

Third 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	Man.
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	Ind.
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
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
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, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	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
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
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, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 5, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Cool 2Be Kind Antibullying Campaign

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Last month, on October 25th, I was very pleased to be at Queenston School in River Heights for the launch of the Winnipeg Police Association's seventh annual Cool 2Be Kind antibullying campaign.

As honorary co-chair of the initiative, I was pleased to join my fellow co-chair, former colleague and friend Kevin Chief, along with students from Queenston School, members of the Winnipeg Police Association, 103 FM and others for the official launch of this very important campaign.

The Cool 2Be Kind campaign is a positive-behaviour antibullying initiative of the Winnipeg Police Association that focuses on teaching students in kindergarten through grade 8 the value of being kind to others and making good choices in school and in life.

Since 2013, 'thish'—this initiative has funded 145 kindness projects, totalling \$72,500, with

off-duty police officers having spoken to over 50,000 students and educators. The campaign allows students and staff to create and submit a unique kindness proposal for their school for the opportunity to receive funding to see their program of choice come to life.

We all have a shared responsibility to combat and prevent bullying. Today, I have as my guests, in the gallery, key members of our community who made this campaign possible: former Winnipeg Blue Bomber Trevor Kennerd; long-time journalist Bob Holliday; members of the Winnipeg Police Association, including President Moe Sabourin, Vice-President George VanMackelbergh and directors Ward Gordon, Kevin Rampersad and Jeff Boehm.

Madam Speaker, collectively, this initiative is making a real difference in the safety of our community and of our children. Let us all make an effort to teach children to recognize bullying behaviour and to practise positive behaviour. This will assist in building a better future for our city and for our province.

We encourage all schools in Winnipeg to participate in the Cool 2Be Kind campaign by submitting their kindness projects by December 31st, 2018.

I'd—last I would like to ask all members to join me in a round of applause to thank my guests for their ongoing work and for all that they do to educate our youth in this most positive fashion. It makes a huge difference to people in our community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, the seventh annual Cool 2Be Kind is an antibullying initiative run by the Winnipeg Police Association, teaching students from K to 8 the value of being kind.

Bullying is an issue that affects students of any age and it comes in many forms, Madam Speaker. It can be both physical and verbal.

At least one in three adolescent students in Canada have reported being bullied, and 47 per cent of Canadian parents reported having a child who was a victim of bullying, Madam Speaker.

The Cool 2Be Kind program helps to give kids the schools—the skills, pardon me, to combat bullying if it is happening to them personally or if it—they see it happening to others. The program talks to children about how bullying can take different forms, how to avoid being a bystander and what to do if they are being bullied. The program helps kids realize if they are engaging in bullying and shows them how to identify and correct their behaviour.

Having police officers come in and teach this program sends a message to kids that even for people with very tough jobs, being kind plays an important part in everyone's life, Madam Speaker.

Cool 2Be Kind also runs a grant program for students to submit their ideas on how to combat bullying. The winning school receives \$500 to implement their project.

And finally, Madam Speaker, the deadline for this year's submission is December 31st, and I would encourage all Manitoba students to submit their ideas on how to combat bullying.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, I'm happy to rise today to speak to this year's Cool 2Be Kind campaign which is celebrating its seventh year of the Winnipeg police's antibullying initiative that teaches our kindergarten to grade 8 students the value of being kind to others and making good choices in school and in life.

There is no more room for bullying in our schools, Madam Speaker, and we can hope that campaigns like this one will teach our youngest generations how to behave with kindness and respect, a lesson that many members here could also use.

The Winnipeg Police Association website has a lot of information on bullying which I think is important to learn at all ages. It reminds us of what bullying looks like with examples such as calling people hurtful and derogatory names, spreading bad rumors about someone, being mean and teasing someone, getting certain kids or teens to gang up on others, and posting nasty pictures or messages about others in social media, blogs and websites.

We should all be talking with our kids about bullying and also setting an example for them to follow.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ajay Chopra

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I rise to congratulate Flying Pizza in Rossmere for 21 years of serving Rossmere, most recently under the enterprising leadership of 25-year-old Ajay Chopra, who came to Canada in 2010 when he was just 17 years old.

After moving here in 2010, Ajay worked two jobs, at Red River Co-op gas station and McDonald's, and used those jobs as opportunities to perfect his English and to save money. Five years later, Ajay bought Rossmere's Flying Pizza restaurant.

Over the last two years Ajay has grown Flying Pizza, establishing credit to fund needed repairs on weekends, learning how to use high-tech ovens and testing interesting menu items to attract new customers, including butter chicken pizza, chicken tandoori pizza and my boys' favourite, bacon pizza.

*(13:40)

Ajay attributes his success to a commitment to continue to learn, to not overthinking transitions and to deliberately fostering good relationships. So, when a nearby thrift store asked if their fliers could go out with pizza orders, Ajay said yes. When local schools and sports teams showed interest, he developed relationships and worked hard to gain their business.

When reflecting on his move to Manitoba, Ajay says he found opportunity, he felt welcomed and he worked hard. Friendly Manitoba truly is a place where newcomers can start a new life. As a small gesture of thanks, Ajay promotes a local soccer program for newcomers in his storefront window.

Madam Speaker, this morning Ajay wrote his citizenship test. This afternoon, he's with us in the gallery. I invite all members to join me in welcoming him to the Manitoba Legislature.

Manitoba's Meth Crisis

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Our province's meth crisis is permeating every corner of our society. Madam Speaker, 2018 hasn't yet come to an end and Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service have documented more crystal-meth-related cases than in 2017. Last year, one third of homicides were meth related, while crime rates have spiked by 60 per cent. Parks where children used to play are now riddled with needles. Meth-related hospital visits are soaring

by 1,200 per cent. And this government seems to be doing nothing.

Behind these statistics are people: somebody's loved one. Meth is a violent drug which transforms its users into unrecognizable versions of themselves, falling into states of psychosis and desperation. Families are forced to watch their loved ones disappear before their very eyes. Where is the help for Manitobans struggling with meth addiction? Where is help for their families and for the community? Main Street Project estimates up to 25,000 Manitobans are struggling with meth, and yet only 46 beds remain available in their detoxification unit.

While people are dying in our community, this government is sitting on their hands and the—while the amount of people addicted to meth continues to rise. Most of all, hope is needed. Surviving without meth is impossible for the person struggling.

Activists and advocates have been calling for these lines of actions for a long time from this government, but they have refused. They've refused to respond with appropriate urgency.

I implore all members of the House to heed the call to action, to stop neglecting the problem and give people hope that their suffering will end.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

RCA Brandon Military Ball

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Speaker, the 70th annual military ball was held in Brandon on Saturday, November 3rd, 2018. The 26th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA, Brandon Military Ball is Canada's oldest continually occurring single-unit military ball and celebrates over a century of military presence in the city of Brandon by the 26th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA, and its predecessors.

The Honourable Janice Filmon, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, was the distinguished guest of honour, along with His Honour Gary Filmon. Her Honour spoke warmly of the many contributions and sacrifices of the military as well as the sacrifices made by spouses and family.

Madam Speaker, the event is hosted by the commanding officer of the 26th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA, Lieutenant Colonel S.K. Fortin, along with Honorary Colonel Rick Felstead and Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Lori Dangerfield. Special greetings were read from Honorary Colonel

Betty Coleman, retired, who attended 66 of the 70 military balls.

Madam Speaker, my wife and I were joined by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), the MLAs for Brandon East, Arthur-Virden and their spouses. Also attending were representatives from 2PPCLI, IRCHA, Shilo base command, Brandon City Police and the Minot Air Force Base. Entertainment was provided by the 26th Field Artillery Regiment pipes and drums band and the HMCS Chippawa's band, Prairie Sailor. The evening wouldn't be complete without the After Glow at the Brandon Armoury, the home of the 26th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA.

Madam Speaker, we should remember to thank our military 365 days of the year, but it is especially important to remember their sacrifices during such events as the military ball and the upcoming Remembrance Day services.

Concordia ER Closure

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): The Pallister government is closing the Concordia ER in June of 2019, leaving the residents of northeast Winnipeg only seven months to convince the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to change his mind.

The residents of northeast Winnipeg and Transcona have been active over the last two years, letting the government know how they feel about this irresponsible government action. Many residents have been asking about the PC MLAs they elected in the 2016 election. Residents want to know why the Conservative members from Rossmere, River East, Radisson and Transcona are going along with this ridiculous idea.

Residents of Rossmere have asked me: Doesn't the Premier listen to the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield)? Radisson residents want to know why the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) doesn't demand that the Premier change his mind.

We know that the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski) gets calls from his constituents on this issue. Why is he afraid of the Premier?

Constituents want to know if these members are being bullied by the Premier. Are they worried about being treated like the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) and kicked out of the caucus?

The Premier is forcing 30,000 Concordia patients per year to fend for themselves—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —forcing them to travel longer distances to St. Boniface, Health Sciences and Grace hospitals.

This closure is opposed by the overwhelming majority of northeast Winnipeg and Transcona residents.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) listen to the people and reverse his short-sighted Concordia Hospital ER closure?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I wish today to congratulate those who were successful in the recent municipal elections, some of whom are incumbents and others who are embarking on their first foray into municipal government. As always, our government remains committed to working with Manitoba municipal governments as well as the organizations that support them.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities is an organization that continues to support municipal governments in Manitoba by providing resources in a variety of areas. The AMM works with 137 incorporated municipalities in Manitoba and these incorporated municipalities are represented by mayors, reeves and councillors.

As a former RM of Dauphin councillor, I saw first-hand the value of the AMM. Most important to me was the process for change and the ability to influence and have input on the government of the day. I appreciated the June district meetings, the annual convention and the ability to network with others, and especially liked the convention's resolution sessions, which was the final step to ensure and affect responsible government, legislation and regulation.

The association provides support and leadership to promote strong, functional councils that truly represent the order of municipal government. They will hold their 20th annual convention from November 26th to 28th in Winnipeg. This event is the AMM's largest and it brings together

approximately 900 delegates from all over the province.

I wish the AMM a productive and inspiring convention and all the best as they work 'collabority'—collaboratively with our newly elected municipal governments.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the Speaker's Gallery, we have with us today Her Excellency, Ms. Kareen Rispal, ambassador of France; Mr. Marc Trouyet, consul general of France in Toronto; Mr. Jean-Eric Ghia, honorary consul for France in Manitoba and Mr. Guillaume Dumas, press and public affairs officer, consulate of France in Toronto.

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

*(13:50)

Seated in the public gallery, from Université de Saint-Boniface, we have 20 political science students under the direction of André *[phonetic]* Brassard, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont).

And also seated in the public gallery, from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 36 grade 9 students under the direction of Steven Collier, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

CancerCare Manitoba Government Review

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Je vous souhaite bienvenue au Palais législatif du Manitoba.

Translation

I welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

English

Madam Speaker, cancer is awful. It's a scourge that affects so many families across Manitoba, and

I'm sure that everyone in this Chamber has their own story to tell about the ravages of that terrible illness.

We've learned that the Premier has decided to pay another high-priced consultant to review CancerCare Manitoba. Now, did this Premier tell this consultant to share ideas for how to improve care? No. Did he ask them, tell me which moves to make to improve things for the patients of CancerCare? No, he did not, Madam Speaker.

He demanded that this consultant look at the fiscal performance of CancerCare relative to other places in the country.

Now, we know in other reviews of health care, that's always led to cuts, so I'd ask the Premier today whether he will commit that this review of CancerCare Manitoba will lead to no cuts for care?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madame Pr sident, nous tenons les promesses que nous avons faits aux Manitobains.

Translation

Madam Speaker, we are keeping the promises we've made to Manitobans.

English

We are keeping the promises we've made to Manitobans. We are investing, this year alone, more than \$700 million more in health care in this province than was ever invested in an annual basis by the previous government.

Madam Speaker, value for money does matter because if any procedures can be found which deliver better care and they save money, more procedures can be undertaken, more research can be done, more people can be hired and more jobs can be secured, and security given to those who do those jobs.

Madam Speaker, getting value for money is truly what all Manitobans understand they have to do. We as a government understand that. I encourage the member to look into the concept.

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

Mr. Kinew: CancerCare is a program that delivers excellent services right now. The experts have shown that 100 per cent of CancerCare patients get the radiation they need within four weeks, Madam Speaker, and yet what have been the actions of this Premier?

Well, immediately upon taking office, he cancelled the new building for CancerCare. Last year, he cut two and a half million dollars from the budget of CancerCare. And now, as a follow up, he is cutting—or, he is launching this review with another high-priced consultant which, in other areas of the health-care system, has led to cuts.

Now, in the RFP, it states that this review will provide, and I quote here, confidential advice, unquote, to the Premier.

Why doesn't the Premier want this information about the advice that he's getting from the high-priced consultant on CancerCare to be known by the public, and will the Premier commit to making public all the results of this eventual review to CancerCare in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: In terms of transparency, Madam Speaker, we've released to Manitobans more reports in just two and a half years of government than the previous NDP government did in 17 years. We understand that accountability and better decision-making can result if transparency is pursued, and we continue to pursue it.

But Madam Speaker, there's nothing accurate in the member's preamble in respect of cuts. As I said earlier, \$700 million more is not defined by any common sense person as a cut.

But what the member goes too far on is the idea that change should never be undertaken because things are okay. That's the approach he's taken on health care, Madam Speaker.

We don't take that approach because we know that wait times in Manitoba under the NDP were the longest of any Canadian province, and wait times must be shortened, and so we're looking for ways to make sure that Manitobans get better value and better care through every process we undertake.

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

Mr. Kinew: Those comments simply aren't relevant when it comes to CancerCare, Madam Speaker.

We've seen—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —when the Premier has launched reviews of other aspects of the health-care system and asked for comparisons to other jurisdictions, that that has meant a race to the bottom.

Under the previous minister of Health, we saw cuts to Pharmacare coverage. We saw cuts to the special drugs program. We saw the reduction in coverage for orthotics.

And now this Premier is bringing in a very similar review with very similar language being launched on the CancerCare program, a program which functions excellently and delivers a very deeply needed service to the people of Manitoba.

Now, it's one thing for the Premier to ask that this report be kept confidential, be kept secret. But, more importantly, I think families in this province want to ensure that cuts aren't brought down on the CancerCare program like the ones he launched last year.

So I'd ask the Premier again: Will he commit that no cuts will result from this review to CancerCare Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the beach ball the member's trying to blow up yet again is full of holes. The fact of the matter is that we have shorter wait times. We are investing more to achieve that, more than ever before, but we have achieved shorter wait times.

In terms of wait times to get into personal-care homes, they're down dramatically. In terms of getting MRI treatment, Madam Speaker, Manitobans are waiting 30 per cent less to get MRI testing. In terms of emergency facilities, emergency health-care facilities, where people were waiting the longest of any Canadians, much, much longer than people in neighbouring provinces, despite the fact that they wanted to get treatment and wanted care, they were not getting it in a timely way. Now the wait times are over 20 per cent shorter.

So, Madam Speaker, the fact that we're getting results is something that gives Manitobans optimism—most Manitobans, not the member opposite, who seems to be very pessimistic.

Madam Speaker, we are not. We're hopeful that we'll have a better system that gets better care sooner to all Manitobans.

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

Lifeflight Air Ambulance Privatization Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier is not

listening. He's not listening to the Manitobans who want him to stop the plan for cuts, and apparently he's not listening to the statistics from the Winnipeg health region which say that wait times have gone up since they started closing emergency rooms and urgent-care centres in Winnipeg.

Now, it would appear that he's not listening to the front-line workers who deliver health care either. Over the last few days, 16 medical doctors wrote to the government telling the Premier to back off his plan to privatize Lifeflight in the province. If you live outside the city of Winnipeg, Lifeflight functions essentially as your emergency room in highly acute situations. They are telling him, these highly trained experts, that this plan to privatize air ambulances will make health care in the province worse, saying, and I quote: This removes an invaluable safeguard and leaves us all with serious concerns that have not been addressed. Unquote.

Will the Premier listen? Will he back off his plans to privatize Lifeflight?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, again, I encourage the member to listen when I tell him that this is our first priority and it's evidenced by \$700 million of additional investment annually. I would hope he would listen.

The fact remains, Madam Speaker, that wait times are improving. The fact remains that Manitobans are getting better care sooner. And in terms of air ambulance, the previous administration didn't even bother to tender for the service. They simply awarded contracts for shipping people around the province—people in dire need of health care—on a random basis without even negotiating any price for the service. That's just irresponsible.

And, Madam Speaker, I don't think even the member opposite would get into a taxi and not ask what the price was going to be before he got into it.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, if the Premier—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kinew: Let me restart. Madam Speaker, if the Premier had bothered to read the letter written by those 16 medical doctors, all the doctors across the province who deliver Lifeflight care, he would have heard them say that Lifeflight has operated incident-free for the past three decades. So he can

choose to disparage that quality of care. We, on this side of the House, choose to believe the experts who are caring for the health of Manitobans.

* (14:00)

Also on this side of the House, in contrast to that side, we do not want two-tier, American-style health care in Manitoba. But that is the spectre that was raised in this letter.

These physicians wrote, and I quote, Manitoba physicians object to the creation of a second tier—end quote—of health care in our province. They say that there has been, and I quote, a complete lack of medical consultation in this process. End quote.

The Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) is clearly outraged. Will he then ask his Premier to back off these plans to privatize air ambulances in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: The member likes to pick and choose his listening skills, Madam Speaker. He says he respects experts, yet the NDP government was given expert advice—expert advice on how to proceed to reduce wait times so that patients in our province would get treatment. And they chose to ignore the advice.

They didn't have the courage to act on it, and this government is. And as a result of listening to experts, we're getting shorter wait times for Manitoba patients.

The member claims that he is concerned about patient care, yet none of the private services—and they increased dramatically under the NDP—none of them were tendered. In other words, they didn't bother to negotiate on a price, meaning that there were, naturally, much higher costs for delivering the service as a result of silly shopping, which Manitobans deplore, Madam Speaker, when—they don't do it with their own money, and they don't deserve a government that does it with theirs. They deserve a government that respects the money they take from Manitobans in taxes and invests it wisely.

Better service standards, better safety requirements—we share the concerns touched upon in the letter by the doctors, and they're all addressed in the request for proposals we'll be reviewing, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier has clearly not read the letter signed by the doctors who care for the entire province with air ambulances, not just in the North, not just in communities like Dauphin and Swan River, but even for pediatric cardiac patients who live here in the city of Winnipeg. And because he is not listening to these physicians, I will table the letter for him so he can begin to edify himself as to what their concerns are.

Now, specifically, this letter concludes, in the words of the physicians here I am quoting, that they are not prepared to work in an environment that provides substandard patient care and increases risk to patients and providers. End quote. That is very clear language, Madam Speaker. These physicians are not prepared to work in the conditions that this Premier is creating.

Now, confronted with the possibility that every doctor who provides service on Lifeflight is prepared to walk off the job, will the Premier now reconsider and abandon his plans to privatize Lifeflight? Or is he picking a fight with every single doctor in the province who provides care on air ambulances?

Mr. Pallister: The first pronouncement on policy the member made when he was successfully elected to be the Leader of the NDP was that he would raise taxes on physicians, Madam Speaker. And I have to question him on whether any of these doctors would actually have remained in Manitoba, were he in a position to do that.

His disrespect for the physicians and others who work hard to qualify for these important positions is well known and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —well understood, Madam Speaker. And his tendency to try to be a scary fear-monger is also well understood in this House and becoming well known elsewhere as well.

And so, Madam Speaker, despite his desire to scare everyone, health care's getting better in this province. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Health care is improving. Wait times are shortening. Ambulance fees are down. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Access to treatment and care is improving. And although the member doesn't want to

admit it, Manitobans are growing in their confidence that health care will be there for them when they need it, Madam Speaker.

**Affordable and Social Housing
Construction and Maintenance**

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The Pallister government has cut upgrades to social and affordable housing by \$78 million. That's 62 per cent.

My constituents tell me that more and more housing units are sitting empty because this government cut funding, and it just needs a paint job. Some family could be living in there and not having to live in poverty because they're paying higher rents. But they don't care.

Why is this minister continuing to cut these upgrades by \$78 million, and why is she pushing the cost of these maintenance onto the backs of future generations?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Coming from a member who's part of a party that, when they were in government, left our party—our government—with more than \$1 billion in deferred 'maintenance' charges, Madam Speaker.

So regardless of what the member opposite wants to make up and say in this House, Madam Speaker, she is not factually correct.

Madam Speaker, it's important that we do have affordable housing for Manitobans. That's why we have already built more than 500 new affordable housing units in the province of Manitoba, many of—more of which are still to come.

We are also providing Manitobans with more Rent Assist, Madam Speaker: up to 3,000 more people in Manitoba. That is where we are going to ensure that all Manitobans have affordability and access to the housing that they need.

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

Mrs. Smith: I'll table for the minister hundreds of housing units under our—under construction before the 2016 election that they are trying to take credit for. The minister actually included these projects on her so-called construction list.

Madam Speaker, we know that the NDP builds housing. We—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —built thousands of units of social—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —and affordable housing. This government has built zero.

The minister stops in for a photo op on projects that are already under way. If she actually cared, she'd actually start building some.

Madam Speaker, is the minister looking for a thank you for not ripping down the hundreds of units of housing that were under construction when she took office? Well, I'll say it: Thanks for not—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: And, you know, the litany of promises that came just prior to the last election from the members opposite were just that: they were promises that were not delivered upon.

Election after election that I've been involved in where the previous NDP government was involved, they made promises to Manitobans that they did not keep.

Where they failed, we have been able to deliver in housing more than 550 affordable housing units to Manitobans, Madam Speaker. We will continue to provide affordable housing to Manitobans for when they need it.

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

Mrs. Smith: I don't think this minister is listening to Manitobans, because they want affordable housing now. There's thousands of affordable housing units that were built in Manitoba here, and I'm proud to say that it was our NDP government who built them.

But thanks to this government, there's now a gap. The minister hasn't committed to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —one single new unit of social and affordable housing since taking government. What matters—what makes matters worse is they've cut funding to the maintenance program by \$78 million. That's 68 per cent.

When will the minister commit to single—to building a single unit of housing, and why is she continuing to cut maintenance on social housing?

Mrs. Stefanson: The fact of the matter is that we inherited more than \$1 billion in deferred maintenance charges left to us by the previous NDP government. So, where they failed we're—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —we're cleaning up a mess for Manitobans. In fact, the member is quite right: Manitobans expected affordable housing five years ago. They expected it 10 years ago. They expected it, in fact, 15 years ago, Madam Speaker. But members opposite did not deliver for Manitobans. Where they failed, we will deliver.

Education System Review Changes to Collective Bargaining

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, the Pallister government has a well-worn strategy for its cuts: it's divide and conquer. They legislated a salary freeze, and then they legislative collective bargaining and then made cuts across government. They legislated health workers' bargaining, and then they cut tens of millions of dollars from regional health authorities.

Now the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has education in his sights, and, right on cue, he intends to interfere in the collective bargaining process once again, right before he makes even bigger cuts.

Why is the minister proposing once again to use the heavy hand of legislation in the collective bargaining process?

* (14:10)

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Well, Madam Speaker, of course, there are hundreds of millions of dollars more that are being invested in education than were ever invested under the former NDP government, and our focus has been clear.

Our focus isn't just about investing more money, although that is important at certain times, but our focus has been about getting results. That is why we're launching the K-to-12 review, which will start early next year. It'll look at a variety of different things. And, certainly, the focus of that will be ensuring that our young people are prepared for the future.

For too many years, under the NDP, those results continued to get worse to the point we were dead last in the entire country. That's not acceptable

for parents. That's not acceptable for young people. That's not acceptable for this government, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the minister talks about his education review, but it's clear that the government has already made up its mind before it even begins. Every review that they have done has been used to make cuts. And they've already indicated they're going to use heavy-handed legislation to change the collective bargaining process. They even passed a Tory resolution this weekend very proudly calling for that very thing.

It's divide and conquer, Madam Speaker. Pallister government just wants to pick a fight as a cover for the cuts that they're making for our education system.

Will the minister back down and let school divisions make their own decisions about their own futures?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member opposite might remember that it's the Manitoba Teachers' Society which for many years has been calling province-wide bargaining. I don't believe that the Manitoba Teachers' Society is trying to divide itself. The resolution is in accordance with what the Manitoba Teachers' Society has been asking for, for many years.

But beyond that, Madam Speaker, beyond bargaining, we are focused on getting results for young people. We need to ensure that young people who are graduating from our K-to-12 system, who are graduating from colleges and universities, are prepared to go into the workforce, are prepared to go into the world and succeed.

That is going to be our focus. We want to ensure that young people can be the future of our province by contributing into a new economy, a strong economy, a better economy that never happened under the NDP, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: And yet the minister won't commit to having teachers as a part of that process as part of his review, and he still won't do that today.

School divisions want that good relationship with teachers. They want to work co-operatively.

They want to find common ground, but the Pallister government doesn't want that. They just want to pick a fight.

The minister's own mandate letter shows only two priorities for K to 12: conduct a review for cuts and pick a fight for—with teachers over the collective bargaining process.

Why is this minister once again resorting to the use of heavy-handed legislation—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —instead of talking to teachers and talking to trustees?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, that coming from a member who sat in a government that picked a fight with everyone, and then when they ran out of people to fight externally, they decided to turn the guns internally and fight with each other. They fought with each other at the convention floor. They fought with each other on the legislative floor. They fought with each other everywhere.

We're sitting down with Manitobans. We're asking for their opinion. We want to hear from them. That is what the K-to-12 review is going to do. We want to hear from teachers. We want to hear from parents. We want to hear from everyone who has an opinion on the education system. In the spirit of bipartisanship, I'd even want to hear from the member if he wants to make a presentation, Madam Speaker.

Provincial Economy Request for Investment Plan

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, businesses and investors like certainty, but the Premier himself seems to be one of the greatest sources of uncertainty in Manitoba. His government interfered with bargaining at the University of Manitoba and lost at a cost of \$2 million.

He has been unable to do his homework when it comes to the \$67-million pan-Canadian framework, so that money's up in the air until he hands in what he wants to do with it. He ripped up two agreements with the MMF. He spent tens of thousands of dollars on a legal opinion that says he shouldn't bother suing the federal government on pricing pollution, but keeps threatening to do anyway.

Last Friday, it turned out that Manitoba was the only province where unemployment went up.

The question here is one of confidence and one of uncertainty: Can the Premier explain why he thinks ripping up agreements and threatening lawsuits left and right helps build trust and confidence in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, frankly, Madam Speaker, I don't accept any of the member's preamble, but it does give me the opportunity to say congratulations to the new premier of New Brunswick, Blaine Higgs, and his party for their opportunity to govern that beautiful province, and a thank you to former Premier Brian Gallant for his service to the people of New Brunswick, as well.

And I would say to the member that the demonstrated power of the citizen to make a difference through their vote was never more evident than in that very closely fought election. And so I want to wish the incoming premier and the outgoing premier all the very best as they move forward in their careers, as they have been directed to by the people of New Brunswick.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, every Manitoban is paying more because of the uncertainty created by this government's lack of a plan. When the Premier announced in 2016 he would run eight years of deficits without a plan to balance the budgets, bond rating agencies downgraded the Province's credit rating.

Our credit rating was downgraded again because this PC government is undermining the Province's revenues while failing to invest in growth. This PC government has been downgraded twice because they are making it harder for this Province to pay its bills.

Interest on tens of billions of dollars of provincial and Hydro debt has gone up on this Premier's watch, and on everything from education to poverty to economic growth, there is no plan. This government is slowing the economy when we need to grow because of the uncertainty being created by this Premier.

And this government is still maintaining not one, not two but three definitions of deficit, as the NDP did.

When is this government going to deliver its long-promised plan for economic growth and investment?

Mr. Pallister: Again, Madam Speaker, I do welcome questions from the member and encourage you to allow more of them to come my way.

I want to say that, in respect of economic outcomes, we are second among the provinces in private sector self-employment, increased by 7.7 per cent in the first eight months of this year—second among all the provinces.

Capital investments in new residential properties—*[interjection]*—increased by 30 per—member should listen to these things because these are Manitobans I'm giving credit to and, if he would, I'd appreciate if he showed some respect for the Manitobans who are venturing forward with capital investments and taking risks in this province. That is the group that deserves the respect and thanks of the people in this House.

These are not, Madam—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —Speaker, investments people make lightly. New residential properties: second in the country. Capital investments in industrial properties: second in the country. Housing starts: second highest increase in the country.

I know the members don't like to hear these things, Madam Speaker, because they feast on fear, they feast on pessimism, but on this side of the House, we thank Manitobans and others who are putting capital at risk in our province and creating jobs in record numbers. We thank them very much, and on this side of the House we celebrate their—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, when Standard & Poor's downgraded the Province's rating for the second time, it specifically said—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —that one of the challenges was this government was focusing too much on cuts and wasn't investing enough in actually being able to gain—to gather revenues or in economic growth.

A year ago, the Premier told the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce that he had discovered that

the Manitoba—that Manitoba had no economic plan. There had been a number of people who were sent out across the province to try to develop it.

It would be great to find out when this plan will actually be delivered, two and a half years into this government's mandate.

Mr. Pallister: Note that that didn't even garner applause from the few Liberals in the House, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: And I have to say to the member that his adolescent preamble, which is erroneous to the 90th percentile, has no place here.

If he would like to enter into some intelligent debate, let's do so. How about put the facts on the record? Labour, in terms of personal income growth, under this government—average weekly earnings, 2.54 annually since '13, second highest among the provinces since '16. Retail vehicles, motor vehicle sales increased by 10 per cent last year. That was the second highest in Canada.

But what about the first? What about the first spots? How about exports to the United States, up 22.7 per cent this year: best—best—among the provinces. Capital spending—private sector capital spending growth: the highest in Canada this year and expected to be first next year.

Madam Speaker, this is what's going on in Manitoba. I just don't know what's going on in the member's head.

* (14:20)

BC Pharmaceutical Company Lawsuit

Re: Opioids

Costs Associated with Addiction Treatment

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The opioid crisis continues to inflict terrible trauma and hurt on Manitoba families, and yet this Premier (Mr. Pallister) is doing the bare, bare minimum to combat this crisis.

Unlike the Pallister government, the government of British Columbia recognized the danger posed by opioids and declared a public health emergency back in 2016. Now the BC government has launched a lawsuit against 40 pharmaceutical companies to reclaim the costs associated with the ongoing crisis.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) stand up for Manitobans, take real action and join the BC lawsuit?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I had the opportunity on Friday to visit yet another of the rapid access to addictions clinics, this one in the city of Brandon, operational now for two weeks. I talked to counsellors there. I talked to clinicians there. And we had the opportunity to compare notes. They say that the investment will be a significant step forward, serving vulnerable people in addictions in that city.

Where she says it's a bare and minimum, I assure her that the people of the city of Brandon think otherwise.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, at least 122 people died from opioid-related causes in 2017, up from 70 deaths the previous year.

The BC lawsuit seeks to only recover costs for the public health-care system, including addiction, treatment and emergency response. The BC lawsuit alleges pharmaceutical companies downplayed the risks associated with opioids, especially their addictive potential, contributing to this crisis.

Meanwhile, in Manitoba, we have a Premier who is willing to sue the media for doing its job, willing to sue the federal government, and yet unwilling to stand up to big businesses like OmniTRAX.

Will the Premier stand up for Manitobans and join the BC lawsuit today?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, that member knows that the rise of opioid use in Manitoba and methamphetamine is a real challenge for everyone. It's a very significant issue. It's not ours solely. We know that it is an issue that is impacting across the provinces. It's why we continue to reach out not just to experts and clinicians in our own jurisdictions but across the provinces.

I'm aware of the approach of BC. I'm also aware of the fact that other provinces have not gone that route. And so if there is something to be learned there, we're certainly open to it. In the meantime, though, our government is taking real action on behalf of real Manitobans who want to see that action taken.

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

Addiction Services Safe Injection Site

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Multiple studies have shown safe consumption sites prevent overdoses, stop the spread of HIV and hepatitis and reduce the number of needles in public spaces, Madam Speaker. This weekend, delegates at the PC convention ignored the crisis and the need for a safe consumption site, resolving instead to impose harder–harsher penalties while ignoring the need for healing, prevention and outreach to people who are suffering. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: As far as the research is concerned, there's no question as to whether safe consumption sites should be—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —established, Madam Speaker.

The only question is: Does this Premier has the—have the political will and the courage to put aside his ideology and do the right thing today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, we've said from the beginning that we see this as a partnership issue. We must all be collaborating. And today with members of the police service in the gallery, no one knows this struggle on the streets as they do.

But we also know we're taking action with them, like our Project Riverbank sting operation, that netted millions of dollars in proceeds in crime, that is having an effect in interrupting that flow of methamphetamines and other drugs on our streets.

Where she says that's nothing, where she says it pales, we say these are all significant efforts, and we thank those police officers and for–officers throughout Manitoba for continuing to stand with us and make a difference in communities.

Distracted Driving New Penalties

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Madam Speaker, our government takes the issue of road safety very seriously. The use of cellphones and other electronic devices while driving is dangerous and has led to far too many accidents and deaths.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure please advise the House of the tough safety measures our government has put in place to curb the use of cell-phones behind the wheel?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, the member for Arthur-Virden has it absolutely right: safety comes first for our government.

In fact, when we were presented with statistics that accidents due to distracted driving had tripled—they'd gone from almost 5,000 to more than 15,000 in 2017—when we were presented with the data that accidents now kill more people because of distracted driving than drinking and driving, our government showed leadership and took action.

Madam Speaker, we would ask all Manitobans, please respect the law. The law is tough but it is right. Please do not use your electronic devices and drive on our roads.

Lead Contamination in Soil School Ground Safety

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Today, I'm joined by 11 members of SPY, Sisler's Political Youth, who are up in the gallery. Together, the students have created three questions that they are hopeful this government will be able to shed some light on.

The first question is based on all the recent news of lead contamination. SPY feels that there's a lack of awareness. They're worried because they have yet to hear about potential solutions.

And, Madam Speaker, they are wondering how this government is going to assure that our school grounds are safe from soil contamination.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I would like to welcome the students in the gallery today, and I appreciate the member's question about what our government is doing to address the problem of lead contamination in soils throughout the province.

Our government has worked to order a new round of testing, and we are going to have those tests available in the early—of next month, and we'll be broadly sharing that with the public and moving forward on a plan to ensure that all our school grounds and our playgrounds and our public spaces are safe from contaminants in the soil.

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

Political Engagement Youth Voters

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): In the last provincial election, youthful voters, aged 18 to 29, represented the lowest voter turnout. This concerns the students involved in SPY very much because they are advocating to get young people involved and it is their generation who is going to be voting in the next election.

A couple of ideas that they had for voter engagement was having Instagram live stream debates and voting stations in the high schools.

Madam Speaker, ultimately, the students of SPY want to know how this government plans to promote political engagement of youth here in Manitoba.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): I also want to welcome the students to the gallery today. I want to say, on those first two questions, I think those are the best questions I've ever heard the member for Burrows give. So I want to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: I want to congratulate you and encourage you to continue to write those thoughtful questions.

I think that all of us as legislators have a role to play in that. I know many of us visit schools and speak to young people, and we need to continue to look at the issues that are important to them. Certainly, technology is one way that we can do a better job of reaching out and encouraging young people to vote.

I think that all of us have a collective responsibility, and I look forward to hearing more of the suggestions from the young people here and beyond in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

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

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Request for Government Plan

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): SPY and the students of Sisler High truly understand the urgency of reducing carbon pollution because it is a major environmental problem, both globally and here in Manitoba. We know this because of all the green

initiatives, such as their sustainability circle, and how, even today, they took transit to get here to the Manitoba Legislative Building.

Now, Madam Speaker, SPY noticed how this government withdrew from implementing a carbon tax, so they are wondering what this government's plan is to reduce the pollution.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I want to support the member in asking these questions. I think this is a great democratic exercise, and I compliment the member for doing that and thank the students as well—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pallister: This might be a way to step up the quality of the questions from St. Boniface too.

* (14:30)

Phasing out Brandon coal-fired generating units, introducing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —an Efficiency Manitoba project to help households and families reduce their carbon footprint right at home, because this isn't just a global problem, this is a think-local problem as well. We want to make sure that that's done. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Cleaner watersheds—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Pallister: Cleaner watersheds; better drainage strategies so we protect our wildlife habitats; fuel efficiency programs so that the trucking industry, which is based here and is central here, can actually save money on fuel, reduce fuel use.

We've reduced the number of vehicles in our fleet already, just year over year, by 20 per cent, and we're also going to reduce the carbon footprint of the fuel use by our vehicles in government by 10 per cent just this year.

But there's a lot more work to do, and I encourage all the students and all of us to make sure we embrace—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Concordia Hospital Emergency Room

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government has announced the closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Concordia Hospital.

The closures come on the heels of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —the closing of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg without any point of contact with the front-line health-care services and will result in them having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface Hospital's emergency room for emergency care.

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in northeast Winnipeg and visit the emergency room frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or who are low income.

(5) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg regarding the closing of their emergency room or to consult with health officials and health-care workers at Concordia to discuss how this closure would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Concordia Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health services.

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

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

Seven Oaks General Hospital Emergency Room

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced the closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Seven Oaks General Hospital.

(2) The closures come on the heels of the closing of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in north Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services and will result in them having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface emergency room or Health Sciences Centre's emergency room for emergency care.

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in north Winnipeg and visit the emergency rooms frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or are low income.

(5) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in north Winnipeg regarding the closing of their emergency room or to consult with health-care officials and health-care workers at Seven Oaks to discuss how this closure would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Seven Oaks General Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in north Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

Signed by Nolasco Mediah [*phonetic*], Abdon Chan, Jenny Nollasko [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

Vimy Arena

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the provincial government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial sites such as the St. Boniface Industrial Park, the 20,000 acres at CentrePort or existing properties such as the Shriners Hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

(3) The provincial government is exempt from any zoning requirements that would have existed if the land was owned by the City of Winnipeg. This exemption bypasses community input and due diligence and ignores better uses for the land which would be consistent with a residential area.

(4) There are no standards that one would expect for such a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living has stated that the Department of Health had no role to play in the acquisition for this Manitoba Housing project for use as a drug addiction facility.

(5) The Manitoba Housing project initiated by the provincial government changes the fundamental nature of the community, including park and recreation uses. The concerns of the residents of St. James and others regarding public safety, property values and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

(6) The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obvious other locations in wealthier neighbourhoods, such as Tuxedo and River Heights, have not been considered for this Manitoba Housing project, even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

(7) The Manitoba Housing project and operation of a drug treatment centre fall outside the statutory

mandate of the Manitoba Housing renewal corporation.

(8) The provincial government does not have a co-ordinating plan for addiction treatment in Manitoba, as it currently underfunds treatment centres which are running far under capacity and potential.

(9) The community has been misled regarding the true intention of Manitoba Housing, as land is being transferred for a 50-bed facility, even though the project is clearly outside of Manitoba Housing responsibility.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for addiction treatment—as an addiction treatment facility.

(2) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purpose of parkland and recreational activities for public use, including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and Sturgeon Creek ecosystem under the current designation of PR2 for the 255 Hamilton Ave. location at the Vimy Arena site, and to maintain the land to continue to be designated for parks and recreation activity, neighbourhood and communities.

* (14:40)

This petition has been signed by a great many Manitobans.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please call, this afternoon, report stage amendments on Bill 8?

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 8—The Government Notices Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended)

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider report stage amendments on

Bill 8 this afternoon, so we will move, then, to report stage amendments, Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended).

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, in accordance with rule 139(11), I am requesting that you combine the debate, where possible, on the report stage amendments for Bill 8 listed on the Order Paper in my name.

Madam Speaker: Regarding the member's request to combine debate on his proposed amendments to Bill 8, several of his amendments meet the criteria of similar content and position in the bill, and I will be grouping them for debate today as we proceed through them.

For the information of the House we will proceed as follows: (1) the member will move his first amendment individually, which will then be debated and resolved. (2) The member will then move his second, third, fourth, ninth, 10th, 11th and 12th amendments separately and consecutively. I will put each amendment back to the House in turn. There will then be one debate covering the combined amendments with 10-minute speaking times for all members except leaders of recognized parties, who have 30 minutes, and when that debate concludes, I will put the questions on the amendments separately and consecutively. (3) The member will then move his fifth, eighth and 13 amendments separately and consecutively. I will put each amendment back to the House in turn. There will then be another debate covering the combined amendments, and when that debate concludes I will put the questions on the amendments separately and consecutively. (4) The member will move his sixth amendment individually, which will then be debated and resolved, and (5) the member will move his seventh amendment individually, which will then be debated and resolved.

Moving, then, to the first amendment.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 5(3).

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamont: I brought forward a number of amendments to this bill, Bill 8. When it—it's a curious bill in many ways. When it came to support for it, it's not clear that there's any public support at all, and it's also not clear that most of it is in the public interest.

One of the things—one of the few things that it does is that it places information on the Internet to be available, but it expects the public to actively go out and seek out that information, rather than placing it in the hands of the public and placing it in the hands of newspapers across Manitoba to let the public know what the government is actually doing on a whole range of issues.

The specific issue of clause 5(3) is The Cooperatives Act, which removes the requirement of informing the purchasers of any share or security of the co-operative about any right of rescission or other rights that the purchasers may have. So purchasers would no longer be notified if the registrar decided to pull the registry.

The bill, Bill 8, all its separate clauses affect a whole series of different pieces of legislation, but the common thing that is shared is that these are issues which the public has a right to know about when it comes to what the government is doing, and simply for the government to place it on a website is not sufficient. This is an issue in all sorts of—in many communities, including my own home constituency, where people have been objecting to issues related to zoning or related to other types of changes the government has made that—they would not have been able to find out about these things if it hadn't been for the public notice.

Again, there has been a huge amount of resistance to this bill and no apparent public support. The members of the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association have spoken out against it. And it's really not a bill that's about saving money, and it's not really a bill that's about income as far as those newspapers are concerned. It's a fairly small amount of the entire revenue that they earn every year.

But the real issue is one of public access and one of the public having a right to know about the changes that are being made at the government level. In a sense—and the reason I actually will hope that the government side will also consider supporting these amendments is that I think it's in the government's own interest in—if—to have this happen. Transparency is a positive thing, but it also means that it would prevent a whole series of nasty surprises if people find out after it's too late that the government has made some decision and it ends up causing a lot of conflict or it ends up causing a lot of costs.

And, frankly, I think it would cause blowback on the government when you consider all the various issues that are being considered in this bill. The Cooperatives Act is just the first one. It also covers the criminal 'properture' forfeiture act, The Ecological Reserves Act, The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act, The Environment Act, The Highways Protection Act, The Human Rights Code, The Municipal Board Act, The Public Schools Act, The Public Utilities Board Act, The Securities Act, The Surveys Act and The Water Protection Act.

These all touch on the lives of every Manitoban one way or another, Madam Speaker. And, frankly, the position of the Manitoba community newspapers and others has been that this is essentially an undemocratic bill because it denies people their right to know. This is a fundamental thing. This is one of the senses that it's—when it comes to putting this—applying revenue to this and actually making sure that it appears in newspapers, this is a fundamental—it's more about the right to know than it is about the expenses that are involved.

Again, this is an—I believe that there is no public support for this bill, and it's in the public interest of everyone, including the government side, to support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I would just like to put on record that this will actually put us in line with what other provinces or jurisdictions are doing throughout our nation and as well as the federal government, Madam Speaker. What we are doing is modernizing the way we communicate here in Manitoba. For far too many years, Manitobans have been left in the dark.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Madam Speaker, for the last two committee meetings on Bill 8, we have heard from many presenters, many of whom were from out of town, and they stayed 'til quite late in the evening to let this government know of the many perils in this bill, how this will be an affront to democracy, how this will be disregarding the community members, especially those from rural areas who may not be able to obtain the needed information because it will be done through online medium, which not everyone has access to.

And at the last committee meeting, our caucus provided an amendment, but it was not even considered by the government.

Therefore, we on this side of the House concur with the Second Opposition Leader's amendment and, furthermore, that this bill should be gutted.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Party and at least half of the freedom caucus will be supporting the Second Opposition Leader, the—in this amendment.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, the amendment is unnecessary and actually does exactly the opposite of what my friend and colleague, the minister responsible, has put on the record. Obviously, it reduces the ability of Manitobans to get notice in newspapers or on—you know, it is such an obvious thing that it's perplexing why this government or any government would try to pull such a fast one over not only the citizens but also over accountability.

*(14:50)

Accountability—there's no replacement for having a hard copy of a notice. It protects the public interest and it actually protects the government, too, because they won't be—can't say, oh, well, there was no notice, or anything of that nature.

So why would the government want to deny people the right, through freedom of the press, to read what is going on in their community?

Now we're told, Madam Speaker, that this has to do with, well, we're just going to put it all online. Well, that's not good enough. If anything, there should be a requirement to ensure that community newspapers not only print these notices, but are required to put them on their websites. That would be okay.

But to say, no, there's no requirement to put it on your website, there's no requirement to—for the government to put it in the newspapers, so we're not going to do it, can only lead to problems, because things happen. The government does things and, with minimal public input, really bad things happen.

Now, maybe the government doesn't want public input. I have been attending committee meetings on the Bill 16 or this bill. Nobody supports the government action, to reduce the notification requirements—or Bill 16, which is basically useless—but on this bill, nobody supports it. The public doesn't support it. The newspapers don't support it. And in the long term, it leads to unaccountable government, lack of transparency and that's not in the public interest.

Madam Speaker, there's a situation in my riding where the government—well, it was initiated by the Province of Manitoba through the MLA for Kirkfield Park—tried to or is trying to acquire land for a Manitoba Housing project.

Now, it would have been hugely helpful to the community, to the people of St. James, if there was a public notice available. The notice is not—was not provided, and now the government wants to make it even more difficult for the public to find out about government activities. Why?

Well, as it turns out, Madam Speaker, in the case that I'm outlining, it was known—long before there was any whisper about the situation publicly—that this site was identified. In fact, there's a documentary on—aired on CBC that shows the site and the facility months before it became public.

So, Madam Speaker, weakening the public notice requirements only increases public cynicism about government, integrity and transparency and accountability. That's why supporting this amendment is so important. The amendment says, no, government, you have to be able to put notice in the public sphere.

Going to the Manitoba Gazette—like, how many people know what the Manitoba Gazette—I bet most of the MLAs in this place don't even know what the Manitoba Gazette is. Now, you want the—oh, just go to the Manitoba Gazette online.

Well, believe it or not, there's a large portion of the population that doesn't have access to the Internet or doesn't like using the Internet. But that's where the government's directing them. That's why you need a broad scope of communication vehicles. Internet's fine, but not alone. Newspapers are fine, but not alone. You have to put notices up in the location in which the rezoning or the land transfer is. You have to do it with enough time to allow the community to reflect. You need to consult. But what this government bill does, it undermines all of that.

And they've already been caught out with the Vimy Arena site, which I've been presenting a petition about every day since this session has begun, so for about a year. And it was about a year ago that the community found out about this, simply because Equal Opportunities West—a very worthwhile organization—wanted to purchase this land for their use for adults with disabilities. It was a perfect facility for their purposes. But rather than have the land go out for tender, the Province swept

in, forced the City of Winnipeg, through legislative power, to sell the land for \$1, thereby depriving Equal Opportunities West or any other community organization from bidding on the land. It prevented the taxpayers and the—of Manitoba to get value for their assets worth millions of dollars. It deprived the neighbourhood from having its say, because the deal was done long before it became—came to the floor of the House or to the city council.

Apparently, there's a letter from the MLA from Kirkfield Park triggering the process with the City of Winnipeg. But he won't produce the letter. Perhaps he should publish it. Maybe we should make it mandatory to publish all these types of letters in the newspaper. But we certainly should not take away the various communication vehicles to notify the public about important government transactions.

Now, people say, well, that's not in my neighbourhood. Well, the next one will be. Inevitably, all Manitobans will be affected by the shadiness of this government bill, the lack of transparency and accountability. Just—the government should withdraw the whole thing.

Madam Speaker: I neglected to mention that the report stage amendment is in order.

Are there any further speakers on debate?

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I would like to support this amendment. And I would like to extend further reasons why it should be published—the notice should be published, because something—sometimes they should—also should be published in the ethnic newspapers. And those newspapers, especially when they are published in another language other than French and English, because new immigrants—or, immigrants, they sometimes don't have that much command on the English or French and they don't understand the—what's happening around them.

* (15:00)

So it's important that—those notices also should be put in the ethnic newspapers, especially if they are not in English and—not published in English or French. And I support this amendment, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this amendment?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the first amendment to Bill 8, related to clause 5(3).

Is the pleasure of the House to adopt the report stage amendment? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

I declare the subamendment lost—the amendment lost.

* * *

Madam Speaker: We will now move, then, to the next amendment, and it is a grouping of amendments.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux),

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 7.

That Bill 8 be amended by—oh, sorry? *[interjection]* Oh—I move, seconded by the member for Burrows,

That Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 8—oh, 7, sorry. *[interjection]* No, and—just one at a time? I thought I'm doing them all together. *[interjection]* Oh? One at a time? *[interjection]* Carry on?

I move, second by the member for Burrows,

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 8.

I move, seconded by the member for Burrows,

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 9.

I move, seconded by the member for Burrows,

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 18.

I move, seconded by the member for Burrows,
THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 19.

I move, seconded by the member for Burrows
(Ms. Lamoureux),
THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 22.

And, I move, seconded by the member for
Burrows,
THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 24.

Motions presented.

Madam Speaker: The amendments are in order.

Mr. Lamont: These particular amendments make it that more clear the severity and threat that this bill poses to the public's right to know.

I do have to disagree with the minister when she says that this is just legislation that's been followed elsewhere, in terms of modernization. It's one thing to put the Gazette online in a place where it's available; it's another thing to withdraw it from public view in newspapers where it was published.

And I think it's important if—that everyone in the House know, if they don't already, that the government has said that they will not proclaim certain parts of this bill.

And, basically, what we've said is that if they're not going to proclaim those parts of this bill, that those parts of the bill shouldn't be in it, and that they should be removed. It doesn't make sense to pass bills or pass parts of bills which the government says, trust me, we have no intention of passing these, when in—when they reserve the right to do so.

And it certainly—you start to see how serious these issues are when it comes to the things that are—will no longer require to be disclosed publicly in newspapers. The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act is an interesting—and I hope that maybe the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) will correct me if I'm wrong—but it actually allows the criminals—the seizure of property not just associated with people who have had a criminal conviction, but occasionally people who've not been—had a criminal conviction.

This type of law was actually—existed in Alabama where it was withdrawn because it was found to be contrary to people's rights, because you're taking people's property when they haven't actually been found guilty of something.

So it is the fact that we already have a law on the books which is in a grey area as far as

people's constitutional rights are concerned and the government is now proposing withdrawing public notices related to it.

When it comes—that's clause 7, and that's one of the challenges. If you normally—if the government were to start a forfeiture process against a property, they have to publish the details in the newspapers, that would no longer take place.

When it comes to clause 8, clause 8 is covered by ecological reserves, and selling reserve land—so this is one of the—another one of these challenges is that ecological reserve lands could be sold without notification, and I would note one of the things that occurs in the new mandate letters is that one of the ministers has been instructed to step up the sale of publicly owned lands.

So that's an unfortunate combination if they say, well, we're going to start selling off lands as well as reducing notice about their availability. And that's—and, again, these are ecological reserves. Right now, the bill states, "reserve lands may not sold. Land that is designated as an ecological reserve shall not be sold or transferred unless, before the sale or transfer, the designation is removed."

And again, when it comes to issues like climate change and this government's green plan, one of the most important things that needs to be done is that we need to have more wilderness and more ecological reserves and not fewer.

So the idea that we're going to be removing designation from these lands and selling them off without adequate notice, and that's basically what the entire problem with this bill is, it's all being done without adequate notice.

Another clause is clause 9, which is the endangered species and ecosystems. Basically, it would allow the government to create or remove or change regulations for ecosystem preservation zones without notification or without adequate notification, which means less notice for people wanting to make written submissions to the minister.

And one of the things I would note, had we—as we've been sitting at committee and members of the government's side, including various ministers, I think have rightly said that we have exceptional process in this province when it comes to the committee process when people—when people from all across Manitoba can come across—can come to committee and speak and present directly to ministers and directly to MLAs about their concerns.

However, we have an instance where people actually are going to have less notice to be able to do that. And, again, this is something I do think—I genuinely think this is against the government's own interests to be introducing this bill because when it turns out that things have been done or that things have been announced or decisions have been made without public notice, without adequate public notice, that the public are going to be angered by it.

And that one of the fundamental challenges with governing today at all is loss of—is, sort of, a loss of authority and respect for institutions in government because—in part, because political parties over the years have made promises they haven't kept but also because governments have not been open enough and transparent enough and let people know, and we're at a time when there is growing engagement and growing interest in people making sure that government does what it says it will do.

When it comes to clause 18, that is The Public Health Act. And again—so now it would seem that the government no longer has to publicize the public health advisory or service on a large number of persons.

Here too, this is—I was recently reading an article in the U of M alumni magazine with a distinguished professor emeritus. I think his name's Vaclav Smil, who is one of the—he's a thought leader, but he's also a great inspiration to Bill Gates. He's written a number of books that—Bill Gates describes him as one of his greatest thinkers.

* (15:10)

And one of his concerns is that we're unprepared for pandemics and infectious diseases. We tend to have shortfalls when it comes to emergency systems. I used to work at a place called the International Centre for Infectious Diseases, where we briefed small businesses on preparation for flu and of the risks that—what could happen if a particularly—if the—when the H1N1 virus came through Canada and posed a risk to businesses and to the economy.

And the idea that we're no longer going to have to publicize public health advisories, which can—when we have huge numbers of boil water advisories and other kind of public health outbreaks, whether they're sexually transmitted diseases or others, are a serious concern.

Clause 19 is The Public Schools Act. Now, once again, we have to—the—we no longer have adequate notice about altering boundaries by the minister,

transferring school lands, amalgamations of divisions of school districts and that, in the case of French language services, that a francophone program be transferred from a provider school board to the francophone school board, and who—to ensure that there are premises in which to provide that francophone program, that a school be transferred from the provider school board to the francophone school board, either for the exclusive use of the francophone school board, or the subject of the right of the provider's school board to share the use of the school.

Once again, there are a number of issues here. The previous government had created a framework for consultation with the francophone community, which was signed by the current government but which, ultimately, has not been followed through on, that there were important messages—that they're important consultations with the francophone community that haven't happened, when it comes to the dismantling of the Bureau de l'éducation française. And I know that people are extremely frustrated about it.

They've been unable to meet—I don't know that they've met with the Minister of Education yet, but people in the francophone community are extremely upset with the changes that have been made, and this is all happening while the government is supposed to be planning a K-to-12 review on education.

So all of this accompanies major plans or major changes, reports that are being prepared by the government with the intention of bringing forward changes, which, if this bill passes, will not have to be announced or made public.

The Securities Act is also a serious question. One of the strange aspects about Canada's—the way Canada's regulatory system is made up is that securities are not federally regulated.

We have provincial regulation across Canada. I know I had a visit from IIROC who were looking to change and update and harmonize regulations across Canada so that we had a single securities regulation across the country.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And the reason this is a huge problem is that the—is that we don't have standards, and basically, as IIROC explained it for the Manitoba Securities Commission, they only actually end up having rules for people who follow the rules. If people are—and they don't have regulations with investigatory powers

or powers of enforcement when it comes to securities, so that if somebody is a licensed securities dealer, if they've completed the Canadian Securities Course, they can be punished. They can be—they can have sanctions held against them.

But, if somebody is not, if somebody is selling securities without a licence, without being qualified, if they are putting investors at risk, they could be cheating people out of their life savings—that those people are—fall outside of the issue with the Manitoba Securities Commission.

This is incredibly serious when we consider there is plenty of white-collar fraud, and especially when it comes to securities. And this is an area where we need more notice and more transparency and better regulation, not less.

IIROC was absolutely clear about that, with a hope that they were going to be able to bring forward regulations that will be harmonized across the country. Because we've seen—again, there are all sorts of problems and a complete lack of enforcement. When it comes to the issue, say, of the Crocus fund, it was a bit like the Murder on the Orient Express.

There's—every—it seemed to be that everybody who's involved ended up being responsible for it in some way, and there's been a real reluctance to look into or inquire into that debacle, but it cost the public \$50 million. There are still investors who have—whose lost money and have yet to be compensated and we never really go to the bottom of what went wrong.

And because that never happened, we ended up never actually addressing it. We never ended up—because there was no inquiry, because nothing was looked into deeply enough, the result was that we don't have a securities framework in Manitoba that can deal adequately with these issues.

The last issue is the question of Surveys Act, which is that there's no newspapers—no notice in newspapers of planting a survey monument where rights are affected. This is—may seem fairly minor, but I will mention that I believe the PC Party website talks about the importance of property rights and other rights.

So we need to be cautious when it comes to that, when it comes to the fact that we're not—'exain', we're ignoring rights; we're providing inadequate notice.

Once again, these—this bill has—again, far as I can tell, has had no public support whatsoever. It's

had angry support from the Manitoba newspapers who have insisted that their interest in this is not—has nothing to do with money, because when you spread out the amount of money across the—'agross' the province, it doesn't actually affect their bottom line that much. It's really about their belief and their—I think, their absolutely correct belief that part of their role is challenging politicians of all stripes, but especially the politicians in power, to be open and to be transparent about what they are doing. And this bill absolutely fails at that.

It is a serious concern. In particular—right now, we live in an age where there's lots of—where newspapers actually are under threat in a number of ways that—of all the industries that have been hurt by job losses over the last 20 years, newspapers have—one of the ones that's been hit the very hardest. And there is no replacement for a strong and independent media that has the resources and the ability to stand up and speak truth to power. And that's absolutely critical.

And to conceal that information, which is, I think, really what's happening—I think to say, well, we have it on our website, and it's going to be there, is not adequate enough. The thing about information is you can't be passive about it. It has to be driven out. It has to be actively pushed out to the public for them to be aware.

We can't take for granted that people will just, on their own, go to a website and see what's happening with securities or whatever else, or leave it up to—it has to be an active—it has to be something active that government is actively doing, and they have to be—it's an obligation to the public to actively inform them what the government is doing, whether the government really even wants it—wants that to be known or not. That's—whether the government of the day or the politicians of the day want it to be known or not.

And I do—I will just voice one other concern, which it come—which comes to another one of the mandate letters, which is to review—which, again, is to review advertising spending when it comes to government.

Now, I know that people are concerned and have been concerned about the partisan abuse of advertising on the part of government. However, there are all sorts of notices that are absolutely critical that will only come from government. Whether it's about public health, whether it's warning people, educating people, encouraging people to get

flu shots, there are all sorts of public services that can and should be done, and can only really be done by government and can't be picked up by the private sector.

But the other is that I do have a concern when it comes to the quality of information that's available—and there are a number of people who've written about this—that when it comes to newspapers and independent newspapers and independent, accountable media—people with publishers, whether it a real person with an address, who are ultimately responsible for whatever's being printed—they take a lot more care in what they're printing than lots of people on the Internet, where there's lots of—there really is—there are people who generate fake news, but there are lots of people who don't have that same kind of accountability.

And I said—I told this to the—when I spoke to the—at the dinner for the Manitoba community newspapers, that they're—in a sense, that that accountable speech is premium. It's—it costs money; it costs shoe leather; it costs time, and reporters have to double-check and corroborate stories.

And they have to print paper and they have to pay for ink and everything else. That there are huge costs associated with this that are real costs, but ultimately they're the costs that have to be—that are absolutely necessary.

And that role of letting people know, of having an engaged citizenship or having people knowing about what's happening in their community, is something that can't be just replaced with—cannot just be replaced with a website. It has to be something that's active and driven out into the community.

* (15:20)

And, finally, I mean, one of the other issues is just in terms of public awareness—is that it is extremely difficult in many areas of Manitoba to access Internet. My family has a place near Rosburn and we have to drive 15 minutes to get our email because there's—you can't even get a radio signal, much less a cellphone signal.

So there are huge parts of Manitoba which have low or no Internet coverage. That's—it's true of the North, it's true of fly-in First Nations, it's true everywhere, and we're doing a huge disservice to the people of Manitoba by denying them access to this information.

Putting it online is fine as a step. That is the one thing that actually everyone agreed with it, but, again, I don't know that there was a single witness who approached this or who has spoken on this and has said that it was worth doing.

So, again, I hope that—I hope that the government will consider—will reconsider. I hope—they've already acknowledged that this is a bill with extremely serious problems in it, that if you're not going to proclaim it, there's no point in passing that—those particular sections and there's no point in essentially hanging that over the heads of the public and the newspapers that are involved.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable Mr. Gerrard—member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to say a few words on the record on this—these actually several report stage amendments because, when put together, they are an assault—the lack of these amendments is an assault on democracy. It is unbelievable that this government would stoop so low to take away the right and privilege of citizens in Manitoba to receive information in their local community newspaper.

We know that community newspapers are read by a large proportion of people in their communities. We know that this is the place where people go to get information on what is happening and what the government is doing and where there are items which have a particular impact on individuals in the community.

We know that people will not always be able to find this on the Internet. There are trillions and trillions and trillions of pieces of information on the Internet. It is not even like looking for a needle in a haystack; it is like looking for a bacteria, a single bacteria, in a haystack to try and get information, and we need to make information easier to get.

And the problem is that a lot of people will not be looking. They will not be looking. They will expect, as they have had for many years, that they will have a government which is going to put this information in their community newspaper where they can find it easily and that's where they will look for it and that's where they should be able to find it.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Let us look at some of the amendments that we're talking about. These amendments are badly,

badly needed. The government is proposing that where there is a significant change to the ecosystem where they live or near where they live, that the government will no longer have to put that significant change that they are proposing into the local community newspaper.

For all of us who live in today's world where the environment is important, where ecosystems are important, they are the fundamental space in which we live, but this government would take away the advertising of changes to our ecosystems from community newspapers.

This government would take away the advertising in community newspapers of public health information, public health awareness related to—it might be boiled water advisories; it might be conditions related to what people should be doing when there is a flu epidemic; it might, in climate change, be some new disease that they need to create awareness of. It might be a disease that—or a condition that we're already dealing with, but we're not dealing with adequately, like diabetes.

And yet this government would take away from the student—from the citizens of Manitoba, from people who are living in Manitoba, from Manitobans, the right to have such critical information in their local community newspaper.

And that is not all. One of these amendments deals with information which deals with The Public Schools Act, and changes in our schools. What can be more important to most people—maybe not the Conservatives—but to most people than information about the schools, where their children are going to school?

You know, think about it. There was—something happened at the school—good or bad—but it may be a situation where it's really important that the parents know about it and that they have some detail, not just a—10 seconds on a radio or TV. They need to have the detail where they can see it and read it and understand it and know exactly what's going to happen.

You know, if something untoward—it wasn't long ago there was an unfortunate incident at Kelvin school where a young man died. And, surely, under such conditions, it would be vital that there be the ability of a public health officer to put information in the local newspaper. And people are looking for that. They're used to that. And yet this government is going to take away the democratic right of people to

be informed in a way that they can easily find and enough detail that they can make sense of it and in enough detail and in a place that they know it's credible.

Too often, we get information—false news, fake news. People need to know when something is credible. And yet the government is going to take away that right of Manitobans to get information in a way that they know is credible and with the right kind of detail that they should have. Shame on this government.

There's going to be changes to The Securities Act. Madam Speaker, I have dealt, on a number of occasions, with people who invested their life savings, and, because they had somebody helping them who was either misinformed or misguided or even fraudulent, they lost a substantial portion of their life savings.

Think about this: people are preparing for their retirement. They have worked very, very hard. They have scraped to put the dollars away. Day by day, they have saved. And they have put that away for their retirement.

And then, all of a sudden, because there's a securities problem, they lost a lot of what they had put away. And the people that I've talked to were not people who are super well off. They were just ordinary Manitobans.

It is vital that there be the ability of our securities regulators to put information out when there are problems under The Securities Act. And it is vital that people should have that information in their local community newspapers.

*(15:30)

Surveys, property rights, you know, it's really important that wherever a person lives in Manitoba that this kind of information is available to them in their local community newspaper. It's where they have come to expect it, know that it's reliable, comes with a stamp of the provincial government. May not be perfect, but at least it is, for that time, the best that can be done.

And yet, this government is now going to do away with that right that the citizens of Manitoba have had for a long, long time. This is wrong. I hope that all MLAs will stand up and support these report stage amendments because they are really important for the democratic rights of ordinary Manitobans.

Merci.

Mrs. Cox: I wanted to reiterate again, and not sure if the member was there at the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association gala earlier this year when we stated that we are not going to proclaim those sections of the act that indicate that it's not necessary to advertise in newspapers. So that will continue status quo, same as—has it—sorry—has it—as it always has been, Madam Speaker. There will be no change at all.

And, you know, the member talks about Internet, and I'd like to remind him as well that our government invested an additional \$20 million in broad band Internet so that there is better and improved Internet for individuals in the North, individuals in northern Manitoba who, right now, are maybe, you know, seeing difficulty accessing the Internet. We're also going to ensure that rural Manitobans have access to the Internet.

So, you know, we're looking at modernizing the way we're doing things, but we also realize that not every individual has Internet, so we have indicated that we are not going to proclaim those sections right now.

Ms. Marcelino: There were at least three, or could even be four, presenters at the last committee hearings, who, in a respectful manner, lambasted this government for that particular statement that there'll be no date for which this bill will be enacted. And, to them, that is a huge, like, sword of Damocles hanging over their heads because no one knows. Right now there is no date set, and then suddenly, with winds changing, the minister or the Premier (Mr. Pallister) might say, oh, we need to put a date on this anyway. So they were so forceful to say that this is no comfort for us that you're not declaring a certain date.

But anyway, my colleagues, both the member from St. Boniface and member from River Heights, have well articulated at great lengths the justification for bringing forth these report stage amendments to Bill 8 by striking several clauses. I think I've recorded 8, 9, 18, 19, 22 and 24. We on this side of the House concur with these amendments because we support that Manitobans should have open, transparent and democratic government.

We believe that Manitoba families should see important public notices in the most accessible way possible. Regardless of the broadband being increased, coming to town soon, still, people are comfortable with community newspapers. The people behind the community newspapers have

interacted and have personal relationships with community members, so they patronize community newspapers and it's hard to minimize that relationship.

So why not do it online, as some presenters have said, but don't remove it from community newspapers as well, those notices. So we, on this side of the House, concur with these amendments.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, I wasn't planning on speaking to this amendment until I heard the minister actually get up and give her explanation of why they wouldn't be supporting this amendment.

In his comments, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) referred to me in reference to The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. And I just want to spend a moment talking about how the government's plan would impact The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act.

The forfeiture act is actually a very good piece of legislation. It uses civil remedies to try to take away the proceeds of crime or proceeds which are derived because of criminal conduct. And it's a very wide-ranging bill, which I know the new government accepts.

I know that because just the other day, when I came back from the Crime Prevention Breakfast, when a local lawyer, Mike Cook, spoke very passionately about what crystal methamphetamine does to people, I saw the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) out in front with the new van that was purchased with the forfeiture proceeds.

It's a good bill, but it also relies on the government acting in good faith to make sure they give notice to parties who may be affected. So for example, at the present time, if the government wants to actually forfeit property and keep the proceeds by selling it, they have to advertise to make sure there's nobody else out there that might have an interest in the property, someone who says they loaned the person money or they have an interest or some claim against the property. At the present time, there has to be an advertisement, and lawyers know where to look for these; other people know where to look for these. And this amendment would actually no longer require those notices to be posted in the paper and require somebody to go and then find it in the Manitoba Gazette.

We're not so concerned, frankly, about people who do break the law and get property illegally, but

it's other people who may be innocent parties who could very well be affected by this. And it really struck me, and I know it struck everyone on this side of the House, as very, very strange when the minister got up and said, well, we know those are problematic, we just won't proclaim those into force.

Well, what does that mean? If the bill passes without taking up these amendments, we're going to have a partially implemented bill, but the rest of the bill could be implemented any time that the Cabinet decides that they want to go and bring these sections into force.

And what does that mean? Well, frankly, it means we're going to be reliant on the whims of a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who so far has proven himself very, very prepared to take on fights with the media when they've been trying to report issues that are of concern to Manitobans.

And I will remind members that it wasn't that long ago that, when the Winnipeg Free Press was publishing information they had received about the Premier's failure to pay luxury taxes he owed in Costa Rica, the Premier's response was to threaten to sue the Winnipeg Free Press.

I will also remind members that when questions were being asked by the media about the past conduct of the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), the response of the Premier's staff was to threaten the media with legal action if they went ahead and reported the story.

We know that the media did not back down. We know how that turned out. It is very, very concerning, I think, for the newspaper industry, which is why they've been so vocal about this, but concerning for us, as legislators, but I think concerns, as well, for all Manitobans, that this bill, according to the minister, should simply pass and they will decide when and if they ever decide to bring those sections into force, which wouldn't require notice.

Cabinet does not publish, before they meet, a list of topics they'll be discussing, nor do we ever expect they will.

An Honourable Member: Won't even be in a community newspaper.

Mr. Swan: Well, as the member from River Heights said, it certainly won't be in a community newspaper.

It is actually quite concerning. And even in her comments today, the minister said, well, we're not going to be moving ahead with those things right

now. And if we look at Hansard tomorrow, you will see the minister saying that. We're not going to do this right now.

* (15:40)

Will they do it next week? Next month? Next year? Next time the media publishes or threatens to publish a story which is critical of the Premier or the government? Is that when the government is then going to bring these sections into force?

The only reasonable thing the government can do, if they truly believe that the sections that are being spoken about do not have value, is to agree to these amendments, withdraw these sections, and, if they ever decide that the playing field has changed and these are now appropriate, they ought to come back to the House and then seek further changes.

So, for those reasons, as my colleague, the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) has put on the record, our NDP caucus will be supporting this and the other amendments brought forward by the Liberal Party.

Thank you.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, where are the Tories? Send in the Tories. Because there are no Tories to be seen.

Madam Speaker, the Tories that I remember—that I have such fond memories of, believed in transparency, accountability, freedom of the press, because Tories believe that those principles over time are what is best for society.

Now, there's a difference between Tories and conservatives, and conservatives and Republicans, and, definitely, Tories and Republicans. But Tories have principles, pillars that they believe in. Queen and country is one. Representing constituents is another and freedom of the press.

Now, we all have a love-hate relationship with the press. But that's the way it ought to be.

Madam Speaker, the government is either saying, (a) that nobody reads the community newspapers and therefore should not be used to notify the public, or (b) that people do read community newspapers and that the public does not need to be notified. It's one or the other.

Both are bad. Very bad. Not consistent with the Toryism that Wilberforce and others have been so involved in, or Edmund Burke, my favourite—the first Tory.

And, as the last Tory in this place, I will point out a hypocrisy of this government. They say, no, nobody reads the community newspapers, so we don't need to post it in the community—well, if we follow that logic, Madam Speaker, perhaps every MLA in this place, particularly government members, should stop advertising in community newspapers.

Stop using the taxpayer funds to advertise for themselves. Stop advertising in community newspapers. No more advertising using taxpayer money because, according to the government, nobody reads the news. Oh, wait a second, they do read the newspaper. They do read community newspapers, and that is why MLAs put ads in the community newspapers.

Would it be acceptable to spend taxpayer money on ads about MLAs that were not read by the public? Or put in our contact information? We do that so the government—or, so that MLAs are able to communicate with the constituents. Well, that's what we're supposed to be doing.

Oh, and when the constituents come to committee and say, oh, the government's doing something bad here, the government doesn't listen. I would think that most of us have had people in our offices say that this bill, as is, is bad. Please make these amendments, and if you don't make the amendments, withdraw the bill.

So Madam Speaker, I will call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly management committee to deny the ability of MLAs to advertise in community newspapers because that's what the government is essentially doing. It's—there's no value in it, so then—don't use taxpayer money to advertise yourselves.

Advertising yourself, that's okay, but it's not okay to advertise changes in school zoning, or The Securities Act, or if your co-op is registered or not, or if there's going to be changes in the ecological reserve near your home. Like, that is crazy and hypocritical.

Now, the minister is an 'integrous' person and has given assurances that the government will not enact. Well, why pass it in the first place? And quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I don't think we're concerned that this minister will or will not keep her word. I think she will, but ministers are not there forever, and we've seen this government flip-flop on much more substantive public financial situations.

The carbon tax: the Province of Manitoba agreed with the federal government in principle on the carbon tax, and then they didn't. That's a pretty big flip-flop. How do we know they're not going to flip-flop on this legislation when it's so easy to do?

A Cabinet shuffle, a sign on—a signature behind closed doors, and all of a sudden, every community newspaper has a guillotine—or actually they have a guillotine right now above their heads, but if this legislation passes, community newspapers will be guillotined. I'm not sure if that's the word, but the people, the newspapers, will be going around headless. It's like zombie newspapers. Is that what the government wants?

Was just Halloween. It's Guy Fawkes Day. Maybe that's what the government wants. Just headless newspapers, just droning along, not informing the public—and by the way, where's the accountability and transparency? Come on, Madam Speaker. Conservatives, in the Canadian tradition, Tories, were the ones that bring forward transparency and accountability, or we at least try—some of us do.

And we could get into issues around conflict of interest, which the government continues to dodge and 'sweeve' and avoid. How long I've been—ever since I got here as an MLA I've been trying to bring forward legislation on that issue and the government avoids that accountability as well.

It's—these—this bill is simply a pattern of denying responsibility, avoiding responsibility, making sure that there's no accountability. What would be very helpful is if the minister would table a letter guaranteeing all the commitments that she has made that this will not be enacted, this will not be enacted, this will not be enacted. And then at least when they do enact them we can say, ah, here, we told you so.

*(15:50)

Kind of like what happened with the carbon tax; they didn't listen to me. They tried to get it both ways, but I told them so—it was an unsustainable position, yet they flip-flopped. And they'll flip-flop on this, except, in this case, people won't notice, because they won't be reading about it in their community newspapers; they'll just have these full-page ads of their MLAs saying, here we are; we believe you look at community newspapers; that's why we're using taxpayer dollars to put our faces and our address and our names in the paper, but be it in

the public interest or not, we're not going to tell you what's going on.

Withdraw the bill.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this amendment?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: We will now do a series of questions related to each of the amendments.

The question before the House is the second amendment related to Bill 8 and related to clause 7, brought forward by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition (Mr. Lamont).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (Second Opposition House Leader): On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On division. The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the third report stage amendment on Bill 8, moved by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, and it relates to clause 8.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Moving, then, to the next amendment, the question before the House is the fourth report stage amendment on Bill 8, brought forward by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, and this is related to clause 9.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the report stage amendment? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the ninth report stage amendment on Bill 8, brought forward by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, and this one is related to clause 18.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the report stage amendment? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the 10th report stage amendment on Bill 8, moved by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition (Mr. Lamont), and this is related to clause 19.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the report stage amendment? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the 11th report stage amendment on Bill 8, moved by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, and this is related to clause 22.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the report stage amendment? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: We will now move and have the question before the House on amendment No. 12, the 12th report stage amendment on Bill 8, moved by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, and this one is related to clause 24.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the report stage amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, on division.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

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Madam Speaker: Moving now to the next group of amendments.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 10.

I move, seconded by the member for River Heights,

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 14.

And I move, seconded by the member for River Heights,

THAT Bill 8 be amended by striking out Clause 27.

Motions presented.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—the amendments are in order.

Mr. Lamont: Once again, all the same criticisms stand, Madam Speaker. And one of the questions we've asked of the government is what—the rationale for this. And the argument is that it's modernization. But to strip away something that's been happening for decades is not necessarily progress. The idea that it's modernization because—just because it's on the Internet and that we're not actively pushing it out to the people who actually need to know about the decisions of the government—or is being made. It really actually risks pitting Manitoban against Manitoban in a way, I think, that just—it—just really unfortunate.

There have been suggestions in some of these—that—from people who are against development when it comes to—the hog industry, for example, that some of these—that there are changes in The Environment Act or changes in zoning that make it easier for hog barns to grow, and that this—now that has people who are concerned about hog barns can—protesting. And, in some cases, when these are not amendments that the—that favour the hog industry and the hog industry themselves don't want to see them.

I mean, part of this is that—one of the reasons for providing this kind of notice is so that people can make informed decisions. It's an absolute cornerstone of democracy that people—that citizens need to be informed about what their government is doing. But they also need to be informed in a way so that they can plan, they can respond and they can have input in a meaningful way into what the government is doing in a way that isn't a surprise. And that, frankly, is one of the big challenges because I don't think it's going—we're going to have adequate notice, and it—and really, this is an instance where the onus is on the government to actively get these messages into the hands of Manitobans. And too often, that hasn't been happening.

Again, the mandate letters suggest that this government should be reviewing advertising spending. And advertising spending—there are all sorts of different ways to reach people. And there—it is an—incredibly important to be able to support Manitoba businesses, Manitoba newspapers that have independence and the kind of credibility that a lot of online platforms simply do not have.

I had the opportunity recently to meet with a law professor at a breakfast dedicated to equality. And she's a professor at the University of Ottawa. She

was the victim of an online smear campaign, and one of the things she talked about were the challenges of inaccurate information on social media. So what she—and part of it is to achieve what we can in order to be able to achieve greater accountability which simply doesn't exist on the Internet.

* (16:00)

It really—it's not to say that newspapers and other forms of so-called traditional media always get everything right. They don't. But they are accountable, and if they make mistakes you can find out who they are and you can hold them to account. And that's part of what's so important. And it's an irreplaceable part of our democracy that I think is seriously at risk.

There are all sorts of areas in which Manitobans have a right to engage and have an opportunity to engage, but they can only do that if they're adequately informed ahead of time. The committee structure, as it stands, is very positive in many ways. It allows people to come and speak to people, but the fact that there are only 48 hours notice can be a challenge in terms of access. For example, we had a presenter who was talking about the challenges of access because—for people with disabilities—because with only 48 hours notice for a committee, it can be difficult for somebody to also—to book transportation if they have special—or if they need special requirements when it comes to transportation.

And that's part of what this is all about. It's about people's ability to contribute and to be engaged and to know what is happening in their neighbourhood and to know what is happening in their community.

As a democratic process that stretches beyond this—beyond the walls of this Chamber, it is extremely serious and I can't—I cannot understand any legitimate reason for moving forward with this legislation as written because of the clauses that are covered. Clause 10 is The Environment Act. Once again, one of the most important—the very—the pillars of this government right now is their—is what they're proceeding on in terms of climate change and their made-in-Manitoba green act. The fact is that there are going—they're—they will no longer have to make—give—provide adequate notice to hold public hearings on the environment.

So, upon—what normally happens is that, under clause 7.1—or clause 10(7.1), upon receipt of a proposal and a request from the minister to hold public meetings or hearings respecting a proposed

development, the commission shall notify the proponent and shall, by advertisement in such newspaper or other media as the commission deems fit, give notice of the proposal, its intentions to hold meetings or hearings and the dates, times, and locations of such meetings or hearings, and the date for receipt of notice for presentation of a submission in the names and number of Class 1 proposals, Class 2 developments, Class 3 developments, and public hearing by commission, or abatement projects. And that will no—those—we will no longer have to adequately notify the 'plubic' about public hearings under The Environment Act.

The Human Rights Code, which is clause 14, I will no longer have to publicly—will no longer have to publish hearing notifications. And The Water Protection Act, which is clause 27, there will be—no longer have to have adequate notice of water quality management zone regulation changes.

And, again, we're talking about absolutely essential parts of our environment, absolutely essential parts of our communities that affect the lives of everyone. They affect the lives of absolutely everyone when we're talking the environment. There's an idea that the environment is something that happens out there, that it's something else outside of our yard; it's something else outside of the city, that it's something else external to us when it is the environment we live in, it is the life we live; it is our neighbourhoods, and these can all be affected.

What is even more of concern is that these are all regulations that are being stripped away in part following a huge amount of loss of protections to—under the federal waterways protection act. And we're talking about, under The Water Protection Act, I'll read it—the whereases: that an abundant supply of high-quality water is essential to sustain all ecological processes and so on; we have to have sufficient, safe, acceptable and affordable water; that the government of Manitoba recognizes the importance of the Canada-United States Boundary Waters Treaty and 'interderjurisdictional' agreements protecting water. Water is the most—is—there is no replacement for water in—for everything it does. It powers our hydro; if we drink it—we—it's—for the animals and plants that we grow in agriculture that we depend on.

The fact that we're suggesting removing protections from this is foolhardy and dangerous because, ultimately, one of the fundamental premises of this government, I think, has been that they want

to compete on the basis that we have low wages and that we have low taxes and we have low protections. The fact is that's a race to the bottom and it's a fool's errand.

What we should be trying to compete on are things like—is things that are the best and not just the lowest. And the—it is quite incredible. And one of the—I recently had an interaction with an—with a—with residents who were concerned about notices when it came to public notices about the environment in St. Boniface. And there is, in fact, a major fire happening in St. Boniface right now. And I want to say that I hope that all the first responders and everybody is safe. There's a fire burning out of control at a seed plant.

And—but the industrial park at St. Boniface is home to a whole series of hazardous waste—of sites where hazardous 'wates' is handled, M3 heavy industrial sites, and this government has—on a daily basis, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) repeats that the green plan is going to commit to a whole series of important measures, and this undermines all of them, because it actually means that any of these measures that are going to be undertaken are basically going to be swept under the rug or held back from members of the public.

And again, these are some of the most important things in—that we're going to have deal with. And I will repeat the issue that I don't think this is good—it is good for the government to bring this forward. I think, ultimately, one of the challenges is if people are surprised by changes that they didn't know were coming, and it turns out that some change has been made in any one of the areas under amendment—public schools, securities, surveys, water protection, highways, ecological reserves, the list—endangered species and ecosystems—is that people are going to be denied the opportunity or feel that they have been denied the opportunity to contribute and that it is going to cause more tension. And it'll actually make discussion and development harder to happen because people will suspect that there's something going on even when you might have people trying to act in good faith. But the government has felt that we don't—that the public does not have to be alerted or need to know what's going on.

So, once again, Madam Speaker, I—despite the fact that the members opposite have voted against the previous amendments, I hope you will take this seriously. I do think that this is a serious breach of our obligations, our democratic obligations to keep

the public informed and to keep the public educated and to keep the public engaged and able to contribute to building our—a better province.

And, ultimately, I would encourage the members opposite to vote against it, because, ultimately, I believe if they fail to do so, it will backfire.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to raise a few additional points on this particular—or these particular report stage amendments. I want to talk briefly about the impact of not having information on The Environment Act.

Many people who are concerned about their community, concerned about themselves, want to have information. When there is public meetings on The Environment Act, they want to have public health information related to what's happening in the environment and the community.

Let me discuss. I mean, there's some recent information about lead levels—high lead levels—in Weston, in St. Boniface. You know, it's apparent that not only does accurate information need to get to people in the community, but people need to be informed at community meetings. People need to know what to do. They are wondering, they are saying, well, you know, there was results which show that there were very high lead levels in 1988. That information has been hidden by consecutive governments for 30 years.

People need to have a government which is ready to be open, to end this era of cover-up and make sure that the information is there for people, and to make sure people know, you know, what do we do? Can we eat the vegetables in our garden? What do we have to do so that what we plant next year is okay if what we planted last year is not? These are pretty fundamental and close-to-home kind of issues, and it's pretty important that there be public information on this.

* (16:10)

We in the Manitoba Liberal Party don't buy the minister's statement that she won't proclaim them. The problem with this is she leaves it open to proclaim this—these parts in the middle of the night, when nobody knows. She could realize that there's a problematic hearing coming up in Weston, where there's a lot of people concerned, and they're going to have to let people know. Well, the day before they have to let people know, they could pass this—

implement this, and the next day they could decide that there won't be public notices in newspapers on this important meeting because they don't want to draw attention to it.

That's not fair, Madam Speaker. That's not normal democracy. That's not what we should be doing in this Chamber. We need to preserve and make sure that citizens in this province—Manitobans in this province—have access to that public information as they have so often had in the past.

Let us talk about—Water Protection Act. Again, this is—water is one of the most fundamental components to life. If we're not going to be able to find out about what is happening in our own community under The Water Protection Act, that's a pretty sad and sorry state of affairs, Madam Speaker. That's not acceptable.

We need to pass these report stage amendments.

Last weekend, I listened very carefully to the words of Stedman Graham. And he talked about identity leadership. He talked about knowing who you are. We thought—when they campaigned, we thought, traditionally, Tories were accountable, sometimes open. But, obviously, we are now finding out the real identity of people in the Tory government. They are not open; they are not accountable. They are putting in place bills so that they can implement measures in the middle of the night without anybody knowing.

Stedman was talking about who you are. Identity leadership—know who you are and then act on those principles. Maybe these are the principles of which you stand, of what the government stands, that is, not advertising, not letting people know, not making sure that there is a good, solid democracy in this province.

And the government might do this—might do this—because it wants to contain costs, because it thinks it's less expensive. But it is my belief, Madam Speaker, that if that's what they're thinking, they could be very wrong. We've had many situations in the past where decisions were made which led to tremendous liabilities in the future. It could—a government could be sued for not letting people know, but—not putting it in community newspapers. There could be a big lawsuit, could cost multi-millions of dollars. It makes no sense to think of this as a cost-saving matter.

What we are talking about in this report stage amendment is a very fundamental aspect of democracy as we know it in Manitoba, and I hope all

MLAs will support this. I hope the government will reconsider, come back and support this—this amendment, which deals with making sure that Manitobans have access to critical information that they need on the environment and water protection and other matters.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Marcelino: My esteemed colleague from River Heights made mention of important notices that could have been missed, and specifically stated it could be notices related to the environment—very important—or water protection.

I and others—I—right now, I am thinking there are many, many notices that could have been missed, one of which is maybe zoning-related notices. What if a business would like to come to town, a small town, and set up a business which—you know, we're in a free country; anyone with entrepreneurial spirit, resources, could—there's no limit to what kind of business, so long as it's legal and appropriate. But what if—and right now cannabis is already legal. What if a business person wants to set up shop in a rural area, and, of course, there should be public notice, and there was notice the kind of business that was to be set up is, for people to buy this newly legalized substance?

If it were acceptable to residents, they should say so, these residents. And, if not, they should also speak loudly against it. But how can they do that if there's no sufficient notice or they didn't have access to such a notice? What's a Manitoba Gazette? Is it that well known in the community that people would regularly and judiciously monitor what's in the Gazette?

Again, these amendments are in order, and this amendment should be seriously considered by our colleagues across the way. Many, many presenters have mentioned they are speaking against this bill not because they're businesses, those in—with community newspaper—in the community newspaper business, not because they're raking profits out of notices from the government.

Many community newspapers—and I've spoken to some who are in this business—are barely making both ends meet, yet they do still do this business because they feel the sense of service to the community, and it's something worth doing, continue to do, even though there's not much money in it, or hardly any money in it, because of the love for the

work that they're doing and love for their community.

So the minister should have listened to these presenters and should have amended, deleted, that clause that says it's only to be advertised through the Manitoba Gazette and, specifically, that the enactment of this bill will—that this bill will—there's no date for this bill to be enacted. So should have listened to the presenters, and right now should have listened to these amendments and accepted these amendments.

Thank you.

Mrs. Cox: I would like to repeat for the members opposite again that this is about modernizing the way that we do business here in Manitoba with regard to communications. It will put us on a level playing field with other provinces, other jurisdictions, other territories as well as the federal government, Madam Speaker. And it does not preclude departments from advertising or publishing notices in newspapers if they feel that is the way that they should advertise.

* (16:20)

So this is bringing us into the 21st century and ensuring that Manitoba is on track with what other provinces and other jurisdictions are doing.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I just want to get up for a few minutes to talk about the amendments that have been introduced by the Liberals today and that reflect on the amendment made by our caucus at committee hearings a week or so ago.

Before I do any of that, I would like to wish my friend to my left, the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) a very happy birthday today as he celebrates his 72nd birthday. I can't think of an individual I would rather sit beside, Madam Speaker. He is funny, he is intelligent, he is a warrior for social justice. And it's my honour and my privilege to stand beside him every day.

My sister from Logan, who ought to know how old is—her brother—

An Honourable Member: How young?

Mr. Allum: Oh, how old? He's 72 years young, I understand, which makes him the second eldest member of this Chamber—from what he tells me, anyways. And, of course, I wish him a very happy birthday and all the best to him for the many, many years to come.

Now, Madam Speaker, I haven't been a member of this Chamber for as long as some others, but I've been around here for a while, and this maybe is one of the most absurd debates we've had in my short time in the House.

We have a bill that we're spending an awful lot of time debating today that's—is not going to be proclaimed anytime soon, so why is the minister wasting the time of this House in proceeding with a bill that she has no intention of proclaiming? Why doesn't she just do the right thing and simply withdraw it, which is what we said right from the get-go?

But the real mystery to me here today, Madam Speaker, isn't that the minister is stuck with a bad bill and is forced, I guess, by the tall foreheads in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office to continue to proceed with it. I'm not surprised with that—about that. The real mystery to me is why members of the Conservative caucus can sit here today and vote against every single amendment when they should know better, that—as my friend from River Heights has said, this clear assault on democracy, on free speech, on access to information should be crystal clear to all members of the governing side that this is a dud of a bill and they shouldn't support it and they should do the right thing and either support these amendments or have a chat with the minister before the end of the day today to say, you know, I've listened to all of the debate, and I think we ought to withdraw it.

For the life of me, I can't understand why the House leader, the Minister of Education, should want to ensure that people in Steinbach can't read public notices in the Steinbach Carillon. I don't understand that. I read the Minister of Families' (Mrs. Stefanson) submission to CanStar once every six weeks because I know that the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) is a supporter of community newspapers. So why wouldn't she want to have public notices published in community newspapers?

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), who holds this very important portfolio for the government, surely, he wants young farmers—people in rural areas to have access to information, to be able to depend on their local community newspaper to access information in order to learn about public notices. But he's also going to sit on his hands. The member from Southdale, the member from Transcona, the members for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson),

Brandon West (Mr. Helwer)—all of these members are sitting here today listening to debate and not doing their job as elected representatives. And that's a shame.

I ask the minister to do the right thing, to withdraw this bill. But I'm calling on members of this Legislature to hear what the public has said, to do the right thing, ask that this bill be withdrawn. And let's have no further discussion about it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Fletcher: The previous speaker, I didn't quite hear what he was referring to in regard to Tyndall. I hope it wasn't—he wasn't referring to Tyndall, the limestone, as the—that goes back to Paleozoic times. And though the member may predate the deposit that we find across Manitoba, I don't think he does. But I suppose we could always carbon date him.

Madam Speaker, in regard to the amendment that's before us, there's been a lot of talk about principles and Toryism. Obviously, we're not dealing with a government that would fall within the spectrum of Toryism. We are dealing with a—something else.

I would point out that, just, the word conservative's not reserved—or does not go—and Toryism are not interchangeable. In fact, Sir John A. Macdonald, our first Prime Minister, the party he ran for was called the Liberal-Conservatives, and he was undeniably a great Tory.

So it goes that a government's actions speak to the type of government it is. And I will note that the only member of the government benches that actually is involved with community newspapers has recused himself from this debate. The member from Riding Mountain, he declared a conflict of interest.

Why did he declare a conflict of interest? I don't think that it was a revenue thing. Maybe the conflict of interest was he knew that the government was doing the wrong thing. He knew that if he spoke up, that he would be turfed. That freedom of speech in caucus or outside of caucus is not something that is tolerated. See, that's not a Tory caucus.

You know, I think of Wilberforce, one of our history's great heroes, who—he brought forward the legislation that abolished the slave trade in the British Empire when all the great powers of the day would not. Madam Speaker, if he had listened to his party and toed the party line, that legislation would

never get through. Part of being a Tory is being able to speak out.

Now, Cabinet is a different story if you're a Tory, because you have to toe the line. You can debate in Cabinet, sure, and—but when you're out of Cabinet, you can—should be able to speak your mind. So, when I was in the shadow cabinet or the federal Cabinet of Stephen Harper, we talked behind closed doors, expressing ourselves, but we came out united.

But backbench MLAs or MPs could speak their mind on issues from abortion to the military to anything they want, even challenging the Whip on who could say what during members' statements. Madam Speaker, this is relevant because, obviously, that culture doesn't exist here.

I was very fortunate to have the spectrum of experiences, including as a backbench MP, and was able to pursue legislation on choice at the end of life, and make a real difference, because that's what Tories do. If you're a backbench MLA, you should be able to do what you want.

But not here, because the only MLA who is involved with community newspapers, the MLA from Riding Mountain, has recused himself. Conflict of interest, maybe. Maybe the conflict of interest is the metaphor that many of—people have used in this debate, and that is a guillotine ready to be dropped—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I would ask the member to zero in on the specific report stage amendments that are being debated on the floor. He's going off on a bit of a philosophical journey about Toryism, and that's really not what this is about. So, if he could please focus his attention to the issue at hand, and that is the report stage amendments that are on the floor right now.

* (16:30)

Mr. Fletcher: What we are talking about is freedom of speech, the ability to have transparency and accountability and the government trying to weasel its way out of doing what governments should do, and that is be there for the people; not exist for the government or the bureaucracy. Let the people have the information and let them decide. Let them—let the people participate. Let them be part of the decision-making process.

And in Manitoba, community newspapers play a huge role in that. So the government is eliminating notifications on security, ecological issues, on school

board transformation. What if the entire school board in Manitoba—all the school boards in Manitoba were amalgamated? It seems that we would never know through a notice because notices aren't required. That's a big deal.

And, Madam Speaker, getting with the 21st century is the argument that we've heard. Well, the 21st century includes newspapers.

People read newspapers. We could make it a rule that the notices go on the newspapers' websites—that would be good—and then they would show up in search engine searches, Google searches. What doesn't show up in Google searches is the Manitoba Gazette.

Like, you can't even say Manitoba Gazette without sort of falling asleep. Nobody knows what that is. Well, not real people; maybe a few people in this place. Some, but the average person is—and it doesn't show up in a Google search or—and it's irrelevant.

The point is, a newspaper is a tool to communicate to the people, and we know it's effective because every MLA in this place uses taxpayer money to advertise themselves in community newspapers.

So, if we follow the government's logic, perhaps MLAs should not be allowed to advertise in community newspapers because it's just a waste of taxpayer money, so says the government. I disagree with that. People need to be reached. MLAs are elected representatives, and people need to know what they need to reach the MLAs about.

They can't provide the MLAs' information without presenting the actual issues that people may want to talk to their MLAs about. And that's what withdrawing notice does; it prevents people from seeing what is going to happen.

And, Madam Speaker, this has led to a huge catastrophe in St. James where the Province initiated a land deal for \$1, without notice, without consultation, and that should not be allowed to happen.

And some people may say, well, how's that relevant? It's relevant because that's—we need to provide more transparency, more accountability, perhaps larger ads in community newspapers, not none, and the government's saying, oh, we're going to pass legislation, but we're not going to enforce it; or, we're not going to enact it, bring it into law.

Oh, give me a break. Give Manitobans a break. That is, first of all, talk about disingenuous. Don't pass the law. Amend the law. Accept the amendments. Don't introduce the law.

There are a zillion things that can be done, and the government chooses not to because they want to have the option to drop the guillotine, to control the message completely. It doesn't matter what political party you're from, but Tories don't believe that. They should withdraw the bill.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on these amendments?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the fifth report stage amendment to Bill 8, sponsored by the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), striking out clause 10.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (Second Opposition House Leader): On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the eighth report stage amendment to Bill 8, sponsored by the honourable member for St. Boniface, striking out clause 14.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is defeated on division.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the 13th report stage amendment to Bill 8, sponsored by the honourable member for St. Boniface, striking out clause 27.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Gerrard: A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

Order, please.

The question before the House is the 13th report stage amendment to Bill 8, sponsored by the honourable member for St. Boniface, striking out clause 27.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Smith (Point Douglas), Swan.

Nays

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere,

Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 13, Nays 35.

Madam Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 5, 2018

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