

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

| 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

Thursday, March 7, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 16—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I move, on behalf of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and seconded by the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, Bill 16 will provide the legislative authority for the implementation of some tax, financial and other measures being announced in Budget 2019. I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Conservation Districts Program 2017-18 Annual Report.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Women's Institutes

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I rise today in honour of International Women's Day and to recognize the Springfield Women's Institute and 100 years of service by the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

In 1919, the inaugural conference of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada was held right here in Manitoba and was presided over by Mrs. Emily Murphy, who recognized the importance of organizing the rural women of Canada so they might speak as one voice for needed reforms.

Since its inception 100 years ago, the Women's Institute has remained true to its original mandate, which is to welcome all women regardless of their ethnic, religious, political or educational background.

While the Women's Institute maintains themselves as a community-based organization for women, they are also part of an international organization that has members in over 70 countries.

The Women's Institute is one of Canada's Canadian organizations that enjoy royal patronage.

For Home and Country is the motto that has been at the heart of the Women's Institute for 100 years.

Like all other Women's Institutes across Canada, the Springfield Women's Institute not only advocates for rural initiatives and promotes educational, moral, social and economic measures, together they also pursue nation-wide campaigns.

Emily Murphy was not only the first president of the Women's Institute but was also one of Canada's group of women known as the Famous Five, just as a monument to this Famous Five group stands proudly on our Manitoba Legislative grounds to recognize their work in making Manitoba women become the first in Canada to win both the right to vote and to hold provincial office.

Please stand with me today to honour the work of the Springfield Women's Institute for home and

country and 100 years of service to Canadians by the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I ask leave to add the names into Hansard of those attending from the Springfield Women's Institute today in the gallery.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the names of the attendees in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Springfield Women's Institute: Diane Holland, president; Debra Barrett; Rose Chopp; Sandra Draper; Barb McLeod; Thelma Ross; June Shoeskie; Janet Tinley; Kathy Wilkinson, founding member. Liz Chongva, board member, Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. Denise Joss, president, Manitoba Women's Institute.

Service Needs in the North End

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Until its closure, the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre was an enduring cultural hub and meeting place for indigenous people in Winnipeg and it will hopefully be reopened soon. However, that hope is getting slimmer as the building was recently vandalized a second time. Almost everything of value was taken from the building and likely sold to feed the addictions of those who broke in.

Manitoba's meth crisis is hitting the North End harder than any other community in Winnipeg, yet this government has taken no action to address and help the people who need it. And while the meth problem appears to be sticking around, services are not.

The North End is experiencing a shortage of badly needed cultural and community services. Over the past couple of years, the community has suffered the loss of the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre, the North End Family Centre, Neechi Commons, and persistent funding issues at Thunderbird House has required organizations to cut some of their funding or their programming.

This government has also made it more difficult for communities to access Neighbourhoods Alive! funding, funding that provided resources and programming to people who needed it the most.

This is concerning because we are in the middle of a crippling addiction crisis here in Manitoba and

essential service providers in the North End are already having to close their doors.

The way this government manages their programming is damaging the community. Their priorities are inconsistent with the needs of Manitobans, making calls for proposals unpredictable and forcing organizations to be reactionary instead of proactive in their efforts.

Winnipeg's North End is an important part of this province. It is not a problem to be fixed but rather a resource to be tapped.

A group of community leaders and non-profits recently met to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to conclude her statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Further member statements?

Funding for Rural and Northern Manitoba

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, \$112 million of federal money is sitting on the table for this current PC government to pick up and utilize for rural and northern developments; \$451 million for green infrastructure is being abandoned; \$61 million for community, culture and recreation infrastructure is being abandoned. This sad list, unfortunately, goes on, but those are the biggest ones I take offence to.

I take particular offence to the fact that this government is focused on squabbling with the federal government, as opposed to working with them to address the critical issues our rural and northerners face.

* (13:40)

This government needs to start meeting with groups and, more importantly, they need to start listening to the critical issues that we face. There are groups out there that desperately need to know these funds will be accepted. As it is, we have many rural municipalities that are grappling with the news that funds have been cut.

The PCs continually meet with their own inner circles so they keep getting reaffirmed that they're doing well. This is simply not true. Polls and surveys? Please. I know of many stricken people that are barely able to afford food, never mind Internet or landlines to participate in a poll or survey.

The PCs are all too conveniently able to find funds for their friends. And tendering? The PCs offers no supports to smaller groups who wish to have a chance at winning a contract. I have several First Nations who have submitted their proposals through the Investing in Canada plan delivered through Infrastructure Canada in the hopes of gaining meaningful—means of employment for their band members.

I quote: Under the integrated bilateral agreements, Canada will invest up to 75 per cent for projects in the territories and for projects with indigenous partners. That's never been done before, and you're leaving it on the table?

I simply don't understand why the PC team is not advocating to their ministers to do something. Real damage to our economy is being done.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Selkirk Curl for the Cure

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, on February 23rd I was pleased to be joined by our Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox) at the opening ceremonies for Selkirk's curl for a cure. Curl for a cure was started four years ago by a then-17-year-old high-school student and Selkirk resident, Shayne Merritt.

At the time, Shayne was an avid curler and dedicated student. Shayne was deeply moved when he learned one of his teachers and curling coach was diagnosed with uterine cancer. He was inspired by her journey and knew he wanted to help in some way.

Shayne decided to combine his love of curling and desire to help others affected by cancer by organizing a fundraiser supported by the Canadian Cancer Society. He brought his ideas forward in his high-school global issues class through a Take Action project. In 2015, curl for a cure was officially launched.

Curl for a cure has now completed its fourth year and has raised over \$55,000 for the Canadian Cancer Society. Monies raised through this event are used to provide community supports and help fund cancer

research, research that is vital to providing state-of-the-art care, treatment and prevention.

Every year, curl for a cure gets bigger, drawing more and more spectators and curlers, people who love to curl and are passionate about doing their part to help those affected by cancer.

Mr. Shayne Merritt, the lead volunteer and creator of curl for a cure bonspiel is with us today, along with some of his team volunteers.

I ask my Chamber colleagues to join me in recognizing Shayne Merritt and the important fundraising achievements of this young man and his volunteers.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to have the complete list of curl for a cure volunteers entered into the record.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to add those names into Hansard? [*Agreed*]

Curl for the Cure Volunteers: Shayne Merritt, founder; Carmen Clifford, Medea Clifford, Shaylynn Merritt, Sheri Merritt, Paris Taylor, Sabrina Taylor.

Royal Manitoba Winter Fair

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Many would think I would stand today to talk about the Brier in Brandon. However, today I rise, Madam Speaker, to bring my annual invitation to my colleagues all around the House, all Manitobans, to set Brandon aside and come visit us later this month when we host the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair.

Whether you're a visitor or an exhibitor, The Royal Manitoba Winter Fair will be jam-packed with homegrown fun and the best in agriculture entertainment. Billed as Manitoba's largest combined indoor agricultural fair and 'esquerian'—pardon me, 'esquay'—let's say a horse show, this year's fair will run from March 25th to March 30th.

This fair gives everyone a great opportunity to meet the farmers and their animals in their 44,000-square-foot Royal Farm Yard. The petting zoo, live animal shows, cattle shows and more will be an excellent way to spend the day or two for both education and entertainment.

Competition for the shows start early each day in both the Westman—Westoba Place main arena and Westoba Ag Centre. Top level show-jumping,

hackney and heavy horse events are sure to bring smiles to faces of both adults and children.

Brand new to the fair this year are the WoofJocks Canine All Stars. Each fast-paced performance contains elements of speed, agility, obedience, plus the 'wolfjacks' special brand of 'unforgettable' comedy. You can watch their show in the main arena and stick around for a personal meet-and-greet after each show.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on, but, unfortunately, you're going to tell me my time for today's statement is just coming to an end.

So before that happens, let me again invite everyone to come and visit with the member from Brandon West, myself, His Worship and everybody else in Brandon, and enjoy creating some memories at the 2019 Royal Manitoba Winter Fair.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have a guest in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

In the public gallery we have Mr. Jeff Hood, the president of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, who is the guest of the MLA for Brandon West.

And I would also take this opportunity on behalf of all members here to welcome everybody to the Manitoba Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Service Reform Request to Restore Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, a doctor once told me that the further you get from the bedside the worse the decision making gets. He was talking about decision making in health care, and yet that's precisely what this Premier has done with his latest scheme for health care in Manitoba. He's taking decision making far away from the bedside and centralizing it in his office.

Now, to be clear, it should be doctors, nurses and patients who make the decisions on health care.

We know already that the Premier's rushed plan to cut health care has caused a lot of chaos across Manitoba. Now he's rushing to bring about even more changes, even though the nurses, physicians and patients around this province are saying that his changes are making things worse.

Will the Premier end the cancelled surgeries, the increasing ER wait times and the closures? Will he end his cuts to health care?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, \$400 million of additional investment by this government in health care in the past year's budget is hardly supporting the member's false thesis.

The people who built our health-care system were courageous people, Madam Speaker, and we have asked those people who are involved in the front lines for advice and we follow their advice and the advice of national and international experts. Some of that advice was commissioned by the previous government, but they didn't have the courage to implement it; and we do, Madam Speaker, and thank goodness because our health-care system was built by courageous people and it will be improved by courageous people as well.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, a funny thing happened in Grandview not too long ago. The community fundraised to buy a new ultrasound machine, but then they were told by Prairie Mountain Health that they couldn't use it because Prairie Mountain bought a different kind of lubricant than the one that the manufacturer specified. Well, the community was in quite a dilemma. That is, of course, until an enterprising local physician called up the manufacturer and said, hey, can we use this other kind of lubricant? And the manufacturer said, yes, of course, you can.

That's what happens when you remove decision making from the bedside and you centralize it in Brandon. Imagine what will happen when you take it away from the bedside and you centralize it in the Premier's office.

We know that his decision making is making health care worse in Manitoba.

Will the Premier—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —abandon his plans to cut and close health services and instead keep investing in Manitobans being healthy in their own communities?

Mr. Pallister: The member's allegedly funny anecdote, Madam Speaker, is actually highlighting the reason for co-ordination in the health-care delivery of our province. In fact, better co-ordination

among RHAs and among health administrators and the deliverers of services is certainly going to benefit patients.

What the member is depicting today and has already depicted in previous question periods, Madam Speaker, is a pessimism that that will never result in improved health care. He needs to get to step 1 of the recovery plan, and that is admitting there's a problem. Manitobans know that we were 10th out of 10 when the NDP left government and they want us to make improvements, not go back in time as the member advocates.

* (13:50)

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, one of the things that's interesting about the Family Medical Centre—that's the St. Boniface clinic that this Premier just ordered to close—one of the interesting things about that place is that the residents and the physicians who practise there have admitting privileges at the hospital.

Now, what that means is that if a patient comes through the door and they're sick enough they can be directly admitted into St. Boniface. They don't need to go to the emergency room. So now that the Premier has ordered this clinic to close, what will happen?

Well, all those patients who used to get care at the Family Medical Centre will have to go to the emergency room at St. Boniface. This, of course, after the Premier's own regional health authority in Winnipeg has raised the alarm and saying emergency wait times in the city are in a desperate condition.

Will the Premier back off these plans to close clinics and close emergency rooms and instead bring forward a real plan focused on preventing illness and injury and keeping Manitobans healthy in their communities?

Mr. Pallister: No other health region in the country, no other province has seen a bigger decline in wait times than Manitoba. Not one.

The member proposes that we go back to the time when we were 10th of 10, Madam Speaker. We are Canada's most improved province—most improved in reducing wait times—and that benefits people who are going for service in our facilities by concentrating our resources as virtually every other jurisdiction has done. In fewer locations we get better care and sooner for people.

The impact of that is that we don't have to do as the NDP government had us do: the reshipment of people in acute care situations from one facility over to another. With the shortening of wait times we have saved Manitobans in just the last two years—versus the two before under the NDP—we have saved them 43 years in waiting rooms. It's no fun being in an emergency waiting room; 43 years of Manitoba time not spent in pain and fear is a good thing.

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

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, that's just not true. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kinew: —stood up two weeks ago and said that emergency wait times in the city are going through the roof and they wanted to warn people in the city about that. Of course, we know that this government always comes up with some desperate excuses to try and change the channel. This time they blame the flu season.

But, I wonder, why is it that a retailer like Sport Chek knows that every year Boxing Day is coming and they're able to staff up to prepare for Boxing Day, and yet our multi-billion-dollar health-care system under this Premier seems to be surprised each and every year by the flu season.

Well, the reason why they can't staff up for flu season is because they've alienated nurses, they've alienated doctors and they've alienated health-care aides with their acrimonious relationship with them.

Will the Premier show a gesture of goodwill and back off his plans to close the Concordia and Seven Oaks emergency rooms

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Manitoba's nurses, who do tremendously important work and who we respect greatly, want to work in a system that works for patients, not for the leader of the opposition.

And, Madam Speaker, the Canadian institute of health information is a better source of comparative data than the member for Fort Rouge, and the Canadian information that we're receiving from that neutral, non-partisan body says that Manitoba is making progress on reducing wait times while nine

other provinces are seeing wait times lengthen. That's a significant accomplishment.

The member's pessimism, his refusal to understand that of course change is not easy but it is necessary when you're dead last, puts him behind—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and makes him a source of the problems and makes him an advocate for continuing them.

On this side of the House we will continue to make health care work better for people. Better care sooner for Manitobans is the goal.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, I don't know where the Premier's been spending his time lately, Madam Speaker, but it's certainly not here in Winnipeg listening to the regional health authority and their latest updates about wait times in the city.

Now, we know that the Premier's refusal to listen is clear. It's reflected in his relationship with other levels of government. We know that he's picking fights constantly with the mayor of Winnipeg. We know that his ministers pick fights with the school divisions. We know that he even has all sorts of disagreements—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —with his own hand-picked chairs of Crown corporations.

So I guess it should be no surprise then, when nurses and patients come forward and say that his changes to health care are not working, that he just doesn't listen to them either. In fact, he goes a step further: not only does he not listen to them, he says they're all wrong. Everyone's wrong but me.

Now, that might work in the PC caucus room, but that does not fly with the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier cancel his plans to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate any question from the leader of the opposition on team building, Madam Speaker. While on this side of the House we built a team that is achieving better results for Manitobans, the member cannot claim such success here or elsewhere.

He had a bromance with the Prime Minister. When it came time to stand up against the Liberal cuts to health care, he said nothing. We stood up for Manitobans on this side of the House. When it was time for the Prime Minister—rush forward prematurely with legalization of cannabis and move it to our province, he said fine with me. But we stood up for Manitobans and for public safety here.

And when the Liberal government in Ottawa was jack—proposing to jack up taxes on small business, corporations and farm families, we led the fight against that while he sat on his hands and said nothing.

Now the bromance is over, Madam Speaker. The bromance is over and we do hope that the member will join with us and begin once and for all to stand with us for Manitobans, not just for Ottawa.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: The health-care system in Manitoba needs to evolve to meet the challenges of our time: type 2 diabetes, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, increasing demands for mental health and addictions supports.

Yet we know that the Premier—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —doesn't focus on these things. He focuses only on consultant reports and cutting costs, Madam Speaker. It's a missed opportunity and it's a failure to lead.

The Premier could come in here today and announce a bold plan to keep Manitobans healthy in their community by preventing injury and illness. He could come in here and announce a dramatic expansion to Pharmacare. He could come in here and present a real plan guided by the evidence to fight addictions in our streets.

But he does not, Madam Speaker. We know that he will not do that today.

Will he instead at least meet us part of the way and back off this plan to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the member has a record of creating harm, not solving problems, and

the fact of the matter is we are reducing wait times for Manitoba families.

The member speaks of compassion, but can't demonstrate it with his own record. Madam Speaker, we are achieving better results for Manitobans. We're seeing reduced overtime—nursing overtime hours.

We're seeing 33 nurses completing critical-care training. We've got 78 new doctors recruited in our province.

Madam Speaker, we're making progress. The member speaks about having a plan, but he hasn't even admitted that the NDP created a mess that we are now solving.

Better care sooner for Manitobans. That's what's happening.

Accessibility of Mifegymiso Across Manitoba Med Students' Letter-Writing Campaign

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): A group of University of Manitoba medical students have begun a letter-writing campaign demanding equal, accessible and free access to Mifegymiso all across Manitoba.

I've had the opportunity to meet this next generation of Manitoba doctors. They're absolutely amazing and they're fully committed, as our next cohort of doctors, in ensuring comprehensive accessibility of the abortion pill.

Tomorrow, on International Women's Day, this group of young doctors are hoping—or, hosting a letter-signing campaign at Fools & Horses which, of course, is just conveniently located right across the street.

Will the Minister of Health, Madam Speaker, attend tomorrow's event and commit to making the abortion pill fully accessible across Manitoba?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): We know that this member is more committed to playing identity politics and more committed to her ideology than she is committed to enhancing the lives of women and girls in the province of Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Our government is taking a balanced approach to improving the lives, including proving the health-care services and reproductive health services for all women in Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: I just want to take a moment to acknowledge and say miigwech to these students for their dedication and hard work in ensuring that all Manitobans have access to the abortion pill. The Medical Students for Choice campaign has been working very hard at developing educational materials as well as getting signatures for their letters to this Pallister government.

The culmination, again, Madam Speaker, of all their hard work comes tomorrow at Fools & Horses between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m., with the opportunity to meet the students and talk with them and sign letters.

And so the question is: Will the Minister for Status of Women attend tomorrow's event and commit tomorrow to fully supporting Mifegymiso across the province?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is choosing to ignore the facts because of her desire to play politics with this particular issue. But the reality is, is that Mifegymiso is available to all women in the province of Manitoba. Those are the facts. She may not want to accept them, but those are the facts.

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

Ms. Fontaine: If that was, indeed, the fact, then these medical students wouldn't see a need to actually engage in a campaign while they're actually going to school to become doctors. So I would disagree, and I disabuse the minister of what she just put on the record.

The—these future doctors understand that restricting accessibility to Mifegymiso is simply unjust and in contravention of women's human rights here in Manitoba. This government has the means to ensure equal access to reproductive health care for all Manitoba women and girls.

So I ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister) today: Will he go and visit these doctors tomorrow, and tomorrow on International Women's Day, commit to making Mifegymiso fully accessible across Manitoba?

Miigwech.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, our government has taken strong action towards improving the lives of women and girls in the province of Manitoba,

including enhancing access to reproductive health services. The member opposite knows this. She is simply fear mongering and spreading misinformation on the record.

But our government is fully committed to enhancing the lives of women and girls. We have since the day we formed office and we're going to continue to stand up for women and girls in the province.

Provincial Nominee Program Fee Immigrant Support Services

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): The Premier (Mr. Pallister) is taking a \$500 fee from potential newcomers; that's roughly \$3.5 million per year. But he did not use that money to support newcomers. Under pressure last year, the former minister said they were introducing new programming that supports newcomers, but nothing has happened.

I ask the new minister: Will he remove this regressive anti-immigrant fee on newcomers and deliver the programming that was promised?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, when the member who was asking the question had the opportunity, as the minister responsible, to be in charge of this file, that wait-list grew. It grew from a year to two years, to three years, to four years. Those individuals who wanted to come to Manitoba to contribute to our communities, to contribute to our economy, were stuck in their own country unable to do so because that minister failed to get that wait time down.

I am proud that the former minister—and we've continued to bring that wait time down where it's now under six months, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Marcelino: What we heard were not facts.

Madam Speaker, in the press release dated March 22, 2018, the former minister pledged that at least some of the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —funds from the \$500 fee would go towards new programs that support newcomers. A request for proposals was put out. It's nearly a year later. Millions of dollars have been taken from newcomers, but simply there are not—we are not seeing the supports that were promised.

Can the minister tell us: Has this RFP been awarded?

Mr. Goertzen: I am happy to speak about the program.

We've celebrated, of course, its 20th anniversary, Madam Speaker. We know that this was brought forward by the former Filmon government. Thousands—hundreds of thousands of Manitobans have come to this province and made us a better province. They have enriched us socially, but have been—also enriched us financially as they become part of the economy. I know in my own community and many other communities across Manitoba, they have truly transformed the face of our province.

Having to have individuals wait for over four years to see whether or not they could come to Manitoba was disgraceful.

We know the federal government is backlogging some of those applications. Maybe that member is also going to Ottawa. And she may want to bring that issue if she goes to Ottawa, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Marcelino: We on this side of the House are very proud of what we have done for the Manitoba nominee program under our watch.

Madam Speaker, the minister is forcing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —onto—forcing new costs onto newcomers. Five hundred dollars might not be a lot of money for the minister, but I can tell him that for newcomers, this is huge burden for them.

My constituents and many newcomers are calling on the minister to provide more services for newcomers and eliminate the \$500 fee.

Will he listen?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would say \$500 is the best deal in the world to come to Canada, the greatest country in the world.

But that \$500 that may have sat in the pocket of somebody who wanted to come to Manitoba, oh, it sat in the pocket when the NDP were in government, I give them that. That \$500 stayed in the pocket. It stayed in the pocket for a year; it stayed in the pocket for 2 years, for 3 years, for 4 years because they couldn't actually come here, Madam Speaker, because of the backlog that existed under the NDP government.

Because of the hard work of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart)—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —and from the officials in my department, Madam Speaker, that wait time is down to six months. They can come here; they can find hope; they can add to our province. We're proud of it.

They stalled them, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Bipole III Transmission Line Manitoba Hydro Agreements

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, the mayor of Ritchot is worried that Manitoba Hydro is going to back out of an agreement for compensation for the economic costs of having Bipole III run through their community. The community has been able to rely on \$100,000 to \$150,000 in funding every year, but that is now in doubt for Ritchot and other communities because Hydro says there is no contract, only an agreement. So they're tearing it up.

This is part of a pattern on the part of Hydro and this government of making promises, going back on them and then leaving communities in a lurch.

Is the Premier going to make sure this—that Hydro upholds its end of the bargain, or will he dismiss their concerns as just another special interest group?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Speaking of Lavalin, Madam Speaker, the federal Liberals have decided that, in the interests of jobs in Quebec, they will place the rule of law as a lower priority, and I would ask them to consider—and the member opposite, who regularly here—consistently, virtually always, I believe—takes the side of Ottawa and Liberals on issues, whether he would prefer to have a country with jobs and no rule of law or a country with a rule of law.

I know that on this side of the House—and I believe we stand with all Canadians on this—we would prefer a country with the rule of law.

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

Mr. Lamont: To the issue of the mayor of Ritchot: the fact that Hydro is backing out of a deal raises larger questions about this government's priorities when it comes to spending.

It was reported yesterday that subsidies for professional sports teams in Winnipeg will hit about \$16.6 million from multiple levels of government. This is quite aside from the \$200-million bailout the Province has granted to Investors Group Field or the \$20 million granted to horse racing.

* (14:10)

Now, I don't want to suggest these—there's an argument that these are all good investments, but it would seem that this government is splurging on entertainment and gambling while cutting and freezing education, health and infrastructure.

Would Ritchot and other municipalities get a better hearing from this government if they rebranded themselves as a hockey team?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate questions like that, Madam Speaker.

I don't think the Prime Minister should've accepted a free vacation on the private island of the Aga Kahn. And I do think that the conflict of interest commissioner was right in ruling—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —that Dominic LeBlanc violated conflict rules by awarding a lucrative fishing contract to a company run by one of his wife's first cousins. And I also think that Bill Morneau failed to report the ownership of a French villa through a private company. I know that Justin Trudeau was also forced to pay a fine for violating conflict-of-interest rules with respect to a gift he received from the Premier of Prince Edward Island.

Madam Speaker, we're for the rule of law. We're for transparency and Manitoba Hydro is too. As far as we understand there are no contracts that the member is alluding to whatsoever, and so I would stand with Manitoba Hydro. They have a decision to make in how they run their place, and they're running it according to the rule of law, as far as I understand.

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

Mr. Lamont: It would be nice to believe that Hydro is acting on its own, but over the last year the Premier's shown he has a troubled relationship with Crown corporations and the people he appointed to run them, because when they do their jobs and disagree with him, they tend to find themselves on the street.

The Premier has personally announced that Hydro is reneging or cancelling agreements, and this is part of a larger pattern. This government has undermined municipalities by cancelling the roads and bridges program. They promised the City of Winnipeg tens of millions of dollars in a budget they voted for last year, then withheld it. They're threatening school divisions.

It makes it impossible for businesses and other levels of government to plan when the Province keeps blowing holes in their budget.

Does the Premier see that by reneging on these commitments, the government is sending a signal they can't be trusted?

Mr. Pallister: I believe the member just said in his preamble that when people do their job—what was the line, Madam Speaker? Something about being shown the door? I'm reminded of Jody Wilson-Raybould and I'm reminded of her willingness to stand up for the rule of law, and I'm wondering why the member would stand quietly by and watch such an injustice.

I do believe that veiled threats and attempts to intimidate are not the way to do things and I also understand that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —the Prime Minister is accused of doing exactly that. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: I also understand, Madam Speaker, that Jane Philpott has resigned her position in Cabinet as well, and I understand that that is in support of and in sympathy for the fact that she can no longer support the federal Liberal government and its behaviour.

That being said, Madam Speaker, I appreciate any question from a Liberal member or an NDP member on team building.

Lake St. Martin Access Road Contract Tendering Process

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is the Minister of Infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, on March the 6th of last year at The Forks, the Minister of Infrastructure said that \$10 million for the Lake St. Martin access road had been tendered. Now, this turned out not to be true, and the industry said that these prices were inflated to double what they should be.

Then, on April 11th of last year the minister was asked 11 times, when did the Treasury Board approve these untendered contracts? The minister stonewalled and refused to answer, but now we know why. These weren't tendered contracts. They weren't even taken to the Treasury Board.

Why is the minister giving multimillion-dollar contracts to party donors for projects that Treasury Board hasn't seen or approved?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): In 2011 there was a flood on Lake Manitoba and many people lost their livelihoods, many people lost their homes, and First Nations lost everything. Six years later our government made the decision to give those various communities hope as they returned to their communities and tried to rebuild their lives.

Madam Speaker, when the First Nations needed a hand of friendship our government was there, and to somehow suggest that the First Nations of Little Saskatchewan, Dauphin River, Lake St. Martin and Pinaymootang, that they are political donators to our party just proves that the member for Elmwood will create any kind of a story and any kind of a mistruth to try to get into a newspaper.

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

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, this minister gave an unapproved, an untendered multimillion-dollar contract to a party donor. It's clear that this government is looking after its well-connected friends.

Premier said last year, he said: If the minister made a mess, he'll clean it up.

Well, it's clear the minister's made a mess. He's admitted as much.

I ask the minister: Did anyone lose their jobs over this? Is anyone in his department paying the price for this minister's mess? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: After the flood in 2011 along Lake Manitoba, Madam Speaker, the Province had to deal with an incredible mess. It took up to six years for the communities to rebuild. In fact, it was under our government that Operation Return Home finally saw that these communities were going back to their communities and trying to rebuild their lives. Our government showed that we were a friend to those First Nations, showed them a hand to friendship.

My question is, why does the NDP always attack the victim? Why do they always attack the First Nations?

When they needed help from our government, Madam Speaker, our government was there for them.

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

Mr. Maloway: This minister is rewarding friends of his party with multimillion-dollar contracts that industry players say are inflated to twice what they should have been, and he's doing it without going through the Treasury Board. These contracts weren't tendered, as the minister asserted last year. They weren't even approved by Treasury Board.

The minister chose to break the rules. He admitted to media that he was responsible for this, yet he's still sitting here. He's still in the Cabinet.

I ask the minister: What steps has he taken to deal with this situation now that he's got caught?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, after the 2011 flood on Lake Manitoba there were four First Nations that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —weren't just mildly impacted. Madam Speaker. They lost everything and they moved to the city and they waited for their lives to be put back together. And it was with our government working with the federal government that Operation Return Home happened. And those individuals also needed some hope to get back, to put their lives together, earn money for their families. And, Madam Speaker, when they approached our government, it was under the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government that we extended a hand of friendship and we helped those communities out.

Why does the NDP always blame the victim?

Keystone Centre Provincial Funding

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, it's no secret that the NDP ignored the Westman region and virtually everywhere outside the—Winnipeg's Perimeter.

Our PC government understands the importance of investing in an entire province.

Can the Minister of Municipal Relations please inform the House about how our government's recent pledge to pay off the Keystone Centre's debt will ensure it can continue to serve as Westman's leading event destination?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member from Brandon East for that great question.

Madam Speaker, fact: our government recognizes value, the contribution that the facility—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —such as the Keystone Centre brings to our province.

Fact: we are committed to ensuring the Keystone Centre continues to be a sustainable multi-use facility that contributes to the high quality of life Manitobans enjoy in the Westman area, Madam Speaker.

Fact: the Keystone Centre generates over \$62 million annually in economic activity in the region.

Fact: Madam Speaker, I'm proud to be a part of a government that invests in the entire province.

And fact: these investments ensure prosperity for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, fact: where the NDP failed Westman, we are getting it right.

* (14:20)

Education Property Tax Credit Reduction Impact on Low-Income Manitobans

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: Manitoba's seniors, students, front-line workers, teachers are just some of the people that this Province has targeted with their

reckless cuts. This government's decision to alter and reduce the Education Property Tax Credit has resulted in very large increases in property taxes for many Manitobans, particularly Manitoba seniors and those with lower and medium incomes.

Why does this government continue to balance its books on the backs of Manitoba's most vulnerable and those who can least afford it?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite for the question.

Madam Speaker, it's very clear that we're—we've set Manitoba on the right path. We—for years—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —17 years, the NDP failed Manitobans. Our government—and it'll be proven today—we're fixing the finances. We're rebuilding the economy and repairing the services that were damaged after 17 years of NDP.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this government is sending Manitobans into further debt. That's what they're doing.

Last November, the Association of Manitoba—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: —Municipalities expressed concern over the potential reduction or elimination of the Education Property Tax Credit. AMM even passed a motion warning this government about the negative impact this reckless cut would have.

Madam Speaker, this cut, which for some families means an increased cost as high as \$500, is hurting people on low incomes. In fact, they're taking the hardest hit: \$500 annually for one household is a lot of money.

Will this government reconsider their poor decision and start working for all Manitobans?

Mr. Wharton: Just remind the member opposite that, again, we're moving Manitoba in the right direction, Madam Speaker. It's very clear and it'll, again, be more clear this afternoon.

We're making steady progress on a \$1-billion deficit that Manitobans were left with under the rule

of the NDP government, Madam Speaker. Where they failed Manitobans, we're going to get it right.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the reduced Education Property Tax Credit will have a negative ripple effect. Every cent that this government takes from low-income Manitobans is a cent that is not going into our economy. This is hurting Manitobans and our local businesses.

Instead of deliberately making life harder for Manitobans, will the government admit that their decision to reduce the Education Property Tax Credit was a mistake and reverse it?

Mr. Wharton: Well, Madam Speaker, again, a very—thanks for the lobbed question from the member opposite because, quite frankly, in 2016 Manitobans hired us to fix the finances, rebuild the services and repair the economy; that's exactly what we are doing.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, we are on track and surpassing what we said we would do. After almost three years in government we're well on our way to turning the 'cadoue' to ensure that we don't have debt saddled by our—to our youth and our kids and our grandkids as we go forward.

We'll get it right.

Birth Services in Flin Flon Request to Restore Services

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Here's a fact: it's been nearly four months since this government suspended birth delivery services in Flin Flon. We know from this government's records that about 150 women from Flin Flon and surrounding communities on both sides of the border, including First Nations communities, have given birth per year in Flin Flon hospital.

For four long winter months, this Minister of Health has forced women to travel at least 132 kilometres to The Pas during an incredibly harsh winter over roads that aren't maintained anymore.

What has this minister done to restore birth delivery services in Flin Flon?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the question.

That member is aware that the Minister of Health undertakes no such decision. As a matter of fact, he is aware that the decision to suspend obstetric services at Flin Flon is one that is medically ordered. It was ordered after two separate reviews, who came in and audited and said, in these conditions, no longer safe now.

I would never want to put myself and this government would never put itself in a position to overrule that kind of decision. That member suggests that he would like to do so.

We stand on the side of the evidence. We know—we are watching carefully to see how this progresses and we know that work is undertaken right now to continue to see what long-term solutions can be gotten at.

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

Mr. Lindsey: We know that this government is solely responsible for the state of birth delivery services in Flin Flon. We know that northern mothers-to-be in Flin Flon and surrounding communities and communities on the other side of the border won't—want to be able to give birth in Flin Flon.

Will this government seize the opportunity that's actually out there to reach out, work with the federal government, work with the Saskatchewan government, work with the First Nations communities, work with Flin Flon, Creighton and Denare Beach and all those other communities?

Will they help create a hub for northern health in Flin Flon that will serve all of those communities irrespective of which side of the border they happen to live on?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I'm honoured to tell the member that we're way ahead of him and we have been working collaboratively with our partners, including the government of Saskatchewan, who we gave early notice to when it became clear that medical practitioners and medical experts were recommending the temporary suspension of those services.

Every care has been taken to ensure that expecting moms are aware of the changes. Every precaution is being taken to make sure that as they're being conveyed to another hospital it's being done safely, and every precaution is being taken to make

sure they're repatriated to their own hospital as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

National Drug Plan

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Canada's public and private drug plans leave many patients with little or no coverage, resulting in one out of 10 of patients not taking their prescribed medication because of affordability.

(2) It is estimated that Pharmacare would save Canadians between \$4 billion and \$11 billion per year.

(3) There have been repeated calls to include prescription drugs in Canada's universal health-care system, including:

(a) National Forum on Health (1997, chair, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien);

(b) Commissioner—Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada (2002, chair, Roy Romanow);

(c) several national organizations, including Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Medical Association, Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to encourage the federal government to amend the Canada Health Act by adding prescription medicines prescribed by a licensed practitioner to the definition of covered services in accordance with an established formulary.

(2) To urge the provincial government to develop jointly with the federal government, a universal, single-payer, evidence-based, sustainable public drug plan that contains purchasing power to secure best available pricing, a list of essential medicines addressing priority health needs and the ability to expand to a comprehensive permanent plan that would promote the health and well-being of all Canadians.

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

Daylight Saving Time

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

And this is the background to this petition:

The loss of sleep associated with the beginning of daylight savings time has serious consequences for physical and mental health and has been linked to increases in traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

(2) According to a Manitoba Public Insurance news release, collision data collected in 2014 showed that there were 20 per cent increase in collisions on Manitoba roadways following the spring daylight savings time change when compared to all other Mondays in 2014.

* (14:30)

(3) Daylight savings time is associated with a decrease in productivity the days after clocks are turned forward with no corresponding increase in productivity when clocks are turned back.

(4) There is no 'conclude' evidence that daylight savings time is effective in reducing energy consumption.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to amend The Official Time Act to abolish daylight saving time in Manitoba effective November 4th, 2019, resulting in Manitoba remaining on Central Standard Time, CST, throughout the year and in perpetuity.

And this petition has been signed by Richard Gage, David Wiebe, John Peterson and hundreds of more Manitobas—Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to members that when they are reading their petitions that there is to not be any extraneous dialogue after they have in—have read their petition.

In this instance, the member just went a little bit further in ending his comments about the number of Manitobans that have signed this. That is inappropriate in the House.

Northern Patient Transportation Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Access to quality health care is a fundamental right of all Manitobans, no matter where they live.

(2) The Premier has slashed budgets, cancelled projects for northern communities, making it harder for families to get the primary health care that they need.

(3) The budget for the Northern Regional Health Authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

(4) With limited services in the North, the Premier is forcing families and seniors to travel further for the health care they need.

(5) On November 6, 2018, the Northern Regional Health Authority announced that obstetric delivery services at the Flin Flon General Hospital would be suspended, with no discussion regarding when they will be reinstated.

(6) The result of this decision is that mothers in Flin Flon and surrounding area, will have to travel at least an hour and a half to The Pas, creating unnecessary risk for mothers and their babies.

(7) The people of Flin Flon are concerned for the health and safety of mothers-to-be, their babies, including—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —the extra physical and financial stress that will be placed on them, by this decision of the provincial government.

(8) There has been no commitment from this provincial government that mothers and their escorts who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the northern transportation program.

(9) Flin Flon General Hospital is a regional hub that serves several communities on both sides of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

(10) Because this provincial government has refused to invest in much-needed health-care services in The Pas, the hospital in The Pas may not

be able to handle the extra workload created by this decision.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reinstate obstetric delivery services at Flin Flon General Hospital and work with the government of Saskatchewan and the federal government to ensure that obstetric services continue to be available on a regional basis.

This petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Tom Davie, Scott Eastman, Crystal Merton and many other Manitobans and Saskatchewanians.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, prior to the budget, which is scheduled for this afternoon, I would wonder, as is tradition, if you can seek leave of the House to have a five-minute recess, followed by a one-minute ringing of the division bells to call members back to the House for the budget?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to call a five-minute recess right now, with one minute of ringing of division bells to call people back to the House? *[Agreed]*

And, in advance of the presentation of the budget, I will remind our guests in the gallery that if you are staying to hear the Budget Address you require a separate pass other than the pass that granted you entrance to routine proceedings. And, if you do not have a pass for the budget, we would kindly ask you to vacate the gallery now, please.

Thank you. We will now start our five-minute recess.

The House recessed at 2:35 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:42 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The House is now back in session, and I would ask all members to please take their seats.

Order, please. Order.

The House is now in session.

BUDGET ADDRESS

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, second by the Minister of Health, that the House approves general budgetary policy of the government.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Fielding: I'm honoured to rise in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly about Budget 2019.

Three years ago, Manitobans chose a new direction for our province. After 17 years of mismanagement by the NDP that left our province with growing debt, the longest health care wait-times in Canada, the worst education outcomes, Manitobans chose a new path, Madam Speaker.

They elected our government to fix the finances, so that Manitobans would have greater stability. They elected our government to repair the services, so that Manitobans would have greater security. And they elected our government to rebuild the economy, so that Manitobans—all Manitobans—will have a genuine opportunity to achieve their dreams for themselves and for their children. That job that Manitobans hired us to do, Madam Speaker, that's the job Manitobans hired us to do, and we're getting the job done.

In 2016-17, we reduced the summary deficit by \$147 million to \$764 million. In 2017 and '18, the summary deficit was further reduced to \$695 million. And I am pleased to advise Manitobans that we are on track to reduce the summary deficit in the current '18-19 fiscal year by over \$225,000, to \$470 million. As we said this, earlier this week in our third quarter report, we are tracking \$51 million better than budget.

We've increased our investments in things like health care, in education, for families to record levels in each and every one of our budgets, to the highest level in Manitoba's history. And we're on track to deliver a balanced budget during our second term, Madam Speaker.

Budget 2019 continues our journey on a road to recovery that began three years ago, Madam Speaker. Through a combination of measures that I will outline in a moment, we are now projecting a summary deficit of \$360 million for 2019-20.

That's \$161 million less than summary deficit that was projected in Budget 2018, the current fiscal year. Budget 2019 ends the year of growth in net debt-to-GDP ratio that occurred under the former NDP government.

We've made tremendous progress in reducing the deficit over the last three years because we have a solid plan. And that plan is working, Madam Speaker. It's working because our government is getting value for taxpayer dollars. We're shopping smarter and we're getting better results.

The proof is found in the progress we are making on reducing the deficit each and every year. And it's found in the fact that the world is showing their confidence in Manitoba in a place to invest and a place to grow. They know that Manitoba is once again open for business, and they are responding, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba has led the nation in private sector investment over the past two years, and we're on pace to be amongst the leader in provinces again this year. Those investments are creating good-paying, long-term jobs throughout the province for our citizens.

Our plan is working because we are listening to Manitobans. Since forming government, we have sought Manitoba's guidance on a number of important issues, and they are responding. Our prebudget consultations have extended to every corner of the province, and I want to thank the thousands of Manitobans who participated in that consultation process. Budget 2019 reflects their concerns, their priorities and their hopes. It's a budget they told us they wanted. And, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, it's their budget.

In 2011, the NDP won an election on a promise not to raise the provincial sales tax. And they promised that they would let Manitobans vote on major tax hikes. A short 18 months later, they broke both of those promises. After making more goods and services subject to the PST, they raised the PST rate to 8 per cent without the consult and without the consent of Manitobans. They took more than \$300 million annually off the kitchen table all over the province. They raised the fees on a number of services that Manitobans really depend on. They refused to index tax brackets and taxed even the poorest of Manitobans. The NDP took more of Manitobans' money and gave less back.

Our Progressive Conservative government is taking less and giving more back to Manitobans. We've indexed the basic personal amount. As a result, 8,000 low-income Manitobans will no longer pay Manitoba income tax. We've indexed tax brackets. As a result, Manitobans are now protected from hidden increases in their tax bills. We think that's important.

Under the NDP, Manitoba's ambulance fees were highest in Canada. Our government promised to lower ambulance fees to a maximum of \$250, and we have reduced that fee in each of our first three budgets. Budget 2019 reduces the fee to the target of \$250.

*(14:50)

Madam Speaker, this is a promise that Manitoba Progressive Conservatives make and another promise that was kept. After years of over-taxation and broken promises by the NDP, Manitobans deserve a break and our government is giving them that break.

On July 1st of this year the retail sales tax will be reduced to 7 per cent, Madam Speaker. July 1st is an important date. It's six years to the day after the NDP raised the taxes on Manitobans. While others are taking more off the kitchen table at all levels all over the province with higher property taxes, higher NDP hydro rates, and higher federal deficits and carbon tax, our PC government is cutting the PST, leaving the money where it belongs: with residents.

By the end of our second term this rate reduction will save an average family of four more than \$3,000, Madam Speaker. It will increase economic output and generate 900 person-years of employment. Labour income, including wages and salaries, will grow nearly \$50 million per year, and Manitoba's nominal GDP will increase by close to \$90 million.

In 2016, we promised to cut the PST and we're keeping that promise, Madam Speaker. We're working hard for Manitobans, working hard to help those who need it most in our society. Seniors living on fixed income, single parents, small business owners, young Manitobans entering the workforce, we are giving Manitobans the government they want at a price they can afford.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans want better health care sooner, and that's exactly what our government is delivering on. Wait times are down; the quality of care is improving. Budget 2019 increases funding for health care by over \$47.8 million. That increase

translates into the highest level investment in health care in Manitoba's history for a third year in a row.

It means an additional \$35.8 million in regional health authorities; it means new personal care home beds; it means \$6.4 million more in capital projects, including Holy Family personal care home, the Brandon Regional Health 12-bed expansion and the Flin Flon General Hospital emergency room. It means \$3.8 million in funding for paramedic positions; it means that Manitobans are going to get the emergency care they need faster, Madam Speaker.

It also means over \$2.4 million in renal therapy, \$2.9 million increase to support provincial health services including \$1.2 million to fund the Canadian Blood Services.

Budget 2019 responds to the challenges of methamphetamine addictions with a million dollars in new funding for expansion, a withdrawal-management beds in Winnipeg and Brandon.

We're proud of our Pharmacare program, and that's why 2019 increase in Pharmacare funding to \$270 million is the highest level in Manitoba's history.

Budget 2019 also increases funding for drug treatments for rare diseases by \$4.2 million, Madam Speaker, and it funds the drug information network will increase by over \$16.7 million.

Madam Speaker, our government is working to give Manitoba students the education and training they require in order to complete—to compete for jobs today and in the future. In January, we announced \$6.6-million increase for K-through-12 funding for the 2019-20 school year. Budget 2019 also increases the capital budget for K-through-12 education from \$146.1 million last year to over \$202.2 million, a 38 per cent increase. It's a \$51-million increase that includes more than \$50 million in new funding for structural repair, roof replacements, new mechanical systems and accessibility projects. It funds investments in classrooms, facilities for special needs students and major additions to École Noël-Ritchot in Winnipeg and Mitchell Elementary in the Hanover School Division.

Budget two thousand also contains additional funding for existing projects, including new schools in Brandon, Niverville, Winkler and Winnipeg. That's important for Manitoba families and students, Madam Speaker.

Our government—Madam Speaker, our government puts Manitoba families first, and that's why we've taken steps to ensure that low-income Manitobans no longer pay Manitoba income tax. That's why funding for Community Living disABILITY Services will increase by \$13.6 million to \$439.5 million.

The Family Group Conferencing program is a tremendous initiative that diverts children from the child welfare system by using collaborative decision-making framework that's adding results and getting results for families. Budget 2019 increases funding for this important program by over \$523,000, Madam Speaker.

Our government continues to support innovative solutions to pressing social problems. That includes continued commitments to social finance tools such as social impact bonds, Madam Speaker. Earlier on this year, our government introduced its first made-in-Manitoba social impact bond, which will reduce the number of children in care by pairing at-risk mothers with indigenous doulas.

We will continue to invest in better outcomes for vulnerable Manitobans in areas such as Justice and Health.

We are committed to adding \$1.5 million in support of social impact bonds that will produce better results for Manitobans who need it most.

Budget 2019 also increases operating funding for existing and new child-care projects by \$759,000—or 450 new spaces, Madam Speaker. Recipients of that funding include campus daycare at the University of Manitoba, the Concordia Child Care Centre and the YMHA Jewish Community Centre.

Our government is keeping Manitobans safe and addressing the needs of victims of crime. That's why Budget 2019 adds 29 positions to Manitoba's RCMP staff complement, including 27 additional officers. It delivers an additional \$2.3 million—2.3 million, Madam Speaker—to target drug-related criminal activities, including meth and gang-related crime prevention initiatives. That's a big deal.

Budget 2019 also allocates an additional \$325,000 for Victim Services and continues to support organizations like the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Brandon Victim Services and Candace House. New supports include direct supports for victims of domestic violence and

implementation of restorative justice pilot projects, Madam Speaker.

* (15:00)

Madam Speaker, strong, sustained municipalities have and continue to be the backbone of our province. That's why Manitoba's support for municipalities is among the most generous of all Canada. Budget 2019 continues that commitment, with a total of \$313.5 million in basket funding for local governments. That includes \$121 million in operating funding, \$5.9 million to support public safety initiatives, and over \$170 million in infrastructure supports. Local governments will also benefit from the reduction in the PST. The City of Winnipeg alone will save approximately \$1.7 million annually because of the change of the PST.

Our government knows that strong infrastructure network is critical to the safety and a strong Manitoba economy. When we formed government, we promised to spend \$1 billion annually on strategic infrastructure such as roads, bridges, flood protections, hospitals, schools, universities and colleges. Budget 2019 keeps that promise.

The Municipal 2019 Infrastructure Grant basket will provide provincial funding for such important projects as Winnipeg's Waverley Underpass and Bus Rapid Transit. Municipalities outside of Winnipeg will receive support for water and wastewater infrastructure projects, municipal roads, bridge projects, and provincial cost-shared funding for federal infrastructure opportunities.

As part of the Manitoba Water Services Board's new five-year capital plan, 20 new projects have been approved, with a provincial contribution of over \$22.6 million. The Water Related Capital program will also fund 15 new projects with over 50 drain rehabilitation projects, for a total estimated cost of \$46 million.

Budget 2019 allocates \$350 million toward highways. Funding for new projects includes \$70 million for the Daly Bridge project in Brandon, \$16.7 million for replacement of existing overpass near Portage la Prairie, and \$12 million for improvements to Highway 21 near Shoal Lake. Budget 2019 also includes a one-time \$45 million allocation for capital projects in recognition of Manitoba's 150th anniversary. That includes funding for additional highway infrastructure projects that is so much needed in our province, Madam Speaker.

Under the previous NDP government, Treaty Land Entitlement claims sat unresolved for years. Over our government made—has made tremendous progress in resolving outstanding claims. We will continue to work with indigenous communities on this important issue, in a genuine spirit of reconciliation.

Through the Department of Indigenous and Northern Relations, Budget 2019 funds a number of projects in northern Manitoba, including a fuel tank replacement at Thicket Portage, the God's Lake Narrows waste-water treatment plant and Camperville generation station—generator station placement. Budget 2019 allocates funding for major improvements in airports at St. Theresa Point, Norway House and Shamattawa.

Through the Department of Sustainable Development, Budget 2019 will fund projects at several locations throughout the province, including road improvements in Churchill, Falcon Lake, and water treatment upgrades in Paint Lake and Birds Hill.

Our government recognizes that our generation has a right to develop the use of natural resources, but not to the detriment of future generations. Manitoba's Climate and Green Plan is the best-in-Canada approach to respect to clean energy investments. It supports our economy and will reduce emissions. That's why Budget 2019 allocates \$2.3 million for the new Climate and Green Plan Implementation Office.

Budget 2018 established a conservation trust in order to provide significant financial support for projects aimed at achieving the objectives of Climate and Green Plan, particularly those related to natural conservation. Funding for a number of Conservation Trust projects will be announced in the next few weeks with additional projects to follow, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba is the jewel of Canada's cultural community and our government is proud to support that growth. Cultural activities, in many forms, contributes almost \$2 billion to our province's GDP each and every year and provides direct employment to more than 22,000 Manitobans—more than 3 per cent of our workforce. That's why Budget 2019 includes \$40.8 million in funding for culture and heritage grants.

In 2017-18 fiscal year, Manitoba film and video sector generated over \$173 million in productions—

movie productions in the province—Manitoba. This sum is projected to increase to over \$250 million, a quarter of a billion dollars of productions in this province. It's a tremendous success story and that's why Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit has been made permanent, Madam Speaker.

Recognizing the growth in the industry, Budget 2019 increases funding for the film credit from \$16 million to over \$31.5 million, Madam Speaker.

Last year our government entered into a three-year agreement with the Winnipeg Foundation to assist community foundations in assuming greater role in supporting local groups and heritage assets. Budget 2019 increases funding for this agreement by over a million dollars, Madam Speaker.

Our government is proud of the growth and success of the technology-based industries in the province of Manitoba. We are excited to play a role in bringing global video-game company Ubisoft to Winnipeg and we have worked to—and we're working to attract other game and software developers. That's why Budget 2019 increases support for the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit by over \$400,000.

Madam Speaker, we are thrilled with the tremendous growth of the tourism industry. Manitoba has become one of the world's top destinations and we want to build on that momentum that Lonely Planet has talked about. Budget 2019 continues our investment of more than \$12 million annually to Travel Manitoba under Plan 96/4 funding model.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba's agriculture industry is and always has been the backbone of our province's economy. It's what built our province and it's what's kept our province strong, and it's a big reason why Manitoba leads the nation in private sector capital investment. With more than a billion dollars in new construction by Roquette, Simplot, HyLife, McCain and others, and more on the way, the world is showing their confidence in Manitoba as a place to do business and a place to invest.

Those companies are investing in our province because Manitoba's agriculture industry is made up of thousands of men and women with skills and expertise that guarantees a reliable source of high-quality crops and livestock.

In January our government announced we'll be developing a first of its kind sustainable protein

strategy, Madam Speaker. It will ensure that Manitoba producers will continue to be the leaders in plant and animal protein development.

Budget 2019 continues our support for income stabilization programs for producers, Madam Speaker, and in order to ensure a strong future for the industry, Budget 2019 increases funding for the Young Farmers Rebate enhancement program by over 32 per cent, or \$2 million.

Madam Speaker, three years ago Manitobans hired our government to do a tough job and we're getting the job done. After a decade of debt, we're fixing the finances of the Province of Manitoba. After a decade of decay, we're repairing the services in health care and education, infrastructure and social services. After a decade of decline, we're rebuilding the Manitoba economy. We're moving in the right direction, and we're on target to deliver a balanced budget in our second term.

* (15:10)

We're investing more in health care, more in education and more in Manitoba families. We're keeping Manitoba's—Manitobans safe, and we're keeping our promises, Madam Speaker.

We've increased the basic personal exemption, ended tax bracket creep, lowered ambulance fees, and yes, on July 1st, we will cut the PST back to 7 per cent, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we've made tremendous progress over the first three years, and our government will continue to move the province forward, fuelled by the knowledge that Manitoba's best days are ahead of us, confident that the hard work we are doing today will ensure a brighter future for tomorrow in the province and for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Messages

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I have two messages from His Honour the Administrator, as well as the budget documents, which I would like to table.

Madam Speaker: Please stand for the reading of the messages.

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the Province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 2020, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And that is signed by the Lieutenant Governor.

And the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the Province for capital expenditures and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And I would indicate that both of those are actually from the Administrator.

Please be seated.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Cullen), that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 7, 2019

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