't just rip up the terms because it suits your political agenda.

Will this government commit today to respecting collective agreements and co-operating with labour in good faith?

Mr. Cullen: Again, I appreciate the premise of the question.

We do know the NDP are having a historic weekend this weekend, where they're going to be meeting with their special-interest groups this weekend. Clearly, they're going to have some important decisions to make and—in terms of how they're going to select their next leader. I wonder if the members opposite are going to be exercising their right to a secret ballot.

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

* (14:20)

Mr. Lindsey: The nature of work is evolving. There's less job security, few, if any, benefits, minimal control over working conditions. Protecting our most vulnerable workers is more important than ever, and the best way to do that, first and foremost, is for the government to recognize and respect their basic rights.

Will this Premier (Mr. Pallister) acknowledge in the House today that there is a constitutional right to meaningful collective bargaining?

Mr. Cullen: Certainly, I would be upset too if I had 17 years under the NDP government and the record that they left us with.

We recognize that we created 3,900 full-time jobs—not we, but the people of Manitoba—created 3,900 jobs this last month. That is a step in the right direction, Madam Speaker.

We know that Manitoba workers have the right to collective bargain; Manitoba workers have the right to form a union; and now, under this government, those workers have the right to a secret ballot.

Liquor and Gaming Authority Downtown Office Location

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, for 17 years, downtown Winnipeg was rejuvenated with successful public and private investments, but this government has turned its back on downtown Winnipeg.

The Minister for Crown Services has directed Manitoba's Crowns not to even examine investments in downtown Winnipeg.

Can this minister tell the House why he ordered the Liquor and Gaming Authority to exclude the entire downtown from consideration for its offices and not even ask if space could be found that would be better for its operations, cheaper or more convenient for its employees?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, we didn't. We actually included it.

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

Downtown Development True North Square Project

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, just the other day, True North development president, Jim Ludlow, said that the dynamic retail, commercial and residential development now being built included a 50,000-square-foot food hall with a liquor store component in it, and there'd been—there's been a lot of excitement about what amenities this would provide for Winnipeggers and Manitobans.

This directly contradicts what the minister and his hand-picked board chair told the House in November: that the project had a 50,000-square-foot liquor store.

Who should Manitobans believe, the people that brought the Jets back to Winnipeg or a minister who just can't seem to keep his story straight?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Well, Madam Speaker, this was a member who went door to door, looked his constituents in the eye, knocked on the door and said, read my lips, no new taxes. And when it came to the PST, his former leader said that was nonsense that they would raise the PST. And after the election, they raised the PST, broadened the PST.

When it comes to trust, he has no room to speak, Madam Speaker.

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

Crown Services Minister Performance Record

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): With that answer, we'll trust the guys that brought back the Jets.

Why do we have a Crown Services Minister who hates Crown corporations? This is the minister who told Manitobans that our profitable and vitally important Manitoba Hydro was bankrupt, and then had to eat his words. This is the minister who didn't know he was responsible for road safety, who then stood by and let MPI ask for the largest premium increase in more than two decades, who's misrepresented Liquor Mart's involvement in True North.

Can't the Premier find a minister who doesn't hate the Crown corporations?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I know that the member is approaching a difficult weekend. It's the second anniversary of the rebellious leadership contest where he wasn't able to prevail on the members of the NDP to remove the member, sitting in front of him, from St. Boniface. And I know it brings back bad memories for him. But that's—that is no excuse for personal attacks.

Now, I want to sincerely wish the NDP the best in their discussions this weekend. They're going to discuss whether they're new or whether they're democratic. They're going to discuss whether they move into, not the 21st century, but the 20th century in respect of giving their members a chance to actually vote on who the leader should be. This is what passes for progressive in the NDP these days, ladies and gentlemen.

I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, that I wish them well in making progress on these discussions, because Manitoba deserves to have an opposition party that stands for something and that adopts democratic practices within its own organization, and that would make this government actually better.

So, we're welcoming the accountability that the NDP opposition has yet to provide to this Chamber. I wish them well in their deliberations, Madam Speaker. I'd like them to move beyond special interests and bring back democracy to their own party.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has ended.

PETITIONS

Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations Funding

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. The reasons—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 on projects that aim to revitalize communities.

(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 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 families and communities.

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 initiatives.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Prior to proceeding—oh, we did have a guest in the House, but it looks like he has left.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, this afternoon we would 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.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on third reading of Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, standing in the name of the honourable member for Kewatinook, who has 28 minutes remaining.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): So, just to continue, we are tired of receiving no answers, and we're tired of not hearing—of no plans. And now the

indigenous people are finally being mentioned by the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

Perhaps a staffer read Hansard and saw that I had stated on record that for every dollar that is put into the indigenous populations, 90 cents comes back out. The fact is this government's intention is to keep our most vulnerable in perpetual poverty.

* (14:30)

So I appreciate being given the time to state that, and I appreciate the hard work that we all do in this Legislature. And I appreciate that the fact that a group of young kids came out to watch the proceedings. A group of wonderful youth, 41 representatives from across Manitoba First Nations were gathered today to—for a youth summit in which I had the honour of being invited to, and they were here for a brief moment. But it's nice to know that we're getting out there and talking to the youth and that youth are taking an active participation in seeing what goes on in this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Just like to echo what the member from Kewatinook just said. It's always a pleasure to see young people coming out to witness government in action. It's kind of a shame, however, that they don't see that from this government. It's a shame that children come and learn that the government can't, won't, answer questions about very specific bills, about very specific issues that affect Manitobans, that they talk around in circles and don't answer those questions.

So, just to get on to the meat of this matter before us, Madam Speaker—I don't want to vector off too much, unlike some of the speakers this morning that seem to have the notes for the wrong bill, the wrong page. The Premier talked earlier, has the wrong decade. So it's unfortunate that they come unprepared.

So let's talk a little bit about what's happening, Madam Speaker, that in the North this government is talking cuts while they said, during the election, when their famous knocking-on-the-door nonsense, they said they—we're going to protect front-line workers, and yet we already see that the vacancies are growing in the health-care system in the North. We already see that commitments made to mental health facilities in the North have been cut, and yet we listen constantly to people from the North, to members of this Legislative Assembly who represent people in the North, talk about the great need for

mental health services to be available to those people that live in the North, all people that live in the North, particularly our First Nations people that have been so disadvantaged for so long, that the need is so great, and yet, this government doesn't recognize that, won't recognize that. I guess it's not enough, the folks in the North hanging out at the Manitoba Club that the Premier doesn't see them, doesn't listen to them, doesn't care about them, which is too bad.

In my own riding, prior to the government bringing in a budget that I'm sure concerns all of us on this side of the House and probably most Manitobans once they realize just what all this government is going to hack and slash and cut, we're already seeing those cuts: Northern Patient Transfer, as I talked about in a previous speech in this House, Madam Speaker. We're already seeing that people are disadvantaged, that they don't have access to the same health care that people in the south enjoy, and now that access is being further limited by insidious behind-the-scenes cuts that this government has already mandated. Never mind what they may do in the upcoming budget, never mind the blatant cuts that'll take place. It's the simple—well, not so simple, but it's the cuts that are already taking place that are having an effect on people from Cranberry Portage that don't have local health-care facilities, that come for a normal doctor visit to Flin Flon but now the amount that they get for travelling is reduced.

The people that rely on flights to get from their northern communities to Winnipeg to access specialists that aren't available in the North are seeing that what has previously been agreed to—although it, unfortunately, maybe wasn't captured in an actual procedure, this government has directed to Northern Health Region to go back to a 1995 document that, even the document that they have, has been scribbled over, added to, taken away from, that they don't have an actual document to refer to. And, in fact, every time you go to try and access the services of the Northern Patient Transfer system, you get a different story. You get a different story as to what's covered and what isn't. It seems to change almost daily these days. Sometimes it depends on who's doing the asking what the answer is. *[interjection]* I see that. You know, it's a shame that the government ministers don't care about people of the North, don't care that they don't have access.

We listened to this government say, well, this week it's a Look North, and please go on our website and tell us your ideas, because, well, quite frankly, we don't have any; we have no idea what the North

needs. They're afraid to invest in the North. I don't know what they have against investing in the North, but they clearly won't. We have a rail line that runs to the Port of Churchill that's reduced in services and a private American corporation that certainly nobody on this side of the House ever thought that privatizing some of those services was a good idea. But, Madam Speaker, the people on those communities need access. They need that train running more often than not. Quite frankly, the government's hands-off approach to all things in the North are shameful.

So, you know, I wish—I wish—that the services that people come to depend on in the North had increased by 20 per cent, kind of like the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) salary increased by 20 per cent, kind of like his ministers' salaries increased by 20 per cent. Probably that total amount would pay for the cuts that they're talking about to things like Northern Patient Transfer. You know, Madam Speaker, \$6 million to come out of the northern health budget is an unconscionable figure that they throw out there and say, we're going to cut this out of your budget; we don't care how; we don't care where; we don't care what services you cut—all the while that they're standing up proclaiming that they are the great protectors of front-line services. Although, to this day, they still haven't figured out exactly what a front-line service is.

So we talk about grants that communities, not just in the North but all over Manitoba depend on, and everything is on pause. I've had a conversation with the leadership group from Snow Lake and their community group. Their municipal CAO, who's no longer with them, he's moved on to greener pastures. But they were awaiting word from this government on grants for sewer and water upgrades in their community. The construction season is soon to be upon them, and the last I heard from them was that they still had no word on whether the grant had been approved, which then means that they can't start letting contracts, they can't start planning for how and when the work should take place, because they don't know if the work is going to take place.

So this government, you know, they talk a lot about the federal government holding them ransom; they're holding communities ransom, Madam Speaker. Communities throughout Manitoba are waiting to hear about these grants so that they can proceed. I referenced earlier about a seniors housing that was going to be built in Flin Flon. The government seemed to indicate at the beginning of

the first session of this Legislature that that project was a go. Later on, when the press contacted them to see what the construction plan was, they seemed to indicate that it's no longer a go. Certainly, we've seen no indication from this government that they have any intention of building a seniors home in the community of Flin Flon, because, well, I guess Flin Flon's in the North. So not real interested in developing jobs—they're not interested in keeping people in the North, I'm not sure why.

* (14:40)

But that, again, is—I guess the Premier's main focus in his life is how soon he can jet off to Costa Rica. I haven't heard of our Premier taking a holiday junket to northern Manitoba. I mean, he's entitled to holidays the same as everybody else, but perhaps he should try holidaying in this province that he supposedly is leading, and I use that term quite loosely because it appears that he can't wait to get out of this province. He can't wait to get away. He can't wait to go to a foreign country to spend his vacation dollars rather than supporting local businesses with his vacation dollars.

I understand he's also got a cottage somewhere not in Manitoba. I'm not sure what this Premier has against the province of Manitoba, the business people in Manitoba that try to eke out a living with tourist dollars while he spends his elsewhere. Kind of a weird juxtaposition of priorities. I guess his priority is to support business people elsewhere, not in this province.

You know, they had the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to introduce their budget, they've certainly had plenty of time, and yet they haven't. The Premier talks about his great negotiating skills that he's—

An Honourable Member: Old union guy.

Mr. Lindsey: Oh yes, old union guy. One of my colleagues—friend says old union guy. I'm not sure what old union he belonged to, but I'm certainly sure that it isn't one that would admit it today.

Now I kind of lost my place in my notes and I'll have to start over, I guess.

You know, he talks about his negotiating skills he's going to work with his buddy Brad Wall. Well, it seems that the wall between Manitoba and Saskatchewan is about to get flooded out, and yet, this Premier and his great negotiating skills have accomplished nothing. The province of Saskatchewan, whether you like Brad Wall or hate

Brad Wall, he's doing what he thinks, today, is the best for his province's farmers by draining their land into Manitoba, by draining the water that floods out Saskatchewan farms into Manitoba, and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and some of his ministers like to say, well, people are sitting on their hands while I'm doing all the hard work. It would appear that this Premier is, in fact, sitting on his hands while farmers and communities in Manitoba are watching the Saskatchewan government potentially inflicting great harm and great damage to their land and their properties while this Premier doesn't appear to have done anything. In fact, when we asked the question what plans had been put in place, as with every other question that gets asked, Madam Speaker, in this House, there was no answer. There was a bunch of political mumbo-jumbo spin but no answer to the question as to what this Premier had done.

He talks about his negotiating skills again while he's standing up to the federal government. He stood up to the federal government on CPP changes. By gosh, he was going to get a better deal for Manitoba. But, the last time I looked, it was the same deal everybody else got. His great negotiating skills didn't really pan out for the people of Manitoba then.

Now we're moving on to talking about health care and we don't see his great negotiating skills getting a better deal for Manitoba. In fact, what we see is them not getting any kind of deal for Manitoba, which is too bad for the people, not just for the people that support us, Madam Speaker, but for the people that actually supported this government during the last election. He's not even standing up for them. There's a very small, narrow group of people that he's standing up for, and it's certainly not all the voters that voted, and I suspect, by the time the next election comes around, that number will be down dramatically as he continues to hack and slash.

You know, we talked during elections about things that this government had done in the past, and this government said that they would never do that again, that they wouldn't cut front-line services, and yet we're already seeing cuts to front-line services, as we wait to see what the next levels, what the next series of cuts will be, as the government waits to bring in its next budget. He's already threatened working people that he would rip up their contracts; he would—he used the term renegotiate them, but when you rip up a contract and make it null and void, that's not called negotiation anymore; that's dictating, which is kind of a shame that in a province that

stands proud of its democracy, that the present leadership believes in potentially dictating to the workers. I guess, somehow, the working people of this province, in the Premier's view, don't deserve his respect, which is kind of a shame because it's the working people of this province that built this province and continue to build this province and that need support.

As we've seen from trade deals that traded away working people's futures, that made sure that nothing was manufactured or—I shouldn't say nothing; I stand corrected—less and less things are manufactured in this province as they're now manufactured elsewhere. You know, it's successive Conservative and Liberal federal governments that have undermined working people in this province so that business people could profit and profit greatly. We talk about economic recoveries that leaves average people out of the recovery. More people working part-time jobs—apparently this government is okay with that because they're going to proceed with more trade deals that don't have protections for Manitobans built into them, that will trade away more of Manitobans' future as we see refugees flying across the border hoping for a better life.

We need to look at people that are in the province now that are hoping for a better life, but they're not seeing that from this government. They're not seeing that hope. One of the Premier's answers, and I use that term loosely, his sole answer was that's what they were offering, was hope.

Well, I beg to differ. For working people this Premier is not offering hope. For immigrants this Premier is not offering hope. For people of the North, this Premier is not offering hope. He's offering nothing of the kind except maybe to his business elite friends that see, hopefully, their bank accounts will grow, which is really not what a government of all the people should be concerned about.

One of the things that some of the constituents in my riding are concerned with is ovarian cancer, Madam Speaker. It's a devastating type of cancer that affects our sisters, our mothers, our aunts, our daughters, and they desperately need more funding to help find a cure, to help find treatments that will make survival rates from this type of cancer go up. But we don't hear the government talking about that. What we hear this government talk about is, well, let's cut cancer care. Let's cut the building of a CancerCare clinic that may have helped innumerable

people battle such a horrendous disease. And this government proceeds to cut health care.

* (14:50)

You know, we talked a little bit about the cuts that are happening in the North, but cuts to services in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority will have a devastating impact on people in the North as well as there's less services available, the wait times for them to get in to see specialists and get the treatment they need will grow. This government will say, well, it's not our fault, we didn't cut that service, we just cut the budget. It was the management of the health services that cut the services.

And that's what we see a lot with this particular government, Madam Speaker, is not accepting responsibility, not wanting to actually live up to what they said, which was to make this province the most improved province. You cannot improve this province by hacking and slashing the services, whether it's health care, whether it's education. The province will not get better by cutting. You cannot cut your way to prosperity, Madam Speaker.

The people that live and work, the people that want to work, the people that see life as being hopeless because there is no work know full well that cuts will not help them, will not help them see a better Manitoba.

We have lots of beaking off about taxes and they're higher under this government and there's a lot of people that don't pay taxes because they don't earn enough money. And this government is doing everything they can to make sure more people will fall into that category and then they somehow, I suppose, think that'll be a cut in taxes because they're so poor they can't afford to pay taxes anymore.

Conversely, maybe the people at the top end are so rich that they don't think they should have to pay taxes. And that seems to be the people that this government and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) are focusing on more—is ensuring that those at the top continue to get ahead at the expense of those at the bottom. And that's just plain wrong.

An Honourable Member: Right.

Mr. Lindsey: No, it's wrong.

Madam Speaker, the government is planning to introduce a whole raft of legislation on Monday because they're very quickly running out of time to introduce legislation, but they've spent a lot of time introducing some fluff regulation or fluff legislation.

It's too bad that they aren't willing to introduce the meaningful stuff and have the proper debate on it.

The other thing that we talk about, Madam Speaker, is the government has commissioned and spent sums of money on any number of reports that they like to quote as being the reason why they're going to do things. And while this Premier stands, and his ministers stand, and his backbenchers squeak about being the most open and 'transparent' government that's ever been, they refuse to release those documents. I fail to see how that makes them transparent. I fail to see how that type of secrecy is the benefit to any Manitoban.

They talk about untendered contracts and the first thing they do is release an untendered contract to do a study, a study that now they try and tout as being the reason for more cuts in different places. Madam Speaker, as we look at Manitoba Hydro—and let's look at the people that work at Manitoba Hydro, because this government continually refuses to look at working people.

They're talking about laying off 900 taxpayers, 900 working people in this province. It's this government, that said they would not interfere with the Crown corporations, that jumped right in and made sure that they told Manitoba Hydro that they had to cut, cut, cut.

And there's all kinds of talking back here in the backbenches about Manitoba Hydro debt, and yet, study after study says, yes, there's debt there, but debt-to-equity is not bad, that growth is important, that we need to look at, you know, the new green economy and what should that mean as we try and transition from fossil fuels, what one entity in western Canada stands to be a major part of the answer to that.

Let's talk about Manitoba Hydro. Let's talk about a new green economy. Let's talk about what that change can mean and how the profits of that corporation stand to grow if, and only if, they have the facilities in place to make sure that growth is possible, which this NDP government had the vision for the future, had the vision for making sure that everything would be ready to grasp the future, to actually make Manitoba the most improved province, unlike this government that merely promises to do that with no actual plan of how to do it.

Madam Speaker, this government is continually at odds with what they say and then what they do. Open and transparent, they are not. Protecting

front-line services they are not. They have introduced balanced budget legislation which has more loopholes in it than you can possibly imagine, that allows this government—well, I shouldn't say this government, because it's certainly not all members of the government that will enjoy the benefits of the 20 per cent increase. I see some of the MLAs sitting at the back here, that didn't get to slop at that particular trough, that it was only the ministers and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that got that 20 per cent increase. The folks back here got told, you'll be taking a freeze, because even within their own party the elites care about the elites and not everybody. And that carries on from the party to the province, that they care about a very select few, to make sure they're doing well and the majority, not so good.

So, Madam Speaker, as my time is running down here, we need to make sure that Her Majesty's loyal opposition holds this government to account. And that is what we are doing. That is what we are attempting to do. We're attempting to make sure that this government listens, and listens to Manitobans, to all Manitobans, not just a select few, that they make sure that an improved Manitoba is actually improved for all Manitobans, so that all Manitobans can enjoy the benefits that this province has to offer if it's properly managed.

Madam Speaker, we look at the North, the resources that are available in the North, that should be shared with all Manitobans, not just a few, but right now they're being shared with no one because this government has no vision for the North, has no vision for how to help the people of the North, how to help the Manitobans prosper. They're only concerned about the prospering of the few. And that's really too bad, because if they actually worked with First Nations communities in the North, other communities in the North, we could come up with a strategy that will really help everyone in the North. With investments from this government and private investments, there should be growth, and yet we don't see that. And yet somehow the Fraser Institute said it's the friendliest jurisdiction for mining, but there hasn't been one new mine opened in Manitoba, not since this bunch took charge, Madam Speaker.

So I'll wrap up very quickly here and thank everyone for their time and patience in listening.

* (15:00)

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I'm pleased to rise and speak to the Interim Supply bill that we're now discussing here in the House today.

It is a little concerning that the government has started to show its true colours. According to some—you know, local experts, noted economists and analysts of, you know, labour relations have said that. And it really is kind of embodied, first and foremost, in the 20 per cent pay increase that the Cabinet and the Premier have decided to not just keep for themselves, but to really fight for and to really strenuously battle for, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

You know, they've sort of spun themselves into contortions and all sorts of different explanations about how they're permitted or, you know, entitled to these 20 per cent raises, if you will. However, we ought to note that as soon as they voted to repeal the balanced budget legislation here in Manitoba, that they did, through that action, give themselves the 20 per cent raise, because that removed any obligation that it might be taken away from them by force. And, therefore, it was a de facto granting to themselves of a raise.

Now that they've brought forward a new piece of legislation under the guise of it perhaps offering some form of accountability, we're also forced to conclude that that is just another means by which they are contorting themselves, stretching logic, to try and justify themselves an opportunity to keep this 20 per cent raise.

Again, there are so many loopholes under the proposed legislation which does very much apply to this Interim Supply bill, given that both have a lot to do with the fiscal affairs of our province. There are so many loopholes that it's very much tough to see a situation under which this current Cabinet and Premier would not be able to keep their 20 per cent raise.

Now, that is relevant and it's also remarkable, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, because in the public sector right now, there is a chill working its way through the ranks of public employees. There's a great concern that there will—that there could be job losses, that there could be wage freezes or wage rollbacks, that there could be other techniques such as Filmon Fridays, as they were once referred to, used to try and extract concessions from, you know, labour.

I, you know, hear, I believe, the member from Thompson talking about how these measures worked, and so I'm alarmed to hear a member of the government caucus verify that in fact these are the

techniques that his Cabinet is planning to use. The job cuts, the wage cuts and the forced days off without pay that I just referred to, he's, in fact, validating with his heckling on the record right now. So that certainly is alarming.

We will, as the official opposition, you know, oppose these measures strenuously, but, at the same time, we can't muster that opposition without noting that that does concern us very much.

But returning to the 20 per cent pay increase that this Cabinet and that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has voted for themselves, when you contrast that with the chill that's gone through public sector employee communities, Mr. Acting Speaker, it really is quite remarkable, because what other group of public servants was able to negotiate a 20 zero-zero-zero contract for themselves over these four years.

Typically, the percentage increases that we see are at—or, you know, perhaps within a few percentage points of the cost of living. And so, you know, if the cost of living this year is going to be 1.1 per cent, just to pull a number out to put on the record, then very likely you would expect to see, you know, contracts in that, you know, 1, 2, 3 per cent range. And yet, this Cabinet, this Premier has decided that one of their biggest priorities is to secure, essentially, a de facto 20 zero-zero-zero wage guarantee for themselves over the four-year period, beginning with the year that we're currently in. So that's current—so that's definitely something to make note of, and, you know, beyond, it seeming to be very unfair to other public sector employees who are now being asked to make concessions. It also is just very indicative of where the government is coming from. And it's a government that is out of touch and a government that, you know, clearly doesn't understand that leadership should be done by example, and that if you want to lead by example, then, in this case, I would suggest that fighting for your 20 per cent raise shouldn't be the first order of business in the government agenda.

Again, we hear, you know, members from the government side heckling about taxes right now, and, you know, that is their right to, you know, point these things out, but, of course, they realize that the overall tax burden on Manitobans is now higher under their government than it ever was under the NDP. The tax burden is now higher, you know, a full year into their administration, than it ever was under the NDP, because they haven't repealed any taxes, and, in rolling back the seniors property tax refund,

they increased the tax burden on seniors. And, by making a de facto cut to education funding in the K-to-12 system, they, you know, consequently, increased the property taxes.

And I've noted, as Education critic, that property taxes have gone up both in the city but also outside of the Perimeter. Earlier today, I was, you know, taking a look at one of the papers from the Interlake and, you know, saw how property taxes have gone up there. I've been following along with the Brandon School Division, through their deliberations, and I've seen that they've been forced to raise property taxes. And I also noted that the—in the Minister of Education's home constituency, in Portage la Prairie, that that school division was also forced to raise property taxes. So, for all the heckling that the government side does about taxes, I find it, you know, a little bit of amusement that they—that the tax burden is now higher under their government than it ever was under the NDP. And so I'm sure they appreciate that irony and they appreciate that, you know, contradiction. But, you know, presumably, they'll find a new line of heckling to pursue in relatively short order.

In the meantime, we'll continue to remind Manitobans that taking a 20 per cent pay increase is, at the same time that you're issuing cuts and missives about laying off workers in the province, is an inappropriate, you know, first step for a government to pursue. And we are really, on this side of the House, very concerned with jobs, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. We want there to be more jobs in our province. You know, we're all committed to pursuing policy objectives that will create jobs, be that through, you know, the public sector, through entrepreneurship, through the private sector, through established business or, you know, start-ups. If we can see more jobs in our province, then I am confident that whatever economic growth that we're able to have in Manitoban will be distributed in a more equitable fashion. However, if we are to pursue policies like the one the current government is aiming for, I'm very concerned that income inequality will be heightened, that income inequality will be exacerbated, because when you just have, you know, economic growth without having a job strategy, without having a jobs plan, there may actually be, you know, a concentration of wealth at the top of our province, similar to how the wealth has been concentrated in this Premier's Cabinet at the—without bringing along his backbenchers.

* (15:10)

Now, I would like to put on the record, also, that if we were to add up the 20 per cent pay increase for all the Cabinet members and also for the Premier (Mr. Pallister), that that pool of money would be enough on its own to match all the fundraising that the Dakota Collegiate community has done for the Louis Riel School Division sports and recreation complex.

So that would seem to be a pretty difficult—untenable, if you will—position to justify for the government. You know, that there is this group in, you know, the Dakota Collegiate area that has fundraised, you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars. I remember looking at their ad last year for the gala dinner where they had Jay Onrait and Jon Montgomery. I know that they have another gala planned in a few months, which I hope they continue with. I hope they don't let this government get them down. I hope that they don't let this government discourage them for their dreams of having a new sports complex in their community.

And I'm also encouraged that the community is taking action in that they are, you know, emailing the members who represent their areas. And though I haven't heard the members from the three constituencies which are close to the Dakota Collegiate raise the issue, hopefully they are raising the issue in caucus or in Cabinet meetings behind closed doors. I would hope that they're doing that work, but in absence of any sort of confirmation of that work, I will continue to raise the issue in the House because I support the community around Dakota Collegiate in their quest to build this new LRSD school complex.

Now, 'Kelvin'—or, sorry—Kelvin High School rather, is in a similar predicament having the funding, which had been working its way through the processes of Treasury Board, now having that funding withdrawn from them. And you know this project, being in my own constituency, means that it's one that I've seen up close and personally. I've watched, you know, students in the area fundraising, working hard. I've been to some of the social events that they've held at Kelvin High School to raise money for this active living centre, and I've even seen some of the concept, you know, designs and what this new facility would look like, and it's a really remarkable project.

When you add to that the fact that, you know, Kelvin is, you know—it's a landmark school in our city, in our province, home to many distinguished

alumni, it seems like this project just has so much going for it. But then you recognize also that the, you know, students at Kelvin really need this in order to be able to fulfill their high school gym credits, but also to set themselves up for future success in life by learning healthy habits around health and fitness.

So, when you realize that the community there gets it, that the students there get it, and that because of their shared interest, they've really been pursuing this project passionately, you really gain a greater appreciation for how much this project means for the community. And I've been pleased to hear, you know, the member from River Heights also raise the issue because I know that there are many families who have kids who go to Kelvin in his constituency, but I point out that there's students who come from many other constituencies as well, including Wolseley and Minto and Tuxedo, and anyone who has children in the Winnipeg School Division may actually send their kids to Kelvin High School.

And, of course, with Kelvin's International Baccalaureate program we also know that it's a magnet school of sorts for students from all over the city. And that's why when I went to Kelvin's graduation last year, I was very proud to see the quality and the calibre of graduates, but also, you know, the tremendous diversity amongst the graduating class and to hear about some of the great, you know, educational paths that are going to be pursued by those people.

Of course, I know the member from Minto was particularly proud on that day, and I'd have to say that I was proud to see him proud as well. As a fellow father it's a great thing to watch another dad get to see one of their kids graduate from high school.

So that is, you know, the sort of good feeling and camaraderie that is built when we work together on our future generation's education, and yet that's the very thing which is under fire here with the government's misguided decision to cut the Kelvin active living centre.

And again, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I'd point out that the community around Kelvin has raised more than a million dollars towards this end, and I ask, you know, if—you know, this government had a project that was committed to where there was a private sector corporation with a million dollars of equity involved, would they walk away from that? Would they leave those players high and dry? I doubt that very much.

And so I think when you have a community organization willing to put in the financial capital, willing to put in the million dollars in financial contributions towards a project, but also the sweat equity, also the countless hours of fundraising and canvassing that, really, the government ought to do better and ought to fund this project as part of their budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Now, I look at the clock and I realize that I'm not even half way through the cuts that they've made to the education system this year, so I find that that's quite alarming, but I'll do my best to make some of the other points that I wanted to get to when discussing this Interim Supply bill and some of the impacts that rolling this out may have to the education system in our province here.

I think probably the biggest system-wide impact that we've seen other than the small class sizes program being cut was the de facto cuts made to the overall operating grants in the K-to-12 system. Now, of course, before the announcement we heard, you know, all this rumbling, no, no, there won't be austerity, there won't be austerity, there won't be austerity, but, then, the government announced a K-to-12 operating grant that was less than the rate of inflation and is therefore a cut in real dollars, in real terms, from the level that the school divisions in the province have to support.

And so we've seen that play out with—well, first of all, it's put many school divisions under pressure and I've done, you know, my best to sort of keep on top of things and have actually gone to some of the budget consultation meetings in Winnipeg School Division and spoken to trustees and some of the school divisions including those outside of the Perimeter. And what you've seen is that there are a lot of pressures that these decision makers and administrators are under.

Just to give a few examples, here in Winnipeg School Division, you saw strenuous debates about whether or not the division can continue to support the current number of teachers in classrooms, the front-line educational workers who are actually instructing children on a day-to-day basis.

You saw conversations about whether the division would be able to continue to pay for school resource officers, the front-line police officers who are there making sure that our children are safe in schools every day, and perhaps, or maybe even a shoulder to cry on when a kid is having a rough day.

You saw conversations about whether or not the school division would be able to maintain the paid adult crossing guards. Again, front-line workers who are there in the school system to keep children safe and ensure that they can continue to pursue their public education without concern for, you know, traffic accidents and the like. And so to see a school division actually put services like that, school resource officers, adult crossing guards, teachers, actually up for consideration, really does illustrate the scale of the problem.

And then, when you look at what school divisions like the Hanover School Division, you know, Steinbach area, and the Brandon School Division were contemplating, you realize that there was some miscommunication between the minister and the school divisions that he's charged with funding. And so they were, you know, wondering what the exact nature and amount of the funding they were set to receive was and that just worked its way downstream and created all manner of problems with their budget processes this year.

Now, of course, we now understand that the reason that the minister would say in the House that he was going to update Brandon School Division, but then failed to actually reach out to them outside of the House, was because he was planning to cut the small class sizes initiative in an announcement made just a few days ago.

And, to me, this, again, is a misguided decision about where to put the resources in our province, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, because if you ask any parent in this province, do you want your kid to have more one-on-one time with their teacher, I'm confident that almost every parent is going to say yes; they are going to say yes, I want my kid to have more one-on-one time with their teacher.

* (15:20)

We recognize that. We realize that. And we also recognize that that parental wish to have more one-on-one time between their child and their teacher is actually backed up by the evidence. If you conduct an environmental review, if you conduct a literature review, an environmental survey, at what the academics, what the experts, what the educators in the academic world say, they consistently say that small class sizes lead to better educational outcomes for kids, and this is not just in terms of year-to-year improvement. We're talking about long-run differences in the outcomes for kids.

So, for instance, there was a study from Tennessee that said that kids who had smaller class sizes in the earlier years were more likely to have better educational outcomes many, many years afterwards. You had research conducted by the National Education Policy Centre in the states, again, coming to a similar conclusion that small class sizes, especially in the early years, would improve educational outcomes for young people far into the future.

And here in Canada, we had the Canadian educational society coming up with similar findings. And again, just to digress into a little bit of, I guess, the research methods used on these reviews, these were, you know, long-run studies, longitudinal studies, in some cases, which monitored young people over extended periods of time. And, in other cases, these were meta-analyses, meaning that they were not just studies on a specific control group or sample subset of the student population, but that these were actually studies of studies. So these were expert educators looking at all the other peer-reviewed research in the field and trying to look for trends and trying to look for significant data amidst all that information that had been collected, and what they concluded was that small class sizes were good; again, matching up that, you know, parents who want their kids to have more one-on-one time with their teacher are making a good decision for the well-being of their kids.

Now, this is, of course, something very important. I hear the member from St. James sharing some of his learned wisdom on the topic, and he asks whether there is, in fact, a difference between 25 and 20 children, and, actually, the bulk of the study says yes. The bulk of the study says that there is actually a significant difference between having a 25-children class versus having a 20-children class, and that when you reduce the class size even below 20 down to, say, 15, for example, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, you will see with that a concomitant increase in the educational outcomes of children.

So, yes, it actually does make quite a bit of difference, and if you just do the simple math in your head in terms of how much time, how many minutes during a day can you spend with each individual child, you will realize that if you have to divide the number of minutes in your workday by 25 children, well, then, that affords less time per child than if you were dividing it amongst 20 children. But not just, again, in calculation based on arithmetic; it's also one that's backed up by the evidence in the field.

And so already in year one, heading towards budget No. 2 of this government, we are seeing very significant cuts being made to the educational system, ones which, you know, are very concerning for us on this side of the House, and so we have to strenuously object. We have to put these concerns on record and we have to ensure that we're fighting for Manitobans, fighting for parents, fighting for students in the public school system and, of course, all children in our province.

Now, on the issue of health cuts, you know this is another issue of concern, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. You know, of course, the idea of cutting the new CancerCare centre is one that seems to offend Manitobans. It's one that they understand almost on a visceral level. When the announcement was made, it seemed to turn many people off, and that is, of course, just—but one of the many cuts to capital projects in the health-care system that were announced. And so that is, of course, very concerning.

Then we get to the cuts that have been ordered to the regional health authorities and those are very concerning—*[interjection]*—I hear the member from Thompson saying something. I presume that he's objecting to his government's cuts to the northern regional health authority.

I'm sensitive to the fact that he may not feel confident voicing his concerns in caucus, but I can assure him that here in the House we will stand up and advocate for people in the North. We will stand up and advocate for people in Thompson, and we will continue to fight for people all over this great province.

But, when you look specifically at the cuts that were ordered to the northern regional health authority, it was a little alarming because it seems to run contrary to some of the words that we have heard spoken into this House by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and by the Health Minister in particular. So when they rolled out the cuts to the northern regional health authority, one of the points that they included was that they wanted the regional health authority there to stop covering non-insured services.

However, everyone in the House I'm sure will remember that we unanimously passed a motion calling on the federal government to equitably fund social services for First Nations people, and that in the follow-up conversations around those things, we asked explicitly of the Health Minister and the Premier to raise these issues with Ottawa and to

specifically advocate for the fulfillment of Jordan's Principle. And we followed up on these issues outside of the House.

I have to commend the collegiality that I saw from the Minister of Health on this topic, but, again, to say that you want to support Jordan's Principle is good; it's a good start. Yet you cannot fully implement Jordan's Principle if you do not cover non-insured health services like transportation costs, like mental health services, like certain drug coverage in the province. So it seems to me that there is a bit of a gap between the stated intent and between what we're actually seeing in terms of the fiscal decisions being made by this government.

So then, returning to jobs, I do want to use my remaining time to say that I am concerned with the job cuts which are being ordered to Manitoba Hydro. These cuts of 900 jobs, which is being directed from this government in a political decision and a rather arbitrary decision as well. When we just say cut 15 per cent across everything, that's not strategic; that's not targeted; that's not allowing organizations like Hydro to be able to pivot towards the future. That's arbitrary and misguided decision making.

And so, when I think about the impact that 900 jobs being lost at Hydro is going to have in this province, I'm very concerned, and the concerns again, you know, are not just here in Winnipeg. But I also think about people in rural Manitoba. I think about people in the North. I wonder what's going to happen to reliability of service. Are we going to ensure that Manitoba Hydro is able to power all the homes across our province without brownouts, if we're losing technicians in some of the rural communities and some of the northern communities? And what will it mean for some small communities if they have good-paying salaried jobs and Manitoba Hydro leave? Is that going to then, you know, make it more difficult for families to stay in their hometowns, in their home communities, and be able to make a life in the place that they're proud of?

Well, certainly, that's very concerning to me, and I'm commending the member from Thompson for sharing his concern on this subject as well, because he's been so vocal for these past 25 minutes. I realize that a lot of these issues I'm raising here in the House are ones that he's passionate about and ones that he is certainly going to raise in caucus just the same way that I know the members from Riel and St. Vital and Seine River are going to raise the issue of funding the LRSD sports complex, not just at the soonest

opportunity but at every opportunity they have, because I know that they went around their community and knocked on all the doors and complained about, you know—what—you know, they portrayed as the NDP shortcomings. And yet now we're seeing a failure on this government to serve those very same communities, and so that's very alarming. And, of course, it's very alarming to see all these other cuts that are being made to the government.

* (15:30)

And I'll just close with pointing out a small, but to me significant, change that we have seen from this government, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. Of course, and to me this is illustrative of this whole first year in government that we've seen from, you know, this crew. You know, we saw last year, they'd say: Cuts? No cuts. We're not cutting anything. There are no cuts. And now, today, when we say cut, cut, cut, they don't even object because they know it's true. They're making nothing but cuts across this province.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I thought maybe one of the members opposite might be getting up and might be ready to speak to this important bill before us, to talk about the interim appropriations bill. Obviously, we've had an opportunity now over the past number of days to start unpacking it on this side of the House and sort of understanding exactly where this government is going with regards to the interim appropriations bill, and giving us an opportunity to ask, I think, some good questions, to put on to the record some good comments about the priorities and the direction that this side of the House stands for.

I wanted to pick up, actually, directly where my colleague from Fort Rouge left off, and that is to sort of think a little bit about what it's like to be a new member in this House and I do remember how that was, being caught up in the excitement of the campaign trail, you know, sort of allowing the leader to go out and make announcements and sort of talk about big policy and spending your days connecting with voters and it's a very informative process, I think, that all of us go through to come to this place. And then, once you're elected, you come into this place and you think, boy, here's my opportunity, I'm going to make a big difference. And so all of these members opposite went out and knocked on doors for those 30-plus days, they all sort of followed the party line, they toed the party line, so to speak, and said, yes, well, of course we're going to protect front-line workers. You know, that's an obvious one.

Of course, we're going to protect those services that you count on. You know, education, why would we—who would even think about cutting education? And, if it is going to get cut, well, don't worry, it'll be cut in a way that won't affect you; it certainly won't affect your community. It may be that that other place, that other part of the province where things are inefficient, we'll make sure that they're more efficient, we'll make those cuts and you won't feel it at all.

They did the same for education, of course, they did the same for health care, they did the same for child care, they did the same across the board and, again, I don't fault the members opposite because they came into this place and, you know, they felt the pressure of the central campaign, the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—who is now Premier, the member dictating to them what they should be saying at the door. And, I'm sure, in their heart of hearts they probably believe that that's the way government should respond to its constituents so they thought, of course I'm going to go out and I'm going to say to my constituents, hopefully my future constituents, that I will stand up for these things, that I will be a champion, of course, for education and health care in our province.

And, again, I'm sort of just thinking through when I first came to this place and you get elected and you're ready to go and you're ready to come into this House and make some change or have some influence on how things operate and then all of a sudden they got a different message from their Premier. They got a different message than was delivered during the campaign and maybe they kind of gave them a little bit of pause and they thought, boy, I'm not so sure exactly where this is going but maybe they were a little bit more concerned. But, again, they probably thought, it's someone else, it's going to happen to a different part of the province, it's not my neighbours that are going to be impacted, it's not my community that's going to be impacted by this. It's going to be someone else. It's going to be the others, the ones who are inefficient, the ones who are dragging our province down. Those are the people that are going to be affected and my people will be safe. Well, again, you know, time goes on and, you know, I also want to, you know, riff off of what the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) said. You know, we came into this House and we were asking those tough questions, we were asking, well, you know, what are the ideas, show us where the ideas are, show us where you know your cuts are going to

come from; and the members opposite said: Cuts? What cuts? There are no cuts. Are you kidding me? Didn't you hear our Premier during the campaign? Our Premier said there weren't going to be any cuts to any front-line services; that's what he ran on. Why are you guys making such noise about it?

That's exactly what they said and in fact, the member—the Minister for Health, back in those early days, when I kept questioning him, I said well, you know, you've got to cut somewhere, the money's got to come from somewhere. You've said you want to cut, you want to investigate private health-care options, you want to do all this stuff. And he said, you know, the member opposite is just trying to scare Manitobans. He says, look, he's just trying to scare doctors; he's trying to scare nurses.

And then he said something that, now in hindsight, is actually quite interesting. He said, you know, the member opposite is actually—he's trying to scare Hydro workers. Oh okay. Well, that's interesting because I think we were asking some pretty pointed questions about Manitoba Hydro at that point. At that point we didn't know where the direction that the minister and the government were going on this, we had suspicions. And so we asked, and he said you are just trying to scare the good people—the good workers at Manitoba Hydro.

Here we are, Mr. Speaker. Nine hundred jobs lost in Manitoba Hydro.

And then the minister said, well, you're trying to scare doctors, you're trying to scare nurses, you're trying to scare the good people at Manitoba Hydro, and you're also trying to scare teachers and education workers. And again my colleague from Fort Rouge was asking some very pointed questions about the direction that this government was going to take and was trying to get some real answers.

And the government said no, no, you're just trying to scare those workers. And here we are, talking about cuts—talking about cuts so many in fact, Mr. Speaker, that the notes that we had—that I prepared—I know the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) mentioned the same thing—had prepared notes for the first round of debate during second reading of this bill, those notes are out of date. They're out of date because there's been so many more cuts that it's page upon page of cuts that are impacting our communities.

And so these new members who went out during the campaign and said don't worry, we're not cutting

anything, don't worry it's not going to be an impact, they had to come into this House and when their Premier (Mr. Pallister) said your school in your community is going to be cut, when your gym is going to be cut, when your wellness centre is going to be cut and it's coming to your neighborhood, well I'm sure that those members weren't too happy to deliver that message.

But that's here in this Chamber. That's here in this Chamber, and we talk and we debate and there's different ideas and we get back and forth in terms of political points of view, and that's not actually what's important because this is just a very small part of the job and every member will know that. The more important part of the job is going back out and talking to those same voters and asking them what they're thinking about the job that you're doing.

And I hope—I hope, I don't know—but I hope that every member opposite has taken that opportunity now since they've cut those gyms, since they've cut that education funding, since they've cut those personal-care-home beds, those community clinics, that they've taken the time now to go back into their neighborhoods and ask their neighbours what they think now. And again, I would hope that they're doing it, but I can also imagine that's a very difficult conversation to have.

And so the inclination of members might be instead to put their heads down, to cover up, and hope that nobody notices. Well I can tell you for a fact, Mr. Speaker, the people of Manitoba are paying attention, they are noticing when a gym that their community fundraised for is not being built. They pay attention when a personal-care-home bed that their member campaigned and walked around door-to-door and said we will build—this is a priority of my Premier, is what the members opposite said. They said, I know my Premier has said that personal-care-home beds are—is an urgent matter, a priority of this government, that we will get them built immediately, in—not—he said not tomorrow, not in five years, not in eight years. He said we're going to get this built now.

And now those same members have to go back to their communities and hang their heads, I would imagine, and say I guess the Premier wasn't telling the complete truth when he said that. Maybe that's what they would say to their constituents.

* (15:40)

So it's a tough place to be—it's a tough place for new members, and I can appreciate that. But, at the same time, I think this is an opportunity for them to stand up and actually have some influence in this place. They have the opportunity to stand up to their Premier and say, no, this is not what we campaigned on; this is not what Manitobans expected or wanted; and this is not what I'm hearing from my constituents. But I think the Premier—I don't know if he would actually have an open ear to this. You know, I don't think—he talks about a good team. I think a good team, to the Premier, is when everybody listens to exactly what he says and does it, no questions asked, which is no team, as far as I'm concerned. I think a team that discusses ideas and, at every opportunity, fights for their constituents, that's the kind of team that I want to be a part of.

But this is the stark contrast that we have, right. So we have a Premier, he's detached, he's—spends—I can't keep track. Eight weeks—I'm looking to the members opposite. Is it eight weeks? *[interjection]* So it's eight weeks in Costa Rica, at minimum, and then other holidays, maybe. I—we don't know—actually, hasn't been very clear about that. So he spends; he's aloof; he's detached; he's floating in an infinity pool; howler monkeys are swinging from the trees above him, an experience that I hope to have maybe at some point in my life to—

An Honourable Member: He's not going to invite you to his place, now.

Mr. Wiebe: I haven't been invited either to the Wellington Crescent mansion nor to the villa in Costa Rica. I imagine that, maybe, the invitation is coming. But this is the reality, the world that the Premier lives in. He's detached. His backbench MLAs, his ministers are on the ground trying to tell Manitobans, oh, don't worry, everything's going to be okay. We said we weren't going to cut, we did cut, but no more cuts, except for the cuts that are probably coming in the budget. Stay tuned. So this is the reality that they're operating under.

And, as the Premier has said multiple times, you know, the attitude starts at the top and the example starts at the top. So the Premier, who made sure he's got his 20 per cent raise locked in, right, he's got it locked up, locked in, he's ready to go for four years. Best deal in Manitoba; it's a great gig, if you can get it, I think, to be a part-time Premier who's got a 20 per cent raise. So he's locked in. And that attitude starts to permeate; it starts go down, right. So it starts at the ministerial level, it starts with his ministers,

and I would charge that the Minister for Finance (Mr. Friesen) is a perfect example of this. Here he is, bringing in the Interim Supply bill, a bill that represents four-plus billion dollars—I'm looking around the House here, in terms of spending—a significant amount of spending.

An Honourable Member: Four point seven billion.

Mr. Wiebe: Four point seven billion. Thank you for—member's correcting me, \$4.7 billion. And a significant array of spending in—across government, in all departments. It's a significant bill. And yet the minister comes into the House and, well, he doesn't want to debate this.

An Honourable Member: He's upset.

Mr. Wiebe: In fact, he was upset when we had an opportunity to ask questions—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the member for—made a mention that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was telling—was not telling the truth—the complete truth. So I just want to caution the person of the parliamentary language that's being used at this—the House. Okay.

The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

So that attitude permeates from the top, and the Finance Minister thinks, no, he doesn't need to answer questions, and, in fact, questions the very debate that we're having here in this Chamber. Now, I know for a fact that this minister's attitude was much different when he was in opposition. He thought it was important, in fact, at that point, to serve as the official opposition, the loyal opposition, to ask questions, to have debate and, in fact, we had that debate here in this House. And we, you know, as a government, answered the questions that were posed by the minister at that time. But now the tables have turned. The minister doesn't feel that the questions or the debate are necessary. Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I take issue with that. I appreciate the opportunity, in fact, to spend this time to talk about issues that are important to my constituents.

I would invite all members to do that, and I know that other members have been—there's a gag order maybe on members opposite to stand up and actually speak about those issues that they care about. But I would encourage them that there is an opportunity. There's an opportunity, you know, for

all members whether you're in Cabinet or you're in the backbenches to just take the opportunity to stand up and say, you know what, actually education is important to my constituents. Health care is important to my constituents. That actually would be helpful to the debate.

It's not happening. I understand why. It's still disappointing, and I will still take the opportunity to, at the very least, put on the record the things that are important to my community and spend some time talking about them.

Now I did have an opportunity this morning to spend some time debating a private member's resolution I was very proud to bring forward talking about investments in health care. And, if for those members that were here this morning will know that I very quickly ran out of time, which is quite normal when sort of trying to capture all of the effects that this government's cuts have had so far in our communities.

And I started off, and this was very intentional on my part, I started off wanting to talk about the real-world impact, the impact that it's actually having right now, here and now on the families and the health-care providers in our province, and, you know, this is where it all kind of brings it all home for me because, you know, I as health critic have spent a lot of time communicating with not only my constituents on these issues but others in the health-care field, you know, experts, people who have a vested interest and, again, just families, families who are feeling the impacts.

And the main thing that they're asking me, they're sort of starting to understand the cuts and they're starting to understand the direction that this government is going in terms of just cutting across the board, not using good evidence, not actually making good decisions about the direction of health care, not giving any kind of vision, but just sort of cutting those programs and services that they count on. So they understand that part.

But what they're asking now is they're saying, you know, we're just—we're really worried. The budget is coming down. There is a budget, April 11th; they know that. And they're sort of just asking me like what's next. What do you think would be the next effect? And this is the concern that I have too. I say to them, I'm not sure.

I said we've got the Interim Supply bill in front of us. We are certainly putting our words on the

record. The government has so far refused to put any words on the record, save the Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield), who went on a—he put on three minutes, as he reminds me, a tirade, you know, worthy of the history books that I'm sure scholars down the road will look back and see just how eloquent those words were. But he didn't stand up and say he was going to build the Concordia health and fitness centre if I recall, but he did stand up nonetheless. He didn't talk about the Park Manor Personal Care Home and the hole that's left in that community, but anyway he did stand up and use some of the time. That is certainly true.

But they're asking me, what constituents are asking me, what can we expect? What is next? What is the impact that we can expect next? And I say I can't tell you. What I can tell you is that programs like and facilities like the QuickCare clinics—QuickCare clinics which, again, I invite any member to come out knocking on doors with me in the afternoon. We can go talk to the good people of Concordia, and I'm willing to bet that eight out of 10 of those people will say they've had good experiences at the QuickCare clinics. They'll nod their heads when the idea to expand them was proposed, and they'll say, yes, you know, community health care that makes sense to me.

But it's not just those constituents; it's actually experts around North America across the world who are saying more of that community health care is actually what's needed in our health-care system. But—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind everyone that's it very hard to listen—hear the speaker when everybody's having their own conversations and also the back and forth too. So, if we can just have respect of the speaker at the time who's giving his thoughts.

The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want any member to miss one word of my time here today. *[interjection]* I appreciate that, yes.

* (15:50)

So I do want to spend a little bit more time talking about health care, but I'm going to take this opportunity because it is—we are having an opportunity to talk about the Interim Supply bill, and, of course, I have an opportunity to get up on a regular basis to talk about my views on health care,

on how I think investments are important in our system.

But I do want to talk a little bit about education, because this is, again, one of those parts of the budget that we have yet to see the full picture of what the impacts of those cuts are going to have. We've gotten a taste of that, of course. And so my obligation at that point was to go out and actually speak with our school trustees.

We went to some community meetings. I'm looking around the room to see if there was anybody there. No, nobody from the government side was at those community meetings. But it was the opportunity for the community to come together to talk to their school trustees, to talk to the school boards and say, you know, what exactly is the impact of—are these cuts are going to have in our school system?

And we heard some really tough stories, right? So we heard about, you know, schools like Elmwood High, where they brought in—it was actually one of the things that I campaigned on when I was elected in 2010, was to bring a community resource officer into the school at Elmwood High School. It was community-driven. I was involved in a number of community groups that were at that time advocating for more connection between police and young people, and this was a program that had been piloted at different schools throughout the province, and we said, this is a perfect fit here at Elmwood High school. And we campaigned on that, as I said. I was very happy that our government then stepped up and invested in that program, not only at high—Elmwood High School, but at many schools throughout our province.

And the results are—they speak for themselves. And I had an opportunity to speak with Mike Babb, the principal there, about the value of that program, how important it was to have that connection between the community and the resource officer, the police officer there. And so this—it was just the opportunity was—it was just the beginning of that program in terms of its ability to impact lives. And you know, he said, this is one of the programs that's on the chopping block. This is one of the things that we are afraid that we might lose.

So we had an opportunity to have some input. I took that opportunity along with many citizens and I appreciate them doing that. And they balanced off, you know, what their priorities were. And at the end of the day, the Winnipeg School Division, after

listening to those constituents and so many more, they had to make a tough decision; they had to raise taxes. And they were not the only ones, obviously, Mr. Speaker.

And this is the crux of the problem with cutting education funding, is that it's ultimately downloaded onto those school divisions who then raise taxes on your constituents. And again, I encourage every member opposite to go out and knock on the doors and say, we raised your taxes; how do you feel about that?

I want them to ask that question, because they said that they would never raise taxes, and they did. And so they get to answer for that now. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: They get to say, we raised your taxes. We forced school divisions to impose higher taxes to protect our education system. And I would love for them to do that.

Now I—would—do I expect that they actually will? I doubt it.

I think most members are probably hiding in their offices, hoping that people don't know this—

An Honourable Member: Watching the emails roll in.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, the emails continue to roll in. I know I'm getting them in my constituency. I can only imagine what it's like in other constituencies where some of these effects are being felt.

You know—likewise, I mean, a number of projects that are on the books, that are needed by the school divisions, have been asked for, worked towards, investments that we actually worked towards and worked with school divisions on, are now all in the wind. And that's not what Manitobans voted for. Like, they just—they didn't vote for that.

But maybe the members opposite think that they did. And so I hope that they're very honest with their constituents, because as I said, Manitobans are paying attention.

But I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't take an opportunity—again, as I said, I ran out of time this morning, but just to talk about the impacts that those cuts have had in health care.

So, again, QuickCare clinics. St. Boniface QuickCare clinic—this is—you know, we call it the

St. Boniface QuickCare clinic, but, in all reality, it's actually the QuickCare clinic that everybody in the northeast of Winnipeg would use if that—that's their closest QuickCare clinic. And so it has an impact not only on the St. Boniface Hospital, but also on the Concordia—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —hospital and other emergency room situations. So this is a great example of a community clinic that can have an impact on health care and how it's delivered in our province.

You know, the government ran up against a challenge. They said, well, there's not enough nurses to staff the QuickCare clinic. Well, I think, if you asked any member on the opposition's side, what would you do if you didn't have enough nurses to staff a clinic? And I bet you they'd tell you you'd train and hire more nurses. And, in fact, that is what our government did. Our government went ahead and hired 4,000 nurses, Mr. Speaker, 4,000 nurses in this province and invested in those nurses. And we understood that the quality of care can be higher, that the investment can be lower and you can actually put a clinic right in the community that needs it.

So, when we looked at the city, we said, okay, St. Boniface is our nearest QuickCare clinic, maybe there's an opportunity to put a QuickCare clinic closer to, you know, River East, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski). There's an opportunity here to fill in the gaps, to build new QuickCare clinics. And, you know, I spent a lot of time talking about this, as a I said, at the doorstep, Mr. Speaker, and I got a lot of people saying, yes, I know the value of these things; I see the economic argument, the value for money, as the members opposite like to often talk about, I see that. They understand it. The experts understand it. Surely, the members opposite, the government, will build the QuickCare clinics.

Instead, the first opportunity that they have, the first challenge that comes their way with community health care, they close the community clinic. They closed the clinic in St. Boniface. They closed clinics in the North. This is so short-sighted, Mr. Speaker, and Manitobans understand it. They know it intrinsically, and they understand it. And now, I could understand, actually, a—you know, and I'll concede this point, that I can understand that if the government said, you know, we're going to close that

QuickCare clinic, but we're going to invest in this other point of primary care; we're going to invest in other parts of our health-care system. So, yes, we changed our model, and we're going to invest in other pieces of it. No, that wasn't done. That wasn't done. It was no with no answers on the other side.

And that leads me very quickly, Mr. Speaker, to personal-care-home beds, which is an absolute travesty—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —what this government has done to the groups and the communities that have fought so hard for personal-care-home beds.

Now, I'm not going to pick on any individual constituencies, as I've done in the past, because it seems like it just gets the heckling to a level that doesn't allow anybody to even listen to what I'm saying. But—so I'm going to keep it—I'm not going to identify those constituencies, but I will say that I've had an opportunity to talk to those groups that have been fundraising, that have been working, have been, you know, side by side with the government to get the personal-care-home beds built.

And this Premier (Mr. Pallister)—again, I go back to this. This Premier went around and said to every single Manitoban that this was a priority of his, that he understood the need and that he wasn't going to sit on it, he wasn't going to wait. Well, he didn't say—he said, not next year, I'm not going to wait five years, I'm not going to wait eight years, I'm going to get this done now; this is an emergency.

And so, when you have three projects, that we know of, that are ready to go—the communities have raised their part of the money; in some cases, millions of dollars have been spent to progress the project to where it is now; you have the communities in a hundred per cent full support of them; you have the WRHA, or the RHAs, in whatever case, understanding the need to take the pressures off of the health-care system downstream—you have all of these stars aligned; and all you need to do is say yes, is to say yes to investing in health care. That's all they had to do.

And, you know, it would've been an opportunity: take something out of our ammo that we have of this government. You wouldn't have heard me say—I may have said, we need more. I certainly would've said we need more personal-care-home beds because this

is simply the beginning of tackling the issue and investing in our personal-care-home beds in this province. But I would not have been able to stand up in this House to ask the minister, day after day, to say how could he abandon those communities? How could he step away from such needed projects, and how could he walk back—no, how could he run from his campaign commitment to support those communities and build personal-care-home beds in this province?

* (16:00)

So I feel—I feel—a little bit bad, I guess you could say, for the members opposite who have to go back to their constituents, who have to now face the music. They have to explain this: why their Premier was not entirely, completely, giving the full picture, to keep it in parliamentary language; and why—why—they feel duped right now. And that's for the members opposite to explain. Why are they feeling duped? Why are Manitobans feeling duped? And why are they feeling that this government's actually not there standing up for them? They're not actually making the decisions that benefit them and their families. Why is this government not standing up for Manitobans? That's the question that they have to answer.

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on this Interim Supply bill. The government says it needs to save money, and yet, time and time again, this government is missing the mark and missing opportunities to save money. They talked one thing and then they do something different.

I give you an example: If this government was interested in saving money, they could be acting to prevent diabetes. They could be saving hundreds of millions of dollars a year by effective measures in preventing diabetes. And it's too bad that the government before did such a poor job, but that's no excuse for the current government not to be acting.

The—there are specific actions which could be taken with regard to a provincial plan to prevent diabetes, with regard to approaches to nutrition which can better prevent diabetes, to approaches to getting more people involved in exercise and sports to prevent diabetes. And all of these things could be happening, but this government has no plan to prevent diabetes. It has no focused actions being taken, and we see every day when they eliminate

funding for the Kelvin gym and for the alumni field, that they're doing the opposite. They're setting things up so that we will have, instead of prevention of diabetes by promoting exercise and participation in sports, we're going to have more cases of diabetes. In fact, the cost of the Kelvin gym would probably be made up by just saving about 27 cases of diabetes in Manitoba on a lifelong basis. That's how expensive and costly diabetes is to our province and to all of us as taxpayers all the time.

And let alone the fact that diabetes is a very important condition for affecting people. It affects the health of, now, well over 100,000 Manitobans. It is resulting in people becoming ill at the height of their productive years, so we're using economic productivity at the same time. It is a scourge; it's been recognized as an epidemic since 1996. The previous government did very little, but this government so far, in almost a year, has done virtually nothing. And so they're no better than the previous government; they're just as bad as the previous government. And that, for Manitobans, is too bad.

We could also be saving a tremendous amount in addressing mental health better, and here we have a government which has sat down, and so far has just tendered for a report which is due at the end of December. Government is going to be halfway through the mandate before they've decided what they're going to do in terms of mental health. This is appalling, quite frankly, to have a government which is so behind and so slow and has so little idea of where it really wants to go.

There is far too much depression in this province and it's time it was effectively addressed. We know from work that has been done around the world, that there's jurisdictions that have much less depression than we have in our province and that there's things that we can do. And, interestingly, one of those things is promoting exercise, because exercise is now known as a very effective way of preventing depression.

And, here, what this government is doing, it's eliminating funding for new exercise and sports facility at Kelvin High School, it's eliminating funding for an Alumni Field, it's doing all the wrong things if you want to save money. This government is going to cost this province more and more by the mistakes that they are making. Every day we see more and more of these examples of what the government is doing that could save money and

they're doing the opposite. It's a tragedy for our province, Mr. Speaker.

In the area of addictions, we see that the government has—I give them some credit—acted to make sure naloxone is more widely available, but this is acting after somebody has already had an addiction, after somebody has taken an overdose. We need a comprehensive plan which will have effective actions earlier on than that, preventing the addictions in the first place.

And there's a variety of measures, and, interestingly enough, one of the things that's known to decrease substance abuse is involvement of students in sports. And what is this government doing? It's doing exactly the opposite. It's at the once—saying, hooray for us, we're distributing naloxone, but then forgetting that what they're doing is decreasing the ability of students at Kelvin High School and students in the Dakota area to be able to get involved in sports by cutting back funding for the Kelvin High School gym and Active Living Centre and cutting back funding for the Alumni Field.

It's a tragedy, what this government is doing and it needs to be brought to light. The government needs to come to their senses, to start realizing that they've got to change direction, and that somehow they got on the wrong foot on these items and they need to be moving much more proactively to prevent substance abuse, to prevent depression, to prevent diabetes, to prevent, in fact, cancers and cardiac—and cardiovascular disease. All these things can be helped and prevented through putting up facilities like the Kelvin High School gym and Active Living Centre and the Alumni Field.

So, you know, we don't really understand what this government is doing. It's being very slow. It's been slow to reach an agreement with the federal government on health care, slow to reach an agreement on climate change, in spite of the fact that every other province has gotten into the act—and territory, in terms of the health-care agreement and the—they have failed to come to an agreement and plan in terms of the Factory of the Future.

This is a government which, you know, needs to realize that they need to be doing some positive things for this province and not just sitting on their hands and looking at where they can cut because sometimes when they're cutting now, they're cutting in ways that are going to cost us a lot more down the road instead of save us the money. And so what they're doing is highly problematic.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I will pass this on to others who want to speak on this.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So I'm glad to put a couple of words on the record again in respect of the Interim Supply bill.

I know that—I hope, anyways, that members in the House have heard how concerned we are on this side of the House at really how divorced the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is from most of Manitobans' realities. I think that it can't be stressed enough that the Premier is so wholly divorced from the struggle and the realities that Manitobans face every single day here and I think that it's important to recognize that.

* (16:10)

And I know that I've said it previously, and I know that my colleagues have said it previously, that—you know, it is such a sacred responsibility to be the Premier of this beautiful, beautiful province, and it means that you are actually the Premier for everybody. And that's a responsibility that should be taken very, very seriously and that you are—you not only govern just for your friends and put things, put conditions in place that benefit only your friends, but certainly I would argue that your greatest responsibility is to put the conditions in place that ensure that Manitobans flourish and that they thrive and that we have an equitable space here for everyone in Manitoba.

So, again, I cannot stress that enough. And I want to kind of stress that by an illustration of a story. Just a couple of weeks ago, I had an individual, a St. Johns constituent—we'll call her Sarah, because actually Sarah is terrified to use her real name as are many, many government employees and front-line workers are terrified to say anything in public. And we do know that most people in government and most people in—that are working as front-line service workers are just trying to keep their head down so that nobody—they don't bring any attention to themselves because they know that all these cuts are coming their way.

At any rate, I had Sarah, again who's a St. Johns constituent, call my office and she asked if she could meet with me. And so we met probably a good, about three weeks ago now, and she came to my office and I could already tell that she was anxious. And everybody knows I have a dog. Chilly Dog happened to be at the constituency office, so I let them kind of visit—*[interjection]* Yes, yes. So I let

them visit and he kind of, you know, centred her a little bit, and so we started to talk and almost immediately Sarah started to cry.

And she started to cry because she said, you know, I've done everything right in my life. She says, I went to school; I went to university; I left university. I had student loans that I had to pay off; I've paid off those student loans. I work so incredibly hard. I work full-time on the front lines serving vulnerable Manitobans and sometimes, well, she's required to now do almost a job and a half because there's been a freeze on even the ability to fill positions that are vacant.

So here she is, she's doing a job and a half, working full-time. She's a single mom; she's raising a 17-year-old boy. And again, I do want to stress to everybody that she's crying while she's telling me this story. And she says, you know, I don't understand why I'm the one that's being penalized by the Premier of Manitoba; like what did I do to deserve to be penalized? I did everything right.

I went to school. I, you know, paid my loan. I work. I contribute my taxes to this province, and yet I'm living now under, you know, the last, you know, 10 and a half months, under the threat of, you know, my contract's been open; my wage has been frozen. I've been forced to take days off unpaid. Potentially my pension is in jeopardy; I don't understand what I did to deserve this.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And she said, she went on to say that actually a lot of her colleagues, that this Premier with his, you know, austerity measures and his cuts, like his cuts, cuts, cuts, he's so obsessed with cutting people that need it the most, is actually creating anxiety among, and real anxiety. Like, I know people laugh in this House and everybody thinks it's funny, but actually these are real Manitobans that we're talking about. And she said that there has been a couple of her colleagues that have actually gone on stress leave now.

So what's happened, she has two of her colleagues in her immediate office. They've gone on stress leave, because they're so stressed and worried and filled with anxiety about what this Premier is going to do to them. So now she was already doing a job and a half, and now she's basically doing two jobs to be able to kind of keep up with individuals who are now on stress leave.

And so I think that that's just one example and a very good example, a quintessential example of the stress that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) is giving to Manitobans, and, again, Manitobans that are doing such critical work on behalf of all of us and that provide such valuable service in operating Manitoba so that Manitoba can actually operate and serve Manitobans. And here we are, instead of a Premier, you know, that chooses to lift up Manitobans and give a sense of pride and a sense of hope, we have a Premier that, you know, in the last 11 months, has given, you know, certain segments of our Manitoba population anxiety and stress, so much so that they're leaving work.

So I do want to share that and have that as a part of the official record in this House because I do have to share that. You know, Sarah did make a real impression on me, to be able to see first-hand, you know, what front-line workers are going through, and I think it's important for everybody to know that, that it's not just, you know, again, you know, let's yell at each other and let's laugh and make fun of each other, that we're actually talking and all of us have very important roles in this House to be—to ensure that we're working on behalf of all Manitobans, and I can tell you that from Sarah's perspective, that's not occurring.

So I just wanted to honour her and I wanted to honour the courage and her strength to be able to go to work every single day, like she still hasn't gone on stress leave, and again I can share that you could tell that she was—she was very, very stressed and she had lots of anxiety, and she kept apologizing to me for crying, and I kept saying, there's absolutely no need to cry, like I get what she's going through. Or I somewhat get—I mean, I can't even imagine the level of anxiety.

You know, she was saying to me, she said—well, my first name, but, whatever, she said, you know, I can't even barely make ends meet now. So here we have somebody that is really struggling and is going to even have to struggle even more after this Premier who, again, should be governing on behalf of everybody, is putting so much stress on her and is really just going into her household income and taking more money away from her and forcing her, forcing a Manitoban that actually works full-time and is very committed to her job, as are all front-line workers who do extraordinary, extraordinary work.

So I don't think, Madam Speaker, that it can be stated clearly enough or often enough that this

Premier is absolutely divorced from the reality that goes on in Manitoba and in the lives of Manitobans.

So I'll give a couple of more examples that I think are important to put on the record. So, you know, again, let me go back to Sarah here. So here's Sarah working so hard and struggling to make ends meet and is going to be put into just even further economic vulnerability, and yet the Premier takes a 20 per cent raise. It just doesn't make any sense, and instead of giving it back and putting it back into the government coffers, the Premier actually sits and almost gloats that he deserves a 20 per cent increase or, you know, gloats that he deserves two months in Costa Rica, like, everybody would love to have two months in Costa Rica, you know.

And, again, I don't think that it can be stressed enough that, you know, the justifications for taking two months in Costa Rica about wanting to spend time with one's family, we all want to spend time with our family—all of us, including Sarah, who's raising a 17-year-old son who is also struggling. I'm sure that she would love to have two months off paid so that she could spend time with her 17-year-old son and deal with the issues that he's dealing with and get herself better.

* (16:20)

I don't understand why some segments of the Manitoba population deserve vacation and time with their families and not others. We all love our children. We all work hard. We all want to have those opportunities to spend time with our family and to get ourselves grounded again.

I know I would love that. I wasn't able to take any time off at all; I would love to be able to have—even just a weekend in Costa Rica would be, like, amazing, but I don't think I'm going to get an invite, yes.

So again, I take exception to the fact that, you know, there are members in this House that kind of lift up the Premier of this province and say that the Premier deserves two months off, or the Premier deserves 20 per cent, or the Premier deserves to spend time with his family; but not the rest of Manitobans.

I do want to share—in respect of leadership, and when we on this side of the House talk about, again, how divorced the Premier is from the reality of Manitobans, and when I say what a sacred responsibility it is to be the Premier of this province, I want to share, when I was doing my master's degree

I did a lot of research on early explorers' and missionaries' narratives that can be found actually in the Hudson Bay archives, and I know I've talked about it a couple of times, but I actually came across—it was from a Jesuit priest, I can't remember his name—but he was describing what leadership looked like within indigenous communities, and he said something to the effect of—he said, you know, I've never seen leadership so humble. He said the people, they laugh at their leader and it's a way to ensure that that leader realizes that he or she is not above anybody else. He goes on to explain that actually, the chief of the community was actually served last. You actually didn't serve the chief first because true leadership is a reflection of what's best for your community, and so actually chiefs were always served last. They always had the least amount of material goods to ensure that there was equity and that communities flourished and that the people flourished.

And so, you know, I share that history, our history, because I think it's important for Manitobans and for people in this—for folks in this House to kind of reflect on the type of leadership that Manitobans deserve, and the type of leadership that is true leadership. Like, it's not enough to just, you know, spout out stuff that, yes, I care about Manitobans and I, you know, I've done this and I'm doing this on their behalf, and yet put the conditions in place which actually prevent Manitobans from flourishing and thriving and actually bring them to a space and a place where they are worse off than when you gain that position of leadership, and so my gentle advice would be perhaps if the Premier (Mr. Pallister), you know, when he's in Costa Rica, if he wants, I can send him some of those narratives on what indigenous leadership looks like, and it's a serving leadership. It is putting yourself last and ensuring that all—that Manitobans who are your family are taken care of.

So I do want to reflect on some of the things that I—the Premier has done in respect of cuts to Manitobans. And again, you know, it is putting those conditions in place that just are to the detriment of whole communities and whole segments of the Manitoba population.

So some of the things that you can't even wrap your head around, like, you literally can't wrap your head around that the Premier has, you know, put delays or frozen or cut programs like Neighbourhoods Alive! and Community Places, which by extension puts families at risk and takes

away opportunities, equitable opportunities in community, again, to thrive and flourish.

And again, I don't know—I don't understand, and I would suspect everybody on this side of the House doesn't understand, you know, of all the things that a Premier can do, the Premier chooses Neighbourhoods Alive! and Community Places. Like, it just doesn't make any sense at all.

And so now we—the consequences of that is that we have organizations that are organizations with their employees, these individuals—so people like Sarah or people like, you know, Joe, or whoever it may be—who are wondering if they're actually going to get paid, or are wondering if they're actually going to have a job, or wondering if they're going to be able to actually continue the phenomenal and good work that they're doing in the community.

Because I will point out that, you know, individuals that work in, you know, social-service development agencies do it because they believe in the work. They have a calling to do that work, and they are Manitobans that want to be able to create a more just and equitable society in Manitoba.

And those individuals put, you know, 150 per cent of themselves into their work. So while they are, I imagine, struggling individually about, you know, their own personal circumstances with whether or not this funding is coming, they certainly as well would be struggling with, you know, who's going to continue this good work.

So, you know, I am hoping—and I hope on behalf of all Neighbourhoods Alive! and Community Places—you know, the organizations, the employees, the folks that rely on these organizations—I hope that, you know, they will hear soon enough what's happening with that funding.

So, just again, you know—and I want to reflect again on what leadership looks like, particularly within the indigenous community, and that is, is that you do not put yourself above anybody. That you put the well-being of your community, your relatives, above your own. And so if you understand that from an indigenous perspective, then you can see why I struggle so much with trying to understand how this Premier could actually make cuts to CancerCare. Like, that just doesn't make any sense.

You know, individuals who are, you know, just in the midst of, you know, dealing with things that I'm sure none of us would ever wish on anybody

here, and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) decided that that was—it was up, that they could make cuts to CancerCare.

And, again, I do want to share—and I know I've shared this before, that, you know—and I know all of my colleagues on this side have talked about that—we all—I'm sure all of us in the House have dealt with, you know, a family member or a relative or extended family or friends that have had cancer, and the emotional and mental and physical and spiritual impacts that that has on a whole family and in the individual.

And CancerCare offers extraordinary support once you're going through that. They are just world-class in their ability to work with patients, to take care of patients, to make patients feel that they know what's going on in their care, in their health plan, to make patients feel safe.

I'm proud of the investments that we've made in CancerCare, because it affected my family in respect of my youngest son's grandmother, who actually was a nurse in the Health Sciences Centre. She's actually one of the—back in the '60s or '70s, she—among the first cohort of indigenous nurses. But then she herself got cancer. And I would actually go to some of the appointments with her, and they're just extraordinary, extraordinary, extraordinary people that work there—like, extraordinary. Hands down, some of the best front-line health-care providers that we have.

So, you know, it certainly doesn't make any sense why the Premier would choose to make those cuts to CancerCare, and it is quite offensive, I would believe to all Manitobans, because, again, we all have those personal experiences.

*(16:30)

So, then, we know that the Premier made cuts to personal care homes in Winnipeg and Lac du Bonnet, and we know that the Premier made cuts to clinics in The Pas and Thompson. I know that my colleague from The Pas has spoken about, really, how detrimental those cuts are and how needed those services are in the North. And I would imagine that everybody here in this House should or ought to know the different geographic and isolation issues that the North faces in respect of health care. So, instead of, you know, investing in that infrastructure, this Premier has chosen that the people in the North, you know, they're—they don't deserve those services, which, again, it's just mind-boggling, why this Premier would choose to make cuts to community

clinics in The Pas and Thompson. Instead of, like, working with the community and getting these community clinics up and running and supporting the people of the North, he chooses to cut them.

And so, then, we know there's cuts to community clinics in St. Vital and St. Boniface. I mean, these cuts just keep going on and on and on, and you just—it doesn't make any sense in respect of if we're trying to ensure that we have a health-care infrastructure here that is—dealing with the needs of Manitobans. You know, I—it doesn't make any sense that you're not investing in that infrastructure; instead, you're taking away from that infrastructure. And so, then, what are the consequences of that? There's going to be major consequences in the lives of Manitobans and Manitoban families, and, as all my colleagues on this side of the House have stated repeatedly, certainly, colleagues on the opposite side of the House will hear about that. And I don't know if they'll be laughing then, when their constituents and Manitobans are asking why all these cuts are coming and how it's been impacting on their lives.

So we also know that there's been direction from the Health Minister, from the Premier, to make substantial cuts to our—sorry, some of our capital projects, so, again, not investing in the infrastructure. So we know that the Premier, his vision for Manitoba was to cancel \$1 billion in capital projects—so not invest, and no thought to, actually, when you cancel \$1 billion in capital projects, how much those projects are going to cost in three years from now, or eight years from now. You know, so, again, we know that he's also ensured that there's cuts to the Pan Am Clinic.

So I wonder—and it's the same way that we saw when the Premier didn't even want to look at the rail relocation, you know, citing how much dollars it would cost to be able to do that. But what the Premier fails to realize is—well, actually, the Premier actually has no vision for this province. You know, how are we going to take this province, you know, 10, 20, 30 years down the road as technology changes. And so instead of kind of having some courage and some vision and, you know, taking Manitoba on a path of renewal and adjusting to the different technological places that we're at right now, he just cuts everything. He's just, like, he's scared; he just cuts everything and then runs off.

So we also know that he's also asked and ordered the WRHAs to cut \$83 million from their budget, and so the regional—the Winnipeg Regional Health

Authority has had to cut—or will have to cut \$83 million from its budget, which is a huge amount of dollars that we're going to see directly impacting on families and Manitobans.

I think it's worthwhile mentioning again that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has directed that the Prairie Mountain Health cut its budget by \$17.5 million, the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority has to cut their budget by \$8 million, the northern regional health authority has to cut their budget by \$6 million, and the Southern Health has to cut their budget by \$11 million. So I do know that I spoke last time that I was up speaking about this about, you know, these cuts particularly—well, all of them, but particularly the costs in the North and how that impacts on preventative work and I agree with the member from River Heights in respect of investing in health care and how that actually helps save costs for the government.

And so, you know, I think it's no secret and I would imagine that everybody in this House would know that First Nation communities are dealing with, you know, suicide epidemics, you know, not only in Manitoba but across the country. We know that First Nations are dealing with addictions, alcohol and drug addictions. We know that First Nation communities are dealing with, you know, intergenerational trauma which manifests itself in a myriad of different ways, which includes suicide and alcohol and drug addiction. We also know that the reproductive health of indigenous women is incredibly important to be able to work towards that indigenous women have full access over their reproductive health and, certainly, I think that these cuts bring that at risk on whether or not, you know, what are going to be the supports for indigenous women's reproductive health and preventative work.

So I do want to—I think I've stressed enough about some of the health care cuts which, again, I don't think that we could stress enough on this side of the House the consequences for that are going to be incredibly detrimental on the lives of Manitobans and, certainly, they will—members opposite will start to hear that from individuals. So the Premier wages an attack on people's health, Manitobans' health, but then the Premier wages—wages an attack on—

An Honourable Member: Wages works too.

Ms. Fontaine: Yes, and wages, yes. And then wages an attack on the education of our children. Like, who does that? Like, I don't even—I don't understand who wages an attack on children's education. So the

government—so this Premier, for the 2017-2018, reduces the funding for 20 out of 37 school divisions. Like, who does that? That—it just doesn't make any sense and particularly, again, I bring us back to that indigenous understanding of leadership when you're supposed to lift people up and honour people. Actually, one of the greatest things with an indigenous community is, if I had more time I'd give the teaching, it's a circle of law teaching and, actually, at the core of that teaching is children and that everything that we should be doing should be in the best interest of children and—but this Premier has waged a war on our children's education. Like, it makes no sense.

So we know that the government—the Premier's cuts means that school boards have to do with less and are going to have to make—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Interim Supply bill, very exciting stuff, really, when you think about what it actually stands for. I know members opposite have been critical of us taking some time to make sure that our views and the views of our constituents are documented and well known on this matter. Interim Supply, of course, is a precursor to the budget and a budget is a reflection of what a government believes in and what they don't believe in.

* (16:40)

And, for that reason, especially when we're talking about in the neighbourhood of billions of dollars, we think it's important to take a moment and identify some of the things that this government clearly does not believe in so that more public pressure, hopefully, can be brought to bear to change their opinions on some of the very, very harmful actions that they are preparing to bring to Manitobans.

These actions and decisions cover a wide range of areas and, of course, in my own personal interest and in my critic area of the environment, I'll be watching very closely, Madam Speaker, to see if there are additional cuts that are going to be made by this government to the hard-working civil servants for instance, in any one of the number of very good programs that our province currently has to help people become more environmentally friendly, to make sure that some of the resources that we consume from the environment are harvested and taken in a sustainable manner, that those resources

are delivered to people in a safe manner, and that there are the proper people in place, the staff in place, to be able to make sure that all of that is working properly.

It's very easy for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or the Finance Minister or anyone else to stand up and say, well, we don't need this anymore; it's gone. And they do have the power to do that. Manitobans, however, have the power to question whether or not those decisions are actually being made in their own best interests.

The challenge for many Manitobans is trying to figure out who this Premier and this government is because they are radically more conservative, and radically more inclined to an austerity government than what they promised Manitobans would be the case during the election.

And I want to send a shout-out to the good folks at the MGEU, Manitoba government employees' union, they have very fairly, I believe, and very accurately pointed out that this government ran on a platform that was not going to involve lots of cuts to social programs, that was not going to involve the loss of hundreds and hundreds of public sector jobs, that was not going to result in a decline in services to Manitobans who depend on them. And they have time and again broken those fundamental promises that they made to Manitobans.

They have engaged in doublespeak and double standards, the Premier leading the pack in this regard on multiple, multiple occasions as was pointed out in the media recently. I mean, this is someone—the Premier is trying to claim on the one hand he doesn't feel that other issues should be lumped in in his ongoing fight with the federal government over health-care dollars but he's actually the one who lumped the climate change plan from the feds as a condition to anything that he was going to do around health-care spending. So the double standard that exists is revealed right there for everyone to see.

This is also an individual who, on the one hand, believes that a 20 per cent increase in his salary as Premier is appropriate, and he loves to stand up in question period whenever we make this fact known and refute it. I actually tabled the documents from his own budget, indicating quite clearly that he did indeed receive a \$22,000 increase in his salary from last year to this year, and that he started taking that salary increase from the first day that his government was sworn in. Like, those are the facts.

There's a gentleman south of the border that seems very fascinated with alternate facts and double standards, and this Premier is becoming dangerously close of emulating some of that very poor behaviour on that front and elsewhere.

We can also see what this government stands for and what it doesn't in the decisions that it has made, even in the week or so since I last spoke to this piece of legislation during second reading. You have the school community of Kelvin High School—has done an incredible job of raising an enormous amount of money, well over \$1 million to contribute to the construction of a new gymnasium at their school. We have—I mean, that's an incredible amount of work that would have been done. That's an incredible commitment that the community has demonstrated. And the government has slammed the door on the project and said, no, we're no longer there for you. We're not going to allow or enable that much-needed improvement from happening.

And there are a significant number of families who live in the Wolseley area, and their children attend Kelvin High School. My son is at the junior high feeder school heading into Kelvin High School afterwards when he's done at the junior high level. And that's because Kelvin is the French immersion catchment for the Wolseley neighbourhood. And this is an enormous disappointment, an enormous letdown, and a classic case of irresponsibility from this government. What do they think is going to happen to the health-care costs in Manitoba in the short term, medium term, and long term if we are not building the facilities so that youth and community members can have access to the proper facilities to engage in physical activity?

We have to remember school gyms are used not just during school hours, but they are quite often rented out to local community sports leagues, whatever it may be, basketball or floor hockey, volleyball, badminton, take your pick. All of those options are there, and the Kelvin High School community is now left hanging with no reasonable explanation from this government other than: They do not matter. They are not important enough. This government does not care about the work, and commitment, and effort that they put into it, and they're stunned and they're outraged, and they have every reason to be. I'm stunned and outraged.

And the government can expect to hear more about this issue in the days ahead. And, Madam Speaker, in case anyone's forgotten, we can contrast

this government's behaviour around the Kelvin High School gymnasium with how our government responded to the incredible community grassroots effort that took place at Gordon Bell High School.

Here was a scenario where an inner-city school had an outdoor playground but there was no natural turf on it. They were the only school in the entire city, as I understood it, which did not have any true green space to call their own. And next door there had been an auto dealership on a very large lot, and then that auto dealership ceased operations, and before anyone knew otherwise, the land had been sold to Canada Post. And the students and the staff and the community and alumni, they all said, hey, wait a minute. That would make a phenomenal outdoor green space for our school and for the entire community.

And they just did not take no for an answer. I was so proud of those students coming down here, marching down Broadway, sometimes in the freezing rain—poor students slipping on the sidewalk, but they came here anyways, demanding that our government and the federal government find a way so that, you know, they could get their field of dreams.

And it took an incredible amount of work. And I want to give a shout-out to our Education Minister at the time, the honourable Peter Bjornson. He was in charge of the Education portfolio at the time. And from day one, when I first brought this issue to his attention, he said that sounds like an amazing opportunity. And Peter himself is of course a nationally recognized, award-winning teacher, so I wasn't surprised that that was his answer.

But then, the next steps were to try and pull all the partners together and find a way to make it happen. And contrast that attitude, Madam Speaker. Contrast that attitude that we had towards this incredible community effort with how this government has been so disrespectful and so dismissive of the good folks at Kelvin High School. It is night and day.

*(16:50)

And you can have a success story. We proved it at Gordon Bell. It took a lot of meetings, not just by myself but by a whole bunch of my colleagues and even more so by the community. And the school division stepped up. I'll never forget the meeting of the parent council that—I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to get to it or not, but I managed to squeeze it into my calendar and was so glad I did, because there

was a deadline coming up right away for the decision on what type of turf they were going to put on to the field and no one knew how to get a hold of the school division chairperson at the time and I had their cellphone number.

So I was able to call, provide them with the information that came from the parent council and that information was used to create the incredible amazing Gordon Bell green space that we now all enjoy. And I should give a huge shout out, as well, to our former member of Parliament, Mr. Pat Martin, who played a significant role in Ottawa, of course, working with a then-Conservative Cabinet minister who was responsible for Canada Post to make that happen.

And I mention all of this in the context of the Interim Supply bill, Madam Speaker, because we were a government which made things happen. When the community came to us with ideas, and proposals, and they were reasonable and they were going to improve the quality of people's lives, we did as much as we reasonably could to see those things through. And we got it done in Gordon Bell. This government would not have even bothered.

If Gordon Bell had come to this—if the roles were reversed right now and Gordon Bell had come to this government, they wouldn't even get in through the front door. It's quite clear. They would not even get in through the front door for that fantastic opportunity and the students at Gordon Bell and the surrounding community would have been the ones that suffered because a budget is a reflection of what your values are, and this government does not value community. It does not value education. It does not value green space. It does not value working with people. They want to just go off and make all the decisions for themselves, they don't want anyone to challenge what they're doing, they don't want anyone to point out the moral and logical inconsistencies that are revealed here on a daily basis from the different ministers right up to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) themselves, and that's just very, very sad and I don't think Manitobans are going to stand for it.

And Kelvin is, of course, not the only community that has suffered just in the last week since I last spoke to this bill. You see the Dakota Alumni proposal for an amazing green space to be built, similarly squashed by this government, and a very similar group of very disappointed parents, very disappointed students, very disappointed teachers and staff left scratching their heads saying, what is

wrong with these guys running the Legislature? Do they not understand that this is what a government is supposed to be doing?

A government's supposed to be improving the lives of the citizens that are depending on it, not making it worse. And yet we're going in the opposite direction every single day. There's new revelations coming out of what this government's true agenda is.

Tragically, you know, it's one of those circumstances where sometimes you hate to be right but, you know, no small number of these things are items that we predicted, that based on what we had seen, day in and day out from this political party across the way when we were in opposition, here come the cuts.

You know, running with scissors. We didn't come up with that theme by accident. It's one hundred per cent true. And the proof is right there for all to see. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), to continue.

Mr. Altemeyer: I was a backbencher for 13 years. I know the back row can get a little boring, so I appreciate that the members opposite are trying to contribute in their own unique way. If they actually wanted to contribute to bettering the lives of their citizens they would go and talk to their colleagues on the front bench and tell them to change course, because the citizens who live in their constituencies are going to be worse off because of the decisions that are in this Interim Supply bill and that are in the budget that is coming up.

Schools are not receiving the funding that they need to have to be properly educating our students, our health-care facilities are sure not going to be getting the support that are required to honour the provision of public and accessible medicare in Manitoba, and the litany of cuts that this government has brought in—nowhere in their election campaign, not once, do I guarantee did a member from the Conservative party during the election, any of their candidates, none of their volunteers, not a single one of them knocked on a door in the last election and said, we are going to cancel the \$300-million CancerCare facility.

Not one of them said that—not one of them said that—they're going to be making massive cuts,

millions of dollars in every single region of the health care in our province. Did any of them? Were any of them honest with the people who ended up voting for them, telling them about the unnecessary, unfair, and hidden pain that was coming the moment that this government took office? Not a single one of them did that, Madam Speaker, maybe skipped their minds, you know, you kind of wonder how that little detail could be left out.

And never mind that, but we also have a government who has, you know, managed to really tick off youth on the one hand with all of the cuts to their treasured educational proposals. On the other hand, seniors, of course, keep a very close eye on health care they're not impressed with where this government is headed, and families of cancer survivors have got to be very concerned. I mean that's a pretty impressive strikeout for this Premier (Mr. Pallister) to manage to annoy young people, old people, and people who are medically vulnerable in just, like, seven days. That is not a record that anybody should be proud of on the other side.

So, if the backbenchers on the other side of the aisle here—the backbenchers in government—if they just want to just sit on their hands, that's great, they'll be replaced in the next election. That's their choice. If they want to actually stand up for their constituents and start making some noise about the wrong direction that this government is headed in, the hidden agenda that has been there all along—we called them on it. We knew what was coming, and they never fessed up to it—well, you know, that's going to be the choice of the backbenchers.

So I leave it to them to wrestle with their moral conscience of whether they're going to enjoy seeing good programs bite the dust. And it's not just in a couple of neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, of course, Madam Speaker, where these cuts have already taken effect. Look at the Community Places Program.

I've talked about this before, but it bears repeating: It's not a huge amount of money. It's a few million dollars and the value that it pulls together is many times larger than that. The irony is the minister who used to be responsible for Community Places—before she cut it—actually took great pleasure in standing up before the cameras and announcing how awesome Community Places was when she was announcing the grants that had been approved already by our government.

So, on the one hand, the government's duplicity involves the minister standing up saying, hey, it's a great program. It's existed for 30 years. It's accomplished hundreds of programs and projects all across the province and, you know, this is a really good thing, and everyone should applaud the great work that my government's doing even though all the work was done by the people who were here before. Then we find out just a little bit later on that they don't believe in Community Places.

They don't believe in projects, they don't believe in progress. They cut the funding for Community Places.

How on earth can you square that circle? Any—this—I'll put this question open to anybody. I would invite any member of the Conservative caucus, whether they're a minister, whether they're the Premier (Mr. Pallister), whether they're a backbencher, whether they're someone who doesn't fit one of those categories—I don't know how they're organized over there. It's not very well organized—anyone of them could stand up and actually explain how on the one hand you'd have a minister claiming credit for a program they had absolutely nothing to do with, and then in the next breath cancel the program outright and say that it doesn't have any value.

Every single MLA on that side, it doesn't matter whether they're in the north or in the south, in the suburbs or in the inner city, every single MLA on that side is going to have to account to their constituents for cutting the Community Places Program. This is a program where local community groups could make proposals all on their own about what needed to be done the most in their community. And our government, when we were in office, we were a partner. We made things happen, we made progress happen. People were better off, communities were better off, and they were empowered because they were the ones driving the ship.

This government is top-down, they're disconnected, and they're going to cause an enormous amount of pain and suffering to the citizens of Manitoba, and the citizens are going to hold them accountable for that.

Madam Speaker: Order please.

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

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 16, 2017

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Performance Review	
Bill 24—The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017		Klassen	771
Friesen	763	Pallister	771
Tabling of Reports		Child-Care Wait Times	
Driedger	763	Klassen	771
Members' Statements		Fielding	771
Tyler Klassen		Community Enterprise Development	
Lagassé	763	Klassen	771
Snoman's Making Tracks Event		Cullen	772
Martin	763	Spring Flooding Concerns	
Concordia Health & Fitness Centre		Piwniuk	772
Wiebe	764	Pedersen	772
Education Governance Agreement		Collective Bargaining	
Klassen	764	Lindsey	772
Portage District General Hospital Foundation		Cullen	772
Wishart	765	Liquor and Gaming Authority	
Oral Questions		Swan	773
Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls		Schuler	773
Fontaine	765	Downtown Development	
Pallister	765	Swan	773
MMIWG National Inquiry		Schuler	773
Fontaine	766	Crown Services Minister	
Pallister	766	Swan	773
Provincial Negotiations		Pallister	773
F. Marcelino	767	Petitions	
Pallister	767	Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations Funding	
Capital Projects and Services		Swan	774
F. Marcelino	768		
Pallister	768	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Personal-Care Homes		<i>(Continued)</i>	
Wiebe	769	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Goertzen	769	Debate on Concurrence and Third Readings	
Dakota Sports Complex Funding		Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017	
Kinew	770	Klassen	774
Goertzen	770	Lindsey	775
Tuition Rates		Kinew	779
Kinew	770	Wiebe	784
Pallister	771	Gerrard	790
		Fontaine	792
		Altemeyer	796

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