

Fourth 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, March 11, 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 11—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act
(Cider and Cooler Sales at Beer Vendors)**

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 11, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cider and Cooler Sales at Beer Vendors), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Mayer: This bill amends The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act to enable all retail beer vendors to also sell cider and spirit-based coolers, resulting in greater consumer choice and convenience. It will provide the opportunity for private businesses to expand their product assortments to satisfy customer demand and increase their revenues.

This initiative is part of our government's priority to reduce red tape, to provide more choices and convenience for the consumer and greater opportunity and flexibility for businesses.

Thank you.

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

Bill 12—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, I move,

seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox), that Bill 12, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, Bill 12 moves the chief prevention officer position over to SAFE Work Manitoba. It strengthens and co-ordinates fines with other jurisdictions in order to raise—have a—higher fines. And it prevents frivolous and 'vexatients' complaints from being forwarded to the Manitoba Labour Board, as well as a number of administrative changes. Thank you.

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

Bill 18—The Labour Relations Amendment Act

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, I move, second by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, that Bill 18, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, Bill 18 establishes a new framework from which conciliators and grievance mediators will be appointed from the private sector by the Manitoba Labour Board. Thank you.

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

**Bill 15—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act
(Cannabis Possession Restrictions)**

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 15, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Possession Restrictions), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, Bill 15 reinforces Manitoba's commitment to protect the health and safety of Manitobans and prevent illegal cannabis sales. The new provincial offence prohibiting the possession of more than 30 grams of non-medical cannabis in a public place will allow provincial inspectors to take action against those who possess illicit cannabis in Manitoba. The new offence prohibiting the possession of cannabis that is not packaged, labelled and stamped in accordance with federal requirements will target black market product and maintain the integrity of the legal retail cannabis system, and inspectors appointed under The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act will support police in enforcing these new offences.

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

**Bill 17—The Police Services Amendment Act
(Institutional Safety Officers)**

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 17, The Police Services Amendment Act (Institutional Safety Officers), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: Bill 17 amends The Police Services Act to create a new institutional safety officer appointment. The amendments will provide security staff at health-care facilities and other designated public institutions with the legal authority to enforce certain provincial laws. Our regulations will allow for standardized training and qualification requirements.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to acknowledge representatives from the Health Sciences Centre hospital, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Manitoba Nurses Union who have joined us in the gallery today.

Thank you.

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

**Bill 14—The Reducing Red Tape
and Improving Services Act, 2019**

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 14, The Reducing Red Tape

and Improving Services Act, 2019, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: The bill will amend and repeal acts to remove regulatory requirements that cost non-profits, civil servants, local governments and businesses significant time and money by adding value for Manitobans. The bill removes more than 300 regulatory requirements, saving Manitobans and government significant time and money. It includes enabling legislation to allow nurse practitioners to issue death certificates, removes fees for oil and gas lease agents, makes Canada Day a fixed statutory holiday, eliminates duplication and delegates authority from Cabinet down to appropriate levels of decision makers and many more common-sense changes to ensure efficient government and improve front-line services.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to present the bill to the House for its consideration.

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

* (13:40)

**Bill 225—The Provincial Court Amendment Act
(Mandatory Awareness Training)**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas, (Mrs. Smith), that Bill 225, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Mandatory Awareness Training), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce, for first reading, Bill 225, The Provincial Court Amendment Act. This bill would require newly appointed provincial judges to undergo sexual assault awareness training before they take office.

This bill would also require newly appointed 'judicials' of peace designated to hear matters on domestic violence and stalking to undergo training on the subjects of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault awareness before they take office.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

Miigwech.

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

**Bill 221—The Animal Care Amendment Act
(Declawing of Cats)**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) that Bill 221, The Animal Care Amendment Act (Declawing of Cats), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: Cosmetic declawing of cats is comparable to amputating the last joint of a cat's finger, a procedure that causes unnecessary and long-term pain to cats.

I'm proud to introduce Bill 221 today, which prohibits cosmetic declawing, ensuring the ethical and humane treatment of cats in Manitoba.

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

Bill 223—The Animal Care Amendment Act

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas that Bill 223, The Animal Care Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: Bill 223 recognizes that there is no place for puppy mills in Manitoba. Bill 223 prohibits a person from possessing more than four female, intact dogs capable of reproduction, an effort to reduce mistreatment and the number of stray dogs in Manitoba who are forced to live in horrible conditions.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of the Manitoba Farm Products Marketing Council respecting the certification of a qualified organization for the Department of Agriculture.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine

proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Festival du Voyageur

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, today I am absolutely thrilled to recognize the accomplishments of one of Manitoba's signature festivals: Festival du Voyageur.

Manitobans are so fortunate to have so many wonderful festivals that take place right across our province. Festivals play a vital role in making culture accessible to all Manitobans while providing an opportunity to gather and celebrate the diversity of our wonderful province.

This year, Madam Speaker, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Festival du Voyageur, the largest annual winter festival in western Canada. From February 15th to 24th, visitors shared in the vibrant francophone, Metis and First Nations culture through song, food and dance.

And, Madam Speaker, it was especially exciting to visit Festival this year with my two little granddaughters, who thoroughly enjoyed the music, dance, snow sculptures, and their very favourite, the maple syrup ice taffy. Experiencing Festival through their eyes was very special, and it really means so much to me.

Festival celebrates Manitobans' love for winter by providing unique cultural experiences for the whole family. It truly helps raise our province's—province—our province's profile regionally, nationally and internationally as a winter destination.

For 50 years Manitobans have embraced Festival. Our government was proud to recognize this milestone with the Celebrate Manitoba designation at the start of this festival.

We commend the dedication and passion that the many Manitobans who volunteered to make the 50th anniversary so special. Merci.

Madam Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to please join me in recognizing the board of directors, the staff and the thousands of volunteers who made Festival du Voyageur such a huge success. Some of the team are in the gallery today, including Executive Director Darrel Nadeau.

Merci and thank you for all of your hard work, and congratulations on your 50th anniversary. Hé-ho.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Bon Festival, puis bon cinquantième Festival aussi.

Translation

Happy Festival and happy 50th Festival as well.

English

So Festival du Voyageur, it's a major cultural event for so many people in the province. Myself, I've been going to check out Festival since I was a little kid going to school in St. Boniface. And this year, on Louis Riel Day, I was happy to take my boys back to Festival for their 50th anniversary. Of course, the boys' first question is: can we go to the Cabane à sucre, right? The taffy in the snow; the kids love it.

Initially, it was part of the revitalization of St. Boniface and francophone culture in Manitoba that led to the creation of Festival, and it's been a real pleasure over the years to see the Festival evolve and grow and begin to celebrate the Metis and indigenous component of the Francophone-Manitoban identity as well.

Of course, we know that the Metis are ever more visible. This year there was a Metis flag procession in the Festival. There's also a powwow workshop that was hugely well attended and tons of great performers from right across Canada and, of course, right across Manitoba.

We know that Festival continues to grow each and every year, and for good reason. It's a ton of fun. It gives us an opportunity to head out during a cold part of winter and still celebrate what makes life in Manitoba so exciting and interesting for all of us. So I just want to say to everybody involved in the organizing of Festival, congratulations on 50 years. Here's to 50 more years.

Puis aussi, je remercie les milliers de bénévoles qui ont travaillé tellement fort au cours des années pour faire un Festival un si grand succès, et j'attends un autre 50 ans de célébrations de la communauté francophone et métisse au Manitoba. Hé-ho.

Translation

I also thank the thousands of volunteers who worked so hard over the years to make Festival such a great success, and I look forward to another 50 years of

celebrating the francophone and Metis community in Manitoba. Hé-ho.

Mrs. Cox: I would like to ask for leave to have the names of the individuals in the gallery put into Hansard. Thank you.

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

Festival du Voyageur representatives: Darrel Nadeau, Lisa Cupples, Marc Fabas, Robert Regnier.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

Oh, pardon me.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Merci, Madame la Présidente. Je me lève aujourd'hui pour célébrer la cinquantième année du Festival du Voyageur, qui vient de finir en février. Chaque année, des milliers de personnes viennent à danser, célébrer et manger de la nourriture merveilleuse. C'est le plus grand festival d'hiver de l'Ouest du Canada, et c'est tenu dans ma circonscription de Saint-Boniface.

Le Festival du Voyageur célèbre les Français, les Métis et les Premières Nations, et le patrimoine de notre province et de notre pays. C'est une joyeuse célébration de vie dans une ville d'hiver au centre d'un pays d'hiver. L'un de mes moments préférés cette année a été quand j'ai participé au concours des barbues, et avec des barbes vraiment incroyables, je n'ai pas gagné, mais je me suis beaucoup amusé.

De belles sculptures de neige et une tente de disco silencieuse—il y a toujours tant de plaisir à s'amuser à ce festival d'hiver étonnant, et ce ne serait pas possible sans tout le travail du personnel et des bénévoles du festival. Merci pour tout ce que vous faites et de tout votre travail acharné. Je veux aussi remercier et féliciter Françoise Terrien-Vignon pour son Sundé Nite Spécial, qui était tellement drôle.

Félicitations pour les premiers 50 ans, et je tiens à offrir tous mes vœux de succès à l'organisation du Festival pour les cinquante prochaines années. Hé-ho.

Translation

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to celebrate the 50th year of Festival du Voyageur, which just finished in February. Each year thousands of people come dance, celebrate and eat wonderful food. It is the largest winter festival in western Canada, and it is held in my riding of St. Boniface.

The Festival du Voyageur celebrates francophones, Metis and First Nations peoples, as well as the heritage of our province and of our country. It is a joyous celebration of life in a winter city at the centre of a winter country. One of my favourite moments this year was when I participated in the beard contest. There were really incredible beards, and I did not win, but I did have lots of fun.

Beautiful snow sculptures and a silent disco tent: there's always so much fun to be had at this amazing winter festival, which would not be possible without all the work put in by Festival's staff and volunteers. Thank you for everything that you do and all your hard work. I also want to thank and congratulate Françoise Terrien-Vignon on her Sundé Nite Spécial, which was hilarious.

Congratulations on the first 50 years, and I wish you all the best in organizing the Festival over the next 50 years. Hé-ho.

* (13:50)

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, yesterday, Sunday, March the 10th, was the start of Canadian agriculture safety week. The Canadian agriculture safety association; the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, FSP; the Canadian Federation of Agriculture; SAFE Work Manitoba and presenting sponsor, Farm Credit Canada, are encouraging all Canadians to be part of Ag Safety Week. Manitoba Agriculture recognizes importance of working together to improve farm safety and commends the efforts of these organizations and others who continue to raise awareness of safety on our farms.

For more than a decade, Canadian agriculture safety association has been raising awareness about the importance of safety on Canadian farms through the Canadian agriculture safety week campaign, which includes the recent participation of Manitoba's Farm Safety Program. This initiative serves as an opportunity to reflect on the importance of farm safety and provide producers with the resources needed to make their farm safer.

This year's theme for the Canadian agriculture safety week is Safe & Strong Farms. As part of a three-year campaign, Build an AgSafe Canada. The aim is to empower farmers, farm families and

farming communities to build, grow and lead the agriculture industry in safety and sustainability.

Recently, through the Ag Action Manitoba program, our government announced \$1.1 million over the next five years to Keystone Ag Producers to continue delivery of Manitoba Farm Safety Program. Today, we wear burlap ribbons, which is a common product on our farms, in addition to being the fabric of commerce in seed, feed and grain. I encourage all members to wear their ribbons throughout the week, which will proudly affirm their commitment to keeping all Manitoba farmers, their farm families and farm workers safe.

Today, I'm joined in the gallery by Marcel Hacault and Robin Anderson from the Canadian agriculture safety association, Renée Simcoe from Manitoba Farm Safety Program, as well as Patty Rosher from the Keystone Ag Producers.

I'd to ask the House to join me in congratulating their hard work and dedication, in addition to wishing everyone a safe Canadian agriculture safety week.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings had been provided in accordance with our rule 26(2) for this ministerial statement.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, Manitoba thrives on agriculture. Over 10 per cent of Manitoba jobs are tied to agriculture and billions of dollars of Manitoba agricultural products are traded internationally.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is an annual campaign focused on the importance of safe agriculture. This March, the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association wants to encourage all Canadians to celebrate Safe & Strong Farms.

Safe & Strong Farms is part of a three-year campaign celebrating farm safety across Canada. The goal is to empower farmers, farm families and farming communities to build, grow and lead for agricultural safety and sustainability.

I want to thank Manitoba's farmers and agricultural leaders for the work they do for this province. By ensuring the safety of our farmers, we are protecting families and workers, but also the future of our economy. We stand with agricultural workers and we support solutions to the safety challenges they face.

Remember, Madam Speaker, an injury to one is an injury to all, regardless of where you work, whether it's in a factory, a warehouse, an office or on a farm.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, this week farmers across Manitoba will mark this year's theme of Safe & Strong Farms for Canadian Agricultural Safety Week.

This week is intended to emphasize the importance of working with farmers, their families, their employees and farm organizations to promote farm safety. Farmers are, of course, vital to our province, and not only do Manitoba farms and farmers feed our families, but they build economic strength and socioeconomic stability in our province.

It's estimated that between—one in 10 jobs in Manitoba—more than 60,000—depend on direct or indirect spin-offs from agriculture. According to the Canadian agricultural injury reporting—report, in 2017 agriculture ranked fourth as the most hazardous industry in Canada with respect to rates of fatal injury. In terms of absolute numbers of fatalities, there was no more dangerous occupation.

We need to emphasize safety. The concerns include physical safety in an occupation that uses a lot of heavy machinery. The concerns are about hazardous materials, including chemicals, in an industry which employs many chemicals. Concerns include brain and mental health in an industry where there's a lot of stress.

These numbers, of course, staggering, and we need to all work together to improve safety on our farms and for our farmers.

I commend the work that Farm Safety Manitoba is doing. They provide resources for farmers, including training and seminars, noise and gas checks, and farm safety consultations.

On April the 8th, Manitoba Farm Safety will be hosting a stress management mental health and work-life balance seminar for farmers. I thank them for their continuing efforts in improving the lives.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pegasus Publications Incorporated

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I am honoured to rise in the House today to celebrate

the 21st anniversary of Pegasus Publications Incorporated.

Pegasus Publications was established in 1998 by founder and president Dorothy Dobbie. After serving as a Member of Parliament from 1988 through 1993, Dorothy wanted to create a media source that was committed to publishing useful magazines and papers that added value to her readers, advertisers and for the community at large.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba Gardener was the first totally subscription/newsstand-based publication in Manitoba. The company now produces sister Gardener magazines in Alberta and Ontario.

Pegasus went on to publish The Hub magazine in partnership with the Winnipeg Airports Authority, and Lifestyles 55, their monthly tabloid magazine for mature Manitobans. Biannual magazines for the Manitoba Aviation Council and Aerospace Association, as well as the directory of the Assiniboine chamber of commerce, are all produced by Pegasus Publications.

In early 2016 a consortium was formed with Manitoban radio, Internet, video, printing and marketing owners, launching Pegasus from paper to include a comprehensive media platform for business owners and their clientele. Above and beyond the general operations of Pegasus, their dedicated staff manages to participate in numerous community endeavours in support of local charities.

I am so pleased to have as my guests in the gallery today some of the Pegasus staff, including Dorothy Dobbie, founder and president.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me in congratulating Dorothy and her staff for their community—or, for their commitment to community, to serving Manitobans through media and through community involvement. I wish them all the best for continued success for many years to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include all of the names of the individuals that are in the gallery with us today in Hansard.

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

Pegasus Publications: Joan Cohen, retired editor; Yasmin Concepcion, digital manager; Dorothy Dobbie, founder and president; Gordon Gage, sales manager; Ian Leatt, general manager; Rick Roschuk, campaign media specialist; Karl Thomsen, creative director; Amy Zhang, administration.

Fred Tipping Place

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the circumstances facing the residents of Fred Tipping Place, a 55-plus Manitoba Housing apartment complex in Fort Garry-Riverview.

In December, the Pallister government without warning or consultation issued an RFP to contract out management services at Fred Tipping and many other social housing facilities across Manitoba.

Since the RFP was issued, my office has been inundated with requests for information about the future of the building. In January, I wrote to the Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson) for information about the proposed changes but the response raised more questions than it answered.

Recently, the leader of the opposition and I met with the residents at Fred Tipping to hear their many concerns because no one in the Pallister government bothered to ask. At the meeting, residents wanted to know: Will there be more cuts to Manitoba Housing Security services? Will pest control services be enhanced, or will they continue to deteriorate? Will the tenant resource worker position be retained, or will it be cut? Will janitorial services be maintained and, if so, at what level? Will there be an on-site property manager, or will that position be cut, too? Will funding for the tenant advisory committee continue, or is that another cut? Will tenants be able to rely on free laundry services, or will that service also be eliminated?

* (14:00)

Tenants have noticed cutbacks to many of these services in the last two years and are increasingly concerned about what the future holds once management is contracted out on April 1st.

According to the RFP, Manitoba Housing committed to keep their tenants informed at every stage of the process, but this has not happened. In fact, there has been no communication. This is a promise made and a promise broken.

There are residents of Fred Tipping Place in the gallery today. I call on the Minister of Families

to meet with them this afternoon to answer their questions, address their concerns and, for once, listen to some of Manitoba's most vulnerable citizens.

Taralea Simpson

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to inform this House about Taralea Simpson, who was recently named the 2018 Agronomist of the Year by the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers, CAAR, at the organization's annual conference in Winnipeg.

In addition, Taralea was also honoured at the Portage la Prairie chamber's excellence in agriculture banquet, receiving the Outstanding Contribution to Agriculture award. This award recognized Taralea, who worked tirelessly to improve agriculture, delivering innovation, championing the needs of farmers and spearheading change and promoting the agricultural industry to the wider public.

Taralea graduated from the University of Manitoba with a bachelor of science in agriculture. She works as an agronomist at Shur-Gro Farm Services, providing agronomic knowledge and consumer service for over 25 years. She also runs a cow-calf operation with her daughter and husband.

Throughout her career, Taralea has 'demnaded'—demonstrated exceptional professionalism and leadership in the community not only through her work, but also her volunteering in the ag industry.

Last fall, Taralea Simpson, along with her sister Tracy, made their long-lifelong dream a reality, opening Farm Away Retreat, a bed and breakfast on the southern edge of Portage. This unique business provides the opportunity for urban and rural people alike to immerse themselves in agriculture and nature.

I ask all honourable members to join me congratulating Taralea for her commitment to our community and to the ag industry, helping producers to achieve in the ever-changing world of agronomic knowledge.

Lynne Somerville

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, it is my sincere pleasure to highlight today the incredible work of local activist, Lynne Somerville.

I had the pleasure of knowing Lynne for several decades. She's one of those people who seems to be at every community event, and when there's important work to be done around the table to make

the next great community initiative happen, she's always there. In the neighbourhood, when someone says, I met with Lynne about that, or Lynne told me about this, everyone knows who they're referring to.

Lynne serves as a mentor and an advocate with the West Broadway Community Ministry, one of several organizations located at Crossways in Common. Last year—or every year, rather, Lynne works with hundreds of vulnerable people and their families, helping them access housing, acquire personal identification documents and receive financial supports through EIA and other programs. Lynne will also put her talents to good use helping people prepare for the formal hearings at the Residential Tenancies Commission and the Social Services Appeal Board.

Throughout all of her efforts, Lynne is the embodiment of a patient friend, someone you can go to with your problems and know that she is on your side. The vast majority of people Lynne works with live with mental health and addictions issues, but she will listen to their stories and help them achieve their hopes for the future without a hint of judgment.

Lynne and everyone else at the community ministry continue their valiant efforts despite the increased challenges they are facing. As safe and affordable housing becomes harder and harder to find and the impacts of addiction hit harder, demands at West Broadway Community Ministry are escalating beyond capacity. Last year they provided almost 24,000 meals and over 2,000 food hampers to people in need. Homeless people can now regularly be found sleeping on the floor every day that the ministry is open, grabbing some precious hours of safe—of sleep in a safe, indoor space away from winter's chill. Yet, because of the erratic and often dangerous behaviour associated with crystal meth, the ministry will soon have to curtail the hours of availability.

Madam Speaker, Lynne Somerville joins us in the public gallery here at the Manitoba Legislature here today, so let me simply say to her and to Lynda Trono, minister at the community ministry, thank you so much for all that you have done and all that you continue to do for vulnerable people in West Broadway.

Here's to the day when all of that work is finally done.

Thank you, Lynne.

Grace Livingstone

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Today I rise in the House to recognize a long-time volunteer in the Swan River constituency, Mrs. Grace Livingstone. Grace was recently awarded the first ever Citizen of the Year award in the town of Swan River for her outstanding volunteerism.

Grace started volunteering with the Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary 67 years ago while she was a busy mom raising a family of four children. In the early days, Grace would take her personal sewing machine in the west door of the hospital and spend volunteer hours sewing baby diapers and mending hospital sheets.

Grace has been involved in everything from sewing diapers and sheets, auction sales, catering weddings, making freezer-ready pies for sale and selling many tickets, all while working the concession in our local hospital every Thursday.

Her volunteering extended to many other organizations. Despite a young family, she stayed volunteering with the hospital auxiliary for 67 years. This even led her to a stint on the local hospital board. When asked, she didn't think she would go on the board, but given a bit of time to think about it, she decided they would not have asked her had they not thought she would be a good—or she'd be good at the job, so she went on the board.

It's folks like Grace Livingstone who give so much of themselves that make our communities better places. In her words: There's not enough money to go around to pay everyone to do all the things that need to be done in communities. That is why she has always volunteered.

Grace believes that it takes volunteers to build a community, and through her 67 years she has, for sure, made the Swan River Health Auxiliary a better organization. Grace says: You don't—you do not always need money to do things for one another, but we do need money to purchase much needed equipment. Grace Livingstone is one of the many ladies that has made this possible through her volunteering spirit.

Thank you, Grace.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the public gallery we have with us today 21 Japanese students from the Toho secondary school from Najoya, Japan. They are visiting Manitoba from March 10th to the 17th as part of the Kakehashi Project. The Kakehashi Project was established in 2013 to encourage exchange and dialogue between Japanese youth and the international community. This year the Kakehashi Project Canada is sending 114 Canadian students and young professionals to Japan, and we are receiving these 21 students as visitors to Manitoba.

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

Also seated in the public gallery we have David Johnson, brother to the member of the Interlake, visiting from BC, and we'd like to welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Reforms Government Record

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier has made the single largest cut to our health care in a generation. That was the choice he made—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in the last budget—to make a big cut to health care in Manitoba—and we see what the impacts are: he's cut three emergency rooms from Winnipeg; he's cut clinics like the Family Medical Centre and he's even forced the cancellation of many cardiac surgeries. All that, and on top of it, the Premier wants to cut a further \$120 million from the health-care budget this year. That is the biggest cut to health care in Manitoba's history.

Now, \$120 million could keep the Concordia emergency room open and running for 15 more years, Madam Speaker, but the Premier does not appear to be concerned with that. He simply wants to rush ahead with his plan to close emergency rooms.

Manitobans want our health-care system to improve, to focus more on prevention, to focus on mental health and—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'm not sure where the member was when our Finance Minister was giving the most celebratory and worthwhile budget

address last week, Madam Speaker, but he certainly wasn't taking notes—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —in this Chamber or he'd get his numbers right and wouldn't be repeating false accusations today.

The monumental contribution to health care that this government is making, Madam Speaker, in this year's budget alone, is over \$414 million higher than the NDP ever invested.

* (14:10)

So I congratulate our Finance Minister, our Health Minister and our whole team on this side of the House for fulfilling the commitment to health care in this province.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, Madam Speaker, the \$120-million cut that the Premier has brought in with this budget was announced just a few days after they revealed that they cut, in-year, \$240 million from the health-care system last year. So they didn't think that the quarter-billion-dollar cut from health care was enough; they decided to cut a further \$120 billion—\$120 million from the budget this year.

Of course, it's not just the dollar—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —value, it's the impact on health care here in the province.

We know that cardiac surgeries are being cancelled. We know that clinics like the Family Medical Centre are being closed and, of course, we know the Premier is rushing ahead with his plan to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia.

Manitobans do want the health-care system to pivot towards improving mental health and keeping people healthy at home.

When will the Premier bring forward a real plan to improve health care in Manitoba and abandon this plan to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the health-care reorganization that was commissioned—the recommendations were commissioned by the previous government, who did not have the courage to act on those

recommendations, Madam Speaker, which was harmful and hurtful to people in the province.

What we have done by adopting those expert recommendations and having the courage to proceed with them is improve the health-care system so that MRA–MRI wait times are declining, emergency room wait times are declining, ambulance fees are in–half of what they were in the NDP.

And Madam Speaker, thousands of Manitobans don't now have to be transferred while in acute conditions from one hospital to another because resources are spread all over the place to make the NDP look good. Rather, they're located in concentrated areas where people can get better care sooner. That's the way to prevent problems and the way to prevent health–negative health consequences for Manitoba families.

What they broke, Madam Speaker, we are fixing.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, Madam Speaker, on March 1st of this year the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority said that emergency room wait times are up and they will continue to rise. That's a direct quote from the WRHA, overseen by this Premier.

So it's clear that on the No. 1 priority of Manitobans, which is health care, that the Premier is moving in the wrong direction and he's making things worse, because not only are ER wait times already up and the WRHA is warning that they will continue to rise, but he's decided that he's going to move ahead with his plan to close emergency rooms.

And on top of that, hey, why not cut another \$120 million from the health-care budget? It's all contained within the budget documents that this Premier brought forward.

When will he abandon this misguided plan to close emergency rooms and instead focus on investing in mental health and prevention in the community, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Pallister: Well, this is part of what I mean, Madam Speaker, when I say that we are making progress in the face of tremendous challenges. We inherited a broken system that was 10th in the country from the NDP and the member says let's go back there, and that doesn't make any sense.

The member may not be up for the challenge, but we are on this side of the House and we are getting results. So I would say to the member, don't be so pessimistic. Don't give up hope.

The fact is that the Canadian institute of health information, a good source of unbiased information, as opposed to the member opposite, has said we are Canada's most improved province and that's what we plan to continue to be, Madam Speaker.

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

Highways and Roads Maintenance Budget

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So, again, summary of that back and forth between the Premier and I: the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority says that ER wait times are going up and they will continue to rise, even as they close hospitals.

Moving on to a new subject, we know that the City of Winnipeg is budgeting zero dollars for residential road repair this year and it's a direct result of the spending cuts that the Pallister government is bringing in on infrastructure spending.

We know that when it comes to the City, the Premier's got plenty of time to point the finger or to pick fights or to exacerbate the failing relationship that he's got there, but he doesn't appear to have time to sit down, roll up his sleeves and get the job done.

Manitobans want their roads to be repaired, particularly in the city of Winnipeg, and yet the Premier is failing at that task.

Will the Premier stop the fighting, stop the cuts, and get down to work to fix streets in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate any question from the NDP leader on the topic of picking fights. And I remind the member that the infrastructure budget for the City of Winnipeg just went up by 35 per cent. And I remind the member that the City of Winnipeg enjoys some of the most generous and unconstrained funding commitments from this provincial government of any city in the country. And I remind the member that when it comes to building relationships it is something we have some experience at doing very successfully in every aspect of the portfolios managed by the team on this side of the House.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Minister of Education's glasses popped off when the Premier just said that last line, surprised as he was to note the deteriorating relationship with the Prime Minister, with the mayor and with everyone else who doesn't need the Premier to sign their nomination papers, Madam Speaker.

Now, we know the impact that the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Kinew:—Premier's cuts in the city of Winnipeg will result in zero dollars being spent on residential road repair, but it goes beyond the Perimeter as well, Madam Speaker, because contained within this budget is an \$11-million cut to the highways maintenance budget this year.

So, again, they cut \$11 million from maintenance last year, and now they're doubling down and they're going to cut another \$11 million this year.

When will the Premier abandon this plan of austerity and get down to work, to fixing the roads and highways right across Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, it should be noted that we are exceeding, in our commitment to road infrastructure funding, what the NDP did in 15 of 17 years they were in government. The only two where they exceeded that was when they were desperately trying to salvage their political fortunes by spending at no concern to value in the last year and a half before the last election.

In terms of the relationship with Ottawa, Madam Speaker, when we have had the opportunity to work with Ottawa successfully, we've done it on many portfolios. When we have had the opportunity to stand up and say they're wrong, we do that.

The member opposite coddled Ottawa when they cut our health-care funding, nodded in their direction when they proposed to raise taxes on farms and small businesses and did nothing, and when they—when he had the chance to stand up and defend Manitoba interests against increases in taxes on home heating and transport or on travel, he did nothing—nothing at all is not a relationship.

We have a good working relationship with Ottawa because we're honest with them.

We stand up for Manitobans. It's too bad the members opposite don't have that courage, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: I'd just like the Hansard record to be pointed out for a second, Madam Speaker, that we unequivocally condemn the federal government for their mishandling of the SNC-Lavalin affair.

However, the Premier, how did he vote on that motion? How did the Premier vote on that motion? I would like to return to the voting record on that motion, Madam Speaker. Again, the Premier couldn't find the time to weigh in—too busy cutting health care; too busy cutting the roads budget; too busy cutting flood protection here in the city of—or in the province of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

So, again, we know that the No. 1 priority for Manitobans is health care. We know that another shared top priority is fixing the roads in our province.

When will the Premier back off of this agenda of austerity and get back to fixing roads and highways right across the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, when the member opposite speaks about defending health care, he neglects to mention that the \$2.2-billion reduction from the federal government met with zero response from he and his colleagues.

Madam Speaker, when the member takes the side of Ottawa on every issue he's simply trying to mimic the behaviour of the leader of the Liberal Party here in Manitoba, and what he needs to do is join with us and stand up for Manitobans. He should do that as well on the PST reduction because, of course, the NDP promised they wouldn't bring it in and he said they were wrong to do it.

Now he's changed his mind. I guess he was for it before he was against it before he was for it before he was against it, Madam Speaker. He can't seem to decide.

Here's a quote, Madam Speaker: The PST reduction benefits everyone by lowering costs for individual consumers, families, municipalities, et cetera. That's from Lorne Calvert, the former NDP premier of Saskatchewan. I think the member should take up the word of Lorne Calvert and support us in putting more money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Addiction Treatment Services Investments Needed

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Last week Jamie Adao Jr., a courageous 17-year-old child was murdered protecting his grandmother from a man looking for money to fuel his drug addiction.

Madam Speaker, Winnipeg Police Service have seen an 890 per cent increase in meth possession charges, and needle use has dramatically increased into the millions. Front-line social and health-care workers, including security guards, are facing increased violence and attacks. Residents at a recent forum expressed, and I quote, we don't feel safe anymore, not even in our homes.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) acknowledge that there is an addictions crisis in our province today?

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

Every jurisdiction understands that we are all troubled by the rise of the use of illicit drugs in our communities. This is a health-related issue; it is also a public safety issue. It is a community issue. It affects all of us, and that's why our government is taking action. We have taken action, with the opening of five Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics, which we know are being well received in this province.

We've also taken action by expanding services for individuals who are looking to be free of addictions and we will continue to make these good investments on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: In the midst of an addictions crisis, even after millions in federal health transfers, the Premier has frozen funding for mental health and addiction services in their 2019 budget. The Premier only cares about the bottom line, Madam Speaker. There's no other way to explain why he's frozen mental health and addiction services in the midst of this crisis. And while the Premier lounges on the beach, unconcerned, Manitobans are dying.

Will the Premier stop stalling and make real investments in mental health and addiction services to address this meth crisis in our province, today?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, that member does nothing to help her arguments when she uses pitiful personal attacks like that. It's regrettable, and it reflects far more on her tactics than on anything else.

On the question: the member knows that our government is making good investments to face a challenge that no one—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —in North America is saying is simple. Only the NDP pretends, somehow, for partisan reasons that this is simple. Nothing—*[interjection]*—about this is simple.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: We will take good advice from anywhere. We are reaching out to other jurisdictions, we are listening to experts and we are acting.

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

Ms. Fontaine: How about listening to the children's advocate when she said this government, the Pallister government, doesn't have a plan to address mental health or addictions crisis? But they're not listening to her. Or, we could listen to the WRHA when they say that there's a lack of provincial leadership. But we're not going to listen to them.

It appears the Premier and the Minister of Health won't be producing a plan any time soon. Through a freedom of information act, we've learned there's been no RFP issued to address the need for a withdrawal and clinical support for meth users in our province.

When will the Premier or the minister or somebody start caring about this meth crisis, develop a plan and a strategy immediately, today, right now?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, how about listening to medical professionals across this province who have recognised that we are one of the very first provinces to give—well, the first—to give olanzapine to emergency medical services personnel to give to people who are exhibiting the signs of increasing psychosis? How about listening to medical professionals who are saying that Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics are really meeting people at the very point of their need, giving them access to services; that was never available under the

NDP? How about listening—*[interjection]*—to those individuals?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: We are listening to Manitobans and the experts.

Manitoba Education Library Elimination Impact on Teachers and Students

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Over the weekend we learned that the Manitoba education library has been cut. Teachers and librarians are calling this a terrible move as it will only increase inequality and limit access to materials for kids who need these resources the most.

The 25 people that work at the library ensure that the collection supports Manitoba's curriculum, but now this resource is being arbitrarily dismantled.

The question is: Why is this minister and Premier (Mr. Pallister) cutting the Manitoba educational library?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, over the last many years there's been something developed called the Internet, and as a result of the Internet, in other provinces that had similar types of resources, they found that they could, by putting resources online, more equitably share those resources with their teachers around the province. We are the only province in Canada that hasn't done that.

We are moving from the physical-based library to more online resources so the teachers around the province can actually have those resources, and it's all in part and thanks to the Internet, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, this minister—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —has to know that teachers are using this—more of the resources of the Education Library each and every year, not less. In fact, that's in this minister's own department's annual report. The Manitoba education library provides large-format Braille books and resources for those who have hearing impairment. One teacher explains that the library was the only source of support when she had a student with a visual impairment.

This minister—so the question is: Why is this minister closing a library that—directly supports resources for visually impaired students?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, there are no changes when it comes to the resources for visually or hearing impaired students. They are remaining and will be accessed in exactly the same way.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, educators and librarians are calling the cuts to the Manitoba education library, quote, a huge loss, especially for rural and northern students. Another says that it—she is simply, quote, broken hearted about this cut and what it means for students. Teachers explain that they use this library on a monthly basis to supplement small libraries in rural schools, which have limited budgets for books under this Pallister government's austerity.

The minister is going to hear the voices of students and teachers and parents in the coming days in his education review.

What will he tell them when they ask why is he cutting the Manitoba education library?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, according to the library, .00001 per cent of students were accessing that library; at most they would have 14 teachers a day. There were 19 staff, sometimes to help 14 people who might come into a library in the entire day. It was underutilized. By putting those resources online not only can we have more than .00001 per cent of teachers able to access the resources, they can be accessed across the province.

I don't know why that member hates equality, Madam Speaker.

Addiction Treatment Services Funding and Wait Times

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): After three years, it's sad to see just how little this government has done to respond to a growing meth crisis that has been fuelling crime and violence and hurting families across this province. The government's responses have been like putting a band-aid on a broken leg. RAAM clinics don't stop home invasions, and a handful of new beds this government has provided is nowhere near what is

actually required. We know this because wait times for treatment have steadily been going up.

I table the government's own figures. For adult men the wait time is up over 37 per cent over the last two years, and while the wait times have not gone up for adult women, they have been waiting for 206 days on average: months.

I ask the Premier: What does he expect people with addictions to do when they have to wait months for an appointment for treatment?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, we're investing in many ways. This is a—as even the NDP's back-of-the napkin investigation revealed—this is a complex problem, but we are investing in many ways to prevent use, in discouraging use. We are also investing in many ways to encourage people who wish to get off meth to help them get off meth through detoxification and various other mechanisms.

* (14:30)

But I would encourage the member to be consistent in his application of his questions and in his positions as Leader of the Liberal Party, and I'll read a quote to you: In fact, parties who fail to get 10 per cent of the vote aren't eligible for a rebate. But the goal of this arbitrary number is clear: to discourage independents and smaller parties from running and to undermine their finances. Subsidies, it would appear, are for winners only.

This was the member's comment in respect of the campaign kickback program, which we are eliminating. So, just recently, the member spoke ardently against such a program being in place and now he's in favour of it.

I'd like him to come clean on what his actual position is on this issue, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order. *[interjection]*

I have not yet recognized the member.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I've spoken to a number of people who are concerned that, as the weather gets better, the meth crisis is only going to get worse, not just in Winnipeg but in every community across Manitoba.

As a caucus, we Liberals called for a meth task force, but not one that would just deliver another report, one that would take action and immediately start marshalling the resources of government in order to make a difference on what we know is needed. We need prevention; it's not being delivered. We need mental health care; it's not being delivered. We need drug stabilization units so people suffering from meth psychosis are not a threat to themselves and others because we don't have them, so they aren't just kept in jail instead. We need treatment programs that aren't just catch and release, but where people can stay as long as it takes to get better.

Given the number of plans and reports still sitting on the shelf on so many issues, why should Manitobans have any confidence that this newest task force report will be acted on?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, we're offering flexible withdrawal management services, we've added six new mental health beds at HSC, we've expanded capacity for women's treatment with 12 beds at AFM, provincial take-home naloxone program in '17, last year five RAAM clinics. We continue—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —to look for other options to deal with this difficult challenge.

The member needs to show some consistency in his positions. Here's another quote: Was it wrong to raise the PST? Yes, it broke an election promise and it's a regressive tax. It hits low-income earners and small businesses harder than people with high incomes or big corps. Who said that, Madam Speaker? The Liberal leader said that. Last week he said he was for it.

He's got to get consistent, decide what's his position. Is he with Manitoba taxpayers or is he against them, Madam Speaker?

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, we need to be clear: this government's inaction is fuelling the meth crisis. This drug is destroying lives, families and threatening communities. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: It is driving meth-related violence in hospitals.

Winnipeg Police Chief Danny Smyth recently said 2019 is off to a bad start because meth was involved of six of seven homicides.

And the Organized Crime Unit says meth being cheap and easily available has changed the landscape of Winnipeg. I've seen it everywhere, including violent crime in my own constituency of St. Boniface.

When police come across someone who is high on meth or in meth psychosis, the only option they have is to arrest them, and there is no place to take them but jail. The federal government has offered \$400 million over the next 10 years, half of which is supposed to fund mental health care.

Has this government signed the deal yet? If not, why not, and, if so, what took so long?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I know that the member—as all of us do—takes this issue very seriously, but he shouldn't look for instant solutions or, in terms of solutions, to simply point the finger. There are unintended consequences when things happen.

One of the causative factors may well be the rush by his federal Liberal friends to push cannabis out legally and encourage the Manitoba Warriors and others to begin marketing other products. This is an unintended consequence which we, according to many police officers, are experiencing now.

I don't wish to point fingers at the federal government, I simply—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —say we are investing in many, many different ways, Madam Speaker. We are encouraging all of us in this House to hold together on this issue. The member chooses to seek partisan advantage. That is his choice.

Madam Speaker, the fact remains we are standing with Manitobans. We are standing—in terms of the meth crisis—with various promotional activities and various educational activities to seek solutions. That is what we're trying to do. We believe it's better if we're united in finding solutions than if we simply finger point to try to place blame on the issue.

Children in Care Funding Levels

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): This government is shortchanging Child and Family Services

authorities at a time when the number of kids in care have surpassed 11,000.

The 2019 budget for Children's Special Allowances does not come close to what the government spent this year—this past year on children in care. This year's budget made a nearly \$40-million cut to the budget for the maintenance.

Will this government stop their cuts and commit to adequately fund children in care today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I'm not sure which budget that the member opposite was looking at, but, clearly, it wasn't the budget '19-20. Budget '19-20 offers about \$15 million more that will be available through block funding for our authorities in CFS, Madam Speaker, and that will be good for children in our province. It will allow them the opportunity to use the funds towards preventative measures and towards reunification with families.

We know that's what we want to all work towards in Manitoba.

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

Ms. Lathlin: This past year the government budgeted nearly \$513 million for children in care, and this was not enough. Through a special warrant the government requested an additional \$17 million to put towards kids in care. This means the minister has already spent over \$530 million for children in care in 2018-2019. The government's 2019 budget allocates, when accounting for federal transfers, millions less for kids in care. This is a cut, Madam Speaker.

So I ask again: Will this government change their budget and promise to adequately fund children in care today?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think it's important to note that under the previous NDP government, the Children's Special Allowance, they used to take that in as part of revenues in government.

We will no longer be doing that. We will ensure that that money stays with the agencies for those children when they need it.

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

Ms. Lathlin: It is apparent that the minister failed to adequately consult with indigenous child-welfare agencies prior to her system-wide implementation

of block funding. These groups have been left in the dark with many questions still being left unanswered. Agencies are worried the new provincial funding model would put vulnerable, indigenous children in care at risk because of lack of financial supports. It's clear from the budget the minister is cutting supports for kids in care.

Will this government change their budget and do the right thing and fund children in care today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the preamble in the member's question is simply not true.

In fact, we have been working very closely with the Indigenous Leadership Council. We've been working very closely with all of our authorities including our indigenous authorities. We've been working very closely with the indigenous grandmothers leadership council as well, and we've been working very closely with all of those agencies and those who are involved in the system, Madam Speaker, to ensure that we get this right.

And what we heard loud and clear is that we—that Manitobans felt that the agency should be able to keep that Children's Special Allowances for those children and we have ensured that that will happen.

Child-Care Spaces Funding Increase

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, families are the cornerstone of our province and we know families all around the province are in need of child-care spaces.

Can the Minister of Families please update the House on how Budget 2019 will provide these families with the help they need?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I want to thank the member for that very, very good question that has to do with child care availability in Manitoba, something that we've heard loud and clear that Manitobans want to see.

And that's why I'm pleased to share, the budget 2019-20 provides funding that will allow for the opening of more than 1,600 new child-care spaces. In fact, to date we have committed more than 3,100 new daycare spaces—child-care spaces for Manitoba families.

* (14:40)

But we're not done yet. We are also continuing to fund the child-care development centre tax credit

to encourage innovative partnerships with the private sector. We will also be reviewing the Early Learning and Child Care programming to ensure that we deliver on a promise—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mining Exploration Permit Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, when it comes to mining, permits for exploration need to be processed promptly, and environmental and indigenous issues need to be handled carefully and thoroughly. The government is getting it all wrong.

A recent indictment of the government's performance, which I table, showed that 44 per cent of mining companies say the current Manitoba government rarely meets its own deadlines, and 30 per cent say permits or licences for exploration work will take 24 months or more.

Are these long days—delays due to the fact that that the Pallister government has laid off so many people in its Mines Branch?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Perhaps the member, the Liberal member, can explain, then, why Ottawa is pursuing Bill C-69, which will in effect stop any mining, any energy project across this country?

Why is this member continuing to support the federal Liberals on Bill C-69?

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

Development of Silica Sand Mine Health and Environmental Concerns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): And why doesn't the minister decide to run to be a Member of Parliament?

There are also issues which need to be addressed—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —with the Wanipigow sand extraction project. The government's own department's comments on the proposal put forward by Canadian premier sands say they are very concerning health issues related to air quality, as silica dust is well known to cause adverse health effects, including acute and chronic silicosis. There are also concerns about groundwater impact, of the handling of tailings

and about the lack of a remediation plan when the mine closes.

But when will these critical issues be addressed?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Well, Madam Speaker, I've got a really good MP, so there's no need for me to run federally.

In regards to Canadian Premium Sand and their application, it's getting a—looking at an environmental review or having an environmental review done right now. Section 35 consultations are going on.

But I really wonder why this—when Canadian Premium Sand first brought their proposal forward, they said they could hire 150 local people. To date, they've got 250 applications in.

Why is this member against local economic development?

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

Mineral and Timber Extraction Environmental Oversight

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the forestry and peatlands branch of Manitoba's Sustainable Development Department says any further development requiring timber removal—which apparently is ongoing—that is beyond the exploration that has already occurred should be put on hold until an environmental act licence and indigenous consultation are completed and approved.

In 2013, under the NDP, a whole mine was built before the environmental licence was issued. Is the Pallister government now joining the NDP as his approach? Is the Pallister government going to be as bad at handling environmental issues as the NDP was?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Well, thank you very much, Madam—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —Speaker. I'm going to try to explain the process for the member's benefit, but, unfortunately, I cannot make him understand the process. So let's walk through this.

The company comes to us and they apply for a licence. And that is what we're doing. During this process, we hear from a lot of user groups of the

resources, including folks in my own department, and we hear their feedback and we work through all the issues before issuing a licence for the company to operate.

We are also doing this in conjunction with a section 35 consultation that is occurring. And those things have to have to happen before the licence is issued.

We're following the process and we're working towards environmental sustainability as these projects move forward.

New Home Warranty Act Government Intention

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): After extensive consultation, the Province announced that The New Home Warranty Act would come into force in 2017. The act ensured that all consumers were protected when they purchased a new home.

However, in November 2017, the Conservative government delayed the coming into force of the legislation by another two years. Now, in Budget 2019, we find out that the Pallister government will not proceed with The New Home Warranty Act at all.

Why has this Premier ripped up The New Home Warranty Act?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do appreciate the member's question. I hope the member has done his homework on this particular piece of legislation. This was legislation that was brought in by the NDP government a number of years ago; was never actually proclaimed. Clearly, the NDP never got their act done.

And I will also say, Madam Speaker, the NDP never consulted with Manitobans before bringing that legislation forward.

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

Mr. Maloway: It was this government that was supposed to make—get the regulations in force. *[interjection]* That was their job, and they failed miserably. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, not all Manitobans have a deep understanding of the construction industry, and while there are many good builders in

Manitoba, there's also bad actors that prey on the public.

During the Pallister government's time in office, there have been stories of homes needing tens of thousands of dollars in repairs.

What is the Pallister government going to do to adequately protect Manitoba purchasers of newly built homes now that they have torn up The New Home Warranty Act?

Mr. Cullen: Let's talk about bad actors. In 17 years of bad government—and this was the NDP government that brought forward this legislation, with no intent of proclaiming it. They misled Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we've consulted with Manitobans and we're going to do the right thing on behalf of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Maloway: All this government had to do was to come up with the regulations. All the hard work was done by the previous government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —and they couldn't come up with the regulations.

Madam Speaker, the Premier's simply not serious about protecting consumers. The New Home Warranty Act established that all builders must have significant insurance coverage to protect consumers in the case of a defect. The government had three years to make changes if they thought they were necessary. Instead, after stalling for two years, they announced the truth: they're not proceeding with these measures and they never intended to.

Why has the Premier ripped up The New Home Warranty Act?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate any question from an NDP member, Madam Speaker, on an issue of saving money for people who live in Manitoba homes.

The members opposite walked, knocked on the doors of the homes of the people of this province, and they promised them, looked them in the eye, said we will not, we will absolutely not raise your taxes. But they did, Madam Speaker. And they broadened them first, they broadened them, and lots

of things that Manitobans pay for that the NDP added costs to for people in Manitoba.

The member opposite was so embarrassed about the NDP record, Madam Speaker, that when he ran for office, he might've had orange on his signs, but he did not have the letters NDP, and he knows why, and Manitobans know why, too.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

The Pas Primary-Care Centre Funding

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 Manitobans, no matter where they live.

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

* (14:50)

(3) The budget of the northern regional health authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively affected the 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 6th, 2018, the regional health authority announced that obstetric delivery services at 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 the surrounding area will have to travel at least an hour and a half to The Pas, creating unnecessary risk for mothers and babies.

(7) The people of Flin Flon are concerned for the health and safety of mothers-to-be and their babies, including the extra physical and financial stress that will be placed upon 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 Patient 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 governments—sorry—work with the government of Saskatchewan and the federal government to ensure obstetric services continue to be available on a regional basis.

And this petition has been signed by Trinity Behey, Ryane Rowe, Brianna Parthenay and many other Manitobans.

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): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) There is no conclusive evidence that daylight saving 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 throughout the year and in perpetuity.

And this petition has been signed by Marshall Dyck, Jake Rempel, Pete Martens and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Gender Neutrality

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Gender, sexuality and gender identity are protected characteristics of human rights, both federally and provincially in Manitoba, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and soon will be in Saskatchewan, Yukon and other places in Canada. These governments have realized the need for this option on identification for the benefit of people who identify or who are identified by others as intersex, third gender, transgender, genderqueer or non-binary.

Identification in government documents should reflect gender neutrality to prevent issues that may arise from intentional bias on gender and misgendering. The people described above face anxiety and discrimination in many aspects of day-to-day life, such as: interactions with health-care professionals; interactions with persons of authority; accessing government services; applying for employment.

Gender neutrality describes the idea that policies, language and other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles according to people's sex or gender in order to 'invoid' discrimination arising from impressions that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than other.

Many newcomers to Canada may already have gender-neutral ID. Many indigenous persons are coming to identify as two-spirit, as the effects of colonization are lessening, and this needs to be addressed in the process of reconciliation.

Being forced to accept an assigned gender affects children and newborns as they grow and become part of society. There are many

psychological benefits for transgender and non-binary people to be allowed to develop without the constraints put upon them by having their gender assigned based on purely physical attributes.

The consideration to have a third option like X or Other on documents was on the previous provincial government's radar for several years, but the current provincial government has not taken steps to implement it.

The City of Winnipeg is actively making its forms reflective of gender neutrality in respect to all persons who work for or come into contact with that government.

The federal government now issues passports and is educating personnel about the correct language and references for non-binary persons.

An Other option existed on enumeration forms for Elections Manitoba in 2016, was easily accepted and provided a framework to provide accurate statistics of those who do not identify under the current binary system.

The foresight, along with training and making changes on required forms, acknowledges and accepts persons who fall outside the binary gender so that governments and people can more effectively interact with one another and reduce the anxieties of everyone involved.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately begin implementation of plans to convert systems and forms to be more inclusive of two-spirit and other non-binary individuals, whether it be to include a third gender option or no requirement for gender on forms unless medically or statistically necessary, including health cards and birth certificates.

To urge the provincial government to immediately instruct the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation to offer a third gender option or no gender requirement for licences or any other form of provincial identification.

To urge the provincial government to instruct Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living to offer the option of Manitoba Health cards with no gender in order to reduce the anxieties of transgender and non-binary persons accessing the health-care system as a first step.

To consider revisiting legislation that may need updating to meet the needs of its citizens in this regard.

Signed by Kathryn Boyd, Elliot McCormick, Jessica DeLury and many others.

Madam Speaker: Further petitions?

Dog Overpopulation in Northern Communities

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Many Manitobans are deeply concerned about the safety of northern, isolated communities in the province owing to an exploding overpopulation rate of dogs.

(2) The current overpopulation of dogs is increasingly alarming to front-line rescues, who witness the severe, difficult and heartbreaking conditions experienced by northern dogs, including starvation, extreme weather conditions, attacks by wild animals and acts of cruelty.

(3) As a result of non-existent veterinarian services in most, if not all, northern communities, dogs are not adequately cared for to no fault of the communities or their members.

(4) Roaming dogs are often sick, injured and alone with no one to advocate for their care, and Manitoba's animal welfare organizations are often the only ones sounding the alarm in this present crisis.

(5) Time and time again, front-line rescuers witness northern families who, with no access to veterinary care, watch their beloved dog perish from injuries and diseases which could easily—which would be easily preventable with better access to veterinarian services.

* (15:00)

(6) This present crisis poses a serious and immediate risk to citizens, in particular children, in northern communities, with the threat of pack maulings.

(7) Many Manitobans and front-line rescuers are currently lobbying for stronger animal welfare laws alongside provincial regulations for animal rescue organizations in partnership with adequate veterinarian services and education for northern communities.

(8) Currently, vaccination rates for owned dogs in Winnipeg is 70 per cent, while in northern isolated communities the rate is less than 5 per cent as a direct result of this current lack of access to veterinarian services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately commit to addressing the overpopulation of dogs in Manitoba, more specifically in northern communities by humanely removing and re-homing unwanted dogs.

(2) To urge the provincial government in partnership with animal welfare agencies, the Manitoba Veterinarian Medical Association, MVMA, front-line rescues and the federal government to immediately develop a provincial strategy to spay and neuter dogs, while providing access to veterinarian services for owned dogs in northern communities, ensuring the safety of communities and their citizens.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Miigwech.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please resume debate on the budget, Madam Speaker.

BUDGET DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of government, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It is a great honour to rise in the Chamber again to put my analyses of this government's pretty awful budget onto the record here.

So, I'm like a lot of parents, Madam Speaker. I have a lot of great hopes for my kids and even, to be fair, some pretty high expectations of what they're able to do. I want them to be able to reach their full potential and live life to its fullest. I hope that they grow up with a feeling of hope and optimism, that

they see that the world is full of mountains to climb and oceans to swim in and amazing people to go out and celebrate and make your life with.

But like a lot of parents in Manitoba, I also have some concerns. You know, I'm worried about the quality of education that my kids are going to get. I worry about the changing job market that is being accelerated by technology change and, of course, I worry about what sort of province is going to be left after the Pallister government is done hacking away at health care and education in the province, here.

So it's with a mixture of optimism and some concern that I look forward over the next five years, next 10 years in our province, here.

So, if we're to look at the vision that's being presented in this budget document, I think we'd pretty quickly conclude that there's not much vision being presented at all.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In fact, you know, this government's only public policy priority appears to be to cut: cut funding for public services, cut the provision of health-care services which are covered and, of course, to cut supports for post-secondaries.

And this is completely at odds with the needs of our society right now. Our society does need to have our health-care system evolve and keep pace with the times. But rather than helping along that sort of evolution, rather than trying to ensure that health care focuses on mental health, focuses on primary and secondary and tertiary prevention—which is to say, preventing injury and illness, preventing the requirements for hospitalization and to prevent the requirement for repeat surgeries—the Pallister government appears to be heading in exactly the opposite direction.

Now, the big headline, I figure, that jumps out immediately from the page is the \$120-million cut to health care. And I remarked with some amusement the other day when the Minister of Health got up and he directed us all to page 3 in the budget book. And so I went and rushed to page 3, and I thought maybe there'll be some exculpatory figure here that will vindicate the Minister of Health's position.

* (15:05)

But then I noted on page 3 of the budget and budget papers document that it does, in fact, show a \$120-million cut from the 2018-19 budget to the 2019-20 budget. So, again, Minister of Health

himself is pointing out that this government is proposing a \$120-million cut to health care.

And, again, just to read the figures onto the record, the budget amount for 2018-19 for Health, Seniors and Active Living is 6,771, meaning \$6.771 billion, whereas the amount for the 2019-2020 budget is 6,651 or \$6.651 billion. You will note, with your careful study of these figures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is, in fact, a cut of \$120 million.

Now, of course, we know that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and others like to, you know, talk about, oh, we've made nominal improvements here, nominal investments there, but if you ignore inflation and if you are distracted by the federal Liberals and, in fact, we're supergenerous when it comes to health care. But that, of course, is very much undermined by the budget document that this government has tabled themselves, the \$120-million cut to health care.

Now, it's not just about the money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's about what that \$120-million cut will have in terms of an impact in the community. Already under this government we have seen that the health-care system has been rushed into a state of chaos. And, while they have plenty of time to—on the government side—to listen to consultants and accountants working for multinationals like KPMG, they don't appear to have any time to listen to the nurses who are being forced to work record numbers of mandatory overtime shifts.

They don't appear to have time to listen to the patients, who are having their cardiac surgeries cancelled, sometimes even on the same day, at least in once instance while the patient had already been prepped for surgery.

And I think we can all pause and lament the fact that none of us would want to be in that position, expecting like a transformative, life-changing surgery to take place, to be—about to be wheeled in and then to find out that because of the understaffing situation, brought to a head by this government's cuts to health care, that your surgery is about to be cancelled.

And then, finally, we know that looming on the horizon are the closures of the Concordia and the Seven Oaks emergency rooms, not to be divorced from the closures of the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre and the Victoria General emergency room.

So, all in all, the government has exacerbated, you know, the current crises that they themselves have made. They created an artificial health-care crisis by rushing ahead with these changes and then they've further exacerbated this situation by moving ahead with the planned closures from Concordia and Seven Oaks.

The reason why I say they're exacerbating the situation is because even though they've already rushed through phase 1 of their health-care plan, the plan for cuts, and created all these problems in health care, these looming closures of the emergency rooms are making the situation much worse. The way that they're making things much worse is that the nurses and other health-care professionals working in the—in those emergency rooms slated for closure are demoralized. They're discouraged. And many of them are already looking for jobs in other places, even though we need them to continue working in those centres for as long as those emergency rooms stay open.

We've heard the situation from Concordia, that understaffing levels at that emergency room are getting worse and that nurses and other health-care professionals are already looking to find jobs in other places. But, of course, we have to remember the fact that that ER's going to be open for many more months. And in the interim is the patient experience going to be guaranteed there?

Seven Oaks, the situation became even more acute. And when I say acute, I'm not talking about the acute care delivered in the ER, I'm talking about the desperate situation of the nurses working in that emergency room. I personally received a letter signed by many, many nurses who work in the emergency room at Seven Oaks. One of the things that jumped out at me was that those Seven Oaks emergency nurses said that they no longer think it's safe for the sickest patients to go to Seven Oaks emergency room.

Again, this emergency room is going to be open for many, many more months. But, already, as of about a month and a half ago, the nurses at Seven Oaks were saying that under this Premier and under this government, it's no longer safe for the sickest patients to go to the Seven Oaks emergency room.

It's pretty remarkable when you have an emergency room open in the city of Winnipeg, where the sign says emergency but, which, you know, suggests that the sickest patients could be sent there, but the staff inside, working underneath that banner,

are telling the public, no, we don't believe that we can guarantee safety for patients.

*(15:10)

When they were explaining the cause of this deterioration of health care at Seven Oaks, the nurses themselves say it's because of phase 2 of the—Pallister's health-cut plan, and we know that phase 2 is the plan to rush towards these closures.

So, again, the nurses themselves—those closest to the patients, at the bedside—are pointing the finger at this government's plan to close emergency rooms and plan to chase the nurses out of their jobs and chase them all around the health-care system. And they're saying that's the reason why in their hospital there's record numbers of understaffing in very crucial positions. And we know that there are very real concerns that on a given day the ratio of nurses to patients that is necessary to gain—guarantee an adequate quality of care is not being met.

So, again, the nurses themselves know that there are standards which have to be in place—a certain amount of nurses for each patient in the ER. And they're saying that because of this government's cuts those ratios for nurse to patient are not being met, and that is the cause of their concern.

That in itself should be a remarkable indictment of health care under this Premier (Mr. Pallister), but we know that it goes much further than that. Again, they've closed many clinics since taking office in all portions of the city and in different parts of the province. Most recently, they closed the Family Medical Centre clinic in St. Boniface. And so you have hundreds, perhaps thousands of patients—in fact, thousands of patients, I should say—who are not going to have primary care in the same centre. And from a variety of different angles this cut does not make a whole lot of sense. One is that this clinic was able—if you were just to look at it from a financial point of view—this clinic was able to deliver primary care in a much cheaper fashion than other clinics.

In terms of primary and secondary prevention, which I mentioned earlier in my little speech here, we know that the residents and the physicians working at the Family Medical Centre had admitting privileges to St. Boniface Hospital, which means that if a patient went to the Family Medical Centre and they were sick enough, they could be admitted directly into the hospital and not have to go to the ER at St. Boniface. Now that that clinic is being closed, what is going to happen?

Well, we know that the emergency room wait times are increasing in the city of Winnipeg, and now more patients will have to go to the emergency room at St. Boniface because they won't be able to get directly admitted into St. Boniface Hospital.

So, again, whether you look at it from a financial sustainability point of view or whether you look at it from a provision of health care perspective, the justification for closing the Family Medical Centre doesn't really make a lot of sense. Again, it's only being done because the current government and the current Premier share an obsession with cutting government services, particularly in health care.

Now, we know also that for those nurses who are currently still working in a variety of units, whether it's at St. Boniface Hospital or HSC or other hospitals around the province, we know that the situation is going from bad to worse. Nurses are demoralized, and it's no wonder—they're working 12-hour shifts and then at the end of the 12 hours, they're being told that, well, you're being mandated to stay for another six hours.

And, of course, many of these nurses—they may be frustrated on a personal level, but I think their real concern is for the well-being of the patient. And the question that they're asking is: Can I perform at my best? Can I deliver the quality of patient care that this person I'm caring for expects if I've already been working 14, 15, 16 hours and I'm now being mandated to stay longer?

And so all of that has been brought to bear by this government. There's high vacancy rates at many units and hospitals around the province and, taken together, this is a reason why I have heard from nurses directly—one of whom had worked in the health-care system for more than three decades. They said that health-care is worse under this Premier than it has ever been in Manitoba. So that's a pretty serious charge.

Now, what do we need to do in health care? Well, there's a lot of challenges before us. We know that in Manitoba—there's many Manitobans with unique and complex medical needs. You have a lot of people with type 2 diabetes. You have many people with multiple sclerosis. You have the increasing impacts of dementia and Alzheimer's and related conditions. You also have an addictions crisis which is being made worse seemingly by the day in this province. And, again, methamphetamine appears to be the drug of choice for many people struggling

with addictions right now, but recently there were other substances that people used.

And what we need to see in addition to these priorities is a real response to the need of our society to have an answer for mental health. You know, in mental health—the lack of having adequate access to mental health and the health-care profession spins off and has impacts on other areas of government oversight, overview, and expenditure as well.

For instance, a common sentiment that I hear from many teachers is, at the secondary level especially, teachers in high school, you know, will tell me: Hey, I have a lot of students struggling through some mental health issues. I'm not a mental health professional; I'm a teacher. I need some help to be able to properly respond in a compassionate, caring, but also evidence-guided way to the needs of my students.

And so these are the challenges that our population is dealing with. And what is this government's response? The government's response is simply to cut services and to cut positions.

But I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the true driver of costs in our health-care system in Manitoba is not the amount of doctors and nurses and health-care aides we have; the true driver of cost is how healthy and how well Manitobans are, and if we have a situation where we are making Manitobans less likely to access care, less likely to have services covered, more likely to injure themselves, more likely to struggle with addictions, more likely to struggle with mental health, then we know that Manitobans are going to suffer more, be less well, and to suffer worse health outcomes.

In a situation like that, the compassionate but also intelligent response from government should be to invest in health care—in prevention specifically—in mental health supports. Again, if we can move mental health supports, health-care programs, home-care visits out into the community where people are and keep people healthy in the community, then it benefits everybody. It makes those people who need to access those services healthier, but it also prevents us from having to deal with their mental health issue or their diabetes issue or their addictions issue in the emergency room, which is a very expensive place to try and deliver care.

So, whether you're looking at it from a fiscally conservative perspective or a compassionate progressive perspective, the answer to what our

province needs from health care really does involve investment and, by that logic, a \$120-million cut year-to-year in the budget to health care simply does not make sense. And so, for that reason alone, we cannot support this budget.

But there's more. Again, there is more. We know that when we go through the budget and budget papers, there are a number of cuts and ways in which the government is going to make life in Manitoba more expensive for people. So, in my opening remarks, I spoke about how we know that the workplace is changing. Anytime you go to Shoppers Drug Mart or you go to Safeway and you see an automated checkout machine, you know that jobs are being replaced by technology. Again, there are less cashiers working in a given retail outfit today than a few decades ago, even just a short few years ago, and so technology change is driving our economy.

So look out a few years—five years, 10 years, into the Manitoba economy, and ask yourself what is going to happen to the biggest industries in our province. Again, the biggest industries in our province are manufacturing, transportation, ag, finance, insurance. And in terms of jobs, if you wanted to round out that list, you'd probably point to retail and services as another big source of jobs in the province.

Well, what is going to happen in those industries in the next five to 10 years? Well, in transportation you've got self-driving vehicles on the horizon. Many experts predict they'll be widely adopted in about six years' time, perhaps a decade from now.

In ag, we see increasing automation, both in the field but also on the manufacturing floor. Again, when a large operation sets up shop to engage in value-added manufacturing for agriculture, there's far less people power required. It's far more automated and there's far more robots, but there's less of a requirement for people.

And then, of course, when it comes to financial, insurance, and other sort of services like that, we know that a lot of those tasks are being automated, as well. Again, algorithms, artificial intelligence, automation is not just replacing, you know, people on the manufacturing floor; it's also replacing so-called white collar jobs as well, whether that's insurance or in finance.

And so we know that in order for Manitobans to be able to make a good living, we have to keep pace with those challenges. But, even beyond that, we

know that a big part of the well-being that people derive from their lives does come with work, pride, the ability to say, you know, when people ask you who are you, you can say, well, I'm a plumber; I'm a carpenter; I'm a professor; I'm a doctor; I'm a, you know, repairman, repairperson, repairwoman—whatever you like.

* (15:20)

The answer to those questions, in large measure, does come from what you do for a living, and so there's a huge question, not just economically, but also a question for meaning in the future of our society.

And what is this government's response to that? Well, they're cutting the funding for post-secondary institutes by some \$6 million. So those post-secondaries—whether they're in the city, like Red River, whether they're in Brandon or the Parkland, like ACC, whether they're the universities like U of W, U of M, CMU, the University College of the North—they're all being handed down cuts; \$6 million cut across the board.

And those are the institutions that are going to help young people be prepared for the future and for those future jobs. We know that there will be jobs in the future; they will just look different than they have in the past. And so it is incumbent on a government to invest in post-secondary and to also make it affordable. We know that one of the biggest barriers to young people—or, really, people of any background—to being able to get a degree or get a diploma from a college or a university has to do with tuition. Yet, when we look at, you know, the government's own document here, it says that the tuition fees imposed by Manitoba universities and colleges are projected to increase by \$25 million.

So, again, this is going to be a real impact that students feel. And, of course, you can already see from the universities and the colleges themselves that, because they're being handed down a \$6-million cut on the operating side, they are all going to seek the maximum increase on the tuition side. So you're going to see education go up by another 6.5, 6.6 per cent this year, after it's already gone up by 6.6 per cent in the past.

So the government has increased the cost of education in the province significantly but they have not focused on increasing the quality, nor are they even equipped to answer the question of how are we

going to meet the challenge of technology change. And the answer is simple, you know. We have to work with Manitobans to find out the careers that they're passionate about.

We know that automation, while it not only is going to change the workforce, in some ways it will create great opportunities for people. I was touring a Boeing plant last year and one of the tasks that they pointed out to me that's being automated is the drilling of thousands of holes within a piece of an airplane hub. And the people who were touring me around said, listen, this is a job that a human does not want to do. This is not a good job for a person, you know. This is something that a robot can do quickly, automatedly. And yet if a person had to do it, it would be bad for their health and it would be bad for their mental health.

And so we face a prospect of perhaps having an increase in what we might call more meaningful work—or, work that is better suited to human beings, to be able to take care, to care of. But one of the things that we have to keep in mind is that in order for young people, people who are being pushed out of existing jobs, other people who need to find new jobs in the new economy to be able to find success, is that there needs to be an adequate investment in public services in our province.

If Manitobans are being saddled with higher out-of-pocket medical expenses, if they're being saddled with higher tuition costs, if they're being saddled with all these other asks that the Province comes to them with, we know that that is going to destabilize them and create greater economic uncertainty, and make it less likely that people are being—that people would be able to find success in that new workforce and economy.

So, again, these are some of the concerns that jump out of just the first five pages of the government's budget and budget papers document.

We know that beyond the cuts to post-secondaries that there've been also cuts to child care. While the government asked a friendly question about child care, I noticed that the minister and also the questioner neglected to point out that the amount of funding for daycare, for child care across the province, is being reduced by some \$1.4 million. So not only is this a cut directly to the families that rely on this service, but we know also that when families struggle to get child care, that that can have an

impact on work, as well, that the parents—often the women—will not be able to work as much as much as they will like because not having child care can be an economic barrier.

And so this \$1.4-million cut to child care is certainly something to be concerned with. I would note that my wife and I are certainly in the market for child care right now, with a 10-month-old at home. We are very lucky; we have a great extended family who's able to help us cope so that we're able to maintain both of our important and rewarding careers. However, many families don't have that same luxury as we do. And so the child-care needs certainly ought to be taken seriously.

And then when we get around to the infrastructure part of this budget book, we note that there are very serious cuts here, whether you look at infrastructure works which provides for maintenance of roadways and winter roads, northern airports, ferries, all sorts of water assets, flood mitigation initiatives, we see that this budget has been cut by \$11 million.

Again, the members opposite like to hoot and holler during question period, but it says right here in black and white that highway maintenance is being reduced by \$10.6 million this year. So for many of the MLAs living outside of the city, you will see first-hand this year the deterioration of highways, and it will be as a result of the cut that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) made in this year's budget.

And throughout this document we see a number of cuts. And so we know that the government presented this budget. They expected a hero's welcome, but the response that I've seen so far has been fairly tepid, and many Manitobans are asking themselves, is it worth it? Is it worth whatever the government is going to give us with the left hand if they're taking so much away with the right hand?

We know that those cuts are happening in a lot of the areas that are not just important to Manitobans, but are going to be increasingly important to Manitobans as we move into the future.

Again, whether it's on health care; whether it's on post-secondary; whether it's on workplace readiness; whether it's on child care; whether it's on infrastructure, which is actually going to be a huge economic driver for the future, we see that this government is not only failing to make the investments that are needed for Manitoba to be

well-positioned, to have a knowledge economy, an economy centred around tech while also still building on some of our traditional strongholds like agriculture—not only are they failing to make those investments, but we see that they're actually cutting in many of those key areas as well.

So, when I look ahead to the future, again, I am often, you know, a little concerned by some of the storm clouds that this government is causing to appear on the horizon, but more than that I am very optimistic. I am very optimistic not just, you know, at the opportunities that my kids are about to enjoy and are enjoying already, which are certainly greater than the opportunities of the generation before mine had in this province, but I'm also optimistic about the people of Manitoba.

You know, the values of this province are great. People care about their neighbours. People care about what happens to each other in this province, and you know, many of us live here because we do find this place very special. Whether it's, you know, from the cultural activities, or whether we're here for the Jets or we're here for family or we're here maybe even for the cost of living, some of us, we know that there's a ton of reasons that make Manitobans proud about this place we call home.

And so I am optimistic that the people in Manitoba do see through the spin and they do see through the government advertising campaign being mounted to support this budget, and that Manitobans do know that we need to do better. Specifically, we need to do better by reorienting our health-care system towards prevention. We need to help pivot our economy towards the jobs of tomorrow, the work of tomorrow and, finally, that we need to take real steps towards making Manitoba affordable, understanding that it's not just the tax bill, but it's also the hydro bill. It's also the tuition bill. It's also the car safety bill. There's many, many bills that Manitobans have to contend with, and that a balanced approach towards keeping life affordable across all of those measures is the right one.

So, with those few words on the record and pointing out a few of the key points, I would submit to you that this budget does not meet the needs of people in this province.

And so I'm going to move an amendment to this budget, which I do believe would more accurately reflect the priorities of people here in Manitoba.

And so, I move, seconded by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:

therefore regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) breaking the Premier's promise to protect front-line services by making deep cuts to health and education despite unprecedented revenues from the federal government; and
- (b) continuing the Premier's attack on the health-care system by underspending on health care by \$240 million, cutting the health-care budget by \$120 million, continuing forward on the plan to close two more emergency rooms while freezing mental health and addictions services during a methamphetamine epidemic and continuing to undermine health care for women and girls across Manitoba; and
- (c) reducing supports for students with special needs while increasing class sizes for the youngest learners and slashing support of daycare for children; and

* (15:30)

- (d) reducing college and university education by millions while increasing tuition rates for parents and students, putting education and good jobs out of the reach of Manitoba's youth; and
- (e) failing to provide a comprehensive jobs strategy for the future, especially for northern Manitobans, that gives more families access to good-paying, non-precarious jobs, while cutting supports for apprenticeships and training; and
- (f) by continuing to cut over \$150 million in infrastructure spending from what was previously promised, cutting \$40 million from water infrastructure in the same year as flood forecasts have worsened, while failing to offer any program to reduce greenhouse emissions and fight climate change.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the member—Leader for the Official Opposition, second by the member of Minto

That the—a motion be amendment by deleting all the words after House, by substituting—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No?

Therefore, it regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of—by Manitobans—priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) breaking the Premier's promise to protect front-line service by making deep cuts to health and education despite unprecedented revenues from the federal government; and
- (b) continuing the Premier's attack on health-care system by underspending on health care by \$240 million, cutting the health-care budget by \$120 million, continuing forward on the plan to close two more emergency rooms by freezing mental health and addiction services during a 'methamphetamine' epidemic and continuing to undermine health care for women and girls across Manitoba; and
- (c) reducing supports for students with special needs while increasing class sizes for the youth—youngest learners and slashing support of daycare for children; and
- (d) reducing college and university education by millions while increasing tuition rates for parents and students, putting education and good jobs out of reach of Manitoba's youth; and
- (c)—or (e)—sorry—(e) failing to provide a comprehensive jobs strategy for the future, especially for northern Manitobans, that gives more families access to good-paying and non-precarious jobs, while cutting support for apprenticeships and training; and
- (f) by continuing to cut over \$150 million infrastructure spending from the—that from what was previously promised, cutting \$40 million for the water infrastructure in the same year as flood forecasts have worsened, while failing to offer any

programs to reduce greenhouse emissions and fight climate change.

As a consequence, the provincial government has therefore lost confidence in this House and in people of Manitoba.

The amendment is in order. The floor is open for debate. Any speakers?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): So, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is the best budget that's come forward. I don't know what the member opposite is speaking of. This is something that is above and beyond anything that they've ever, ever brought out.

So, a budget is kind of a look at where we are, where we want to be and how we going to get there. So first off, I want to talk a little bit about where we are, just to clarify a few of the statements that member opposite just went over.

So, the forecast for the '18-19 budget for Education, let's start with that. So the forecast of what we're going to finish the year at is \$4 billion—sorry about that—\$4,425,000,000. And guess what next year's budget is? Four billion, five hundred and sixty—\$4,560,000,000. So that's a total \$135 million more, \$135 million more in Education. So my hat's off to the Education Minister for investing in our children wisely.

Now, one in particular that member opposite had mentioned was the Health. So, currently, we're looking at landing, for this year's budget, about \$6,533,000,000. And next year, guess what? It's up. We're budgeted for \$6,651,000,000. That is an increase of \$118 million.

So, not only more money—there's more money for hips, knees, cataracts and wait times are down. Isn't this an amazing job by our Health minister and the previous Health minister, I might add.

There's less children in care in families. The Education minister, as well, is going through a K-to-12 review to ensure that our education system is sustainable and works well.

What other number is going up—debt servicing. Debt servicing is going up from just over a billion dollars to 1 billion and 88 million dollars

So why is that number important? Well, the last 10 years of the NDP government, they doubled our debt. This is just the interest, so debt servicing, for those that aren't a hundred per cent sure what debt

servicing means, what is it? That's pretty much our interest that we are paying on our—call it our credit card, our debt.

So this interest alone, roughly, is \$3 million a day, doubled under the previous government. So, out of that 1 billion, 88 million dollars we could spend another half a billion dollars if they didn't—if they would have had the balanced budget through those 10 years, we could have been currently spending, on infrastructure, an extra \$544 million per year.

So, as we treat our household, you can't keep going in debt every single year over and over again and just pay more and more interest. That's not how we'd run our households.

If you have a credit card payment and you're not making that minimum payment, if you're not even paying the interest on your credit card every year, you're increasing the deficit. Eventually, the bank is going to come knocking on your doors and take your credit card away.

And we have warnings when this happens in the provincial government. The bond rating agencies have given the previous government many warnings. Our government has gotten positive reinforcement, saying that we are on the right track, which we are, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So that's a very—it's very good that we are doing this, but let's compare some of these numbers to the previous government. What did they spend while they were in there on health?

Well, inefficiently, they spent 6 billion, 237 million dollars in '15-16. In this year's budget we have—look at that—6 billion, 651 million dollars. That is an increase of \$414 million over what the current government has ever spent on health care.

Let's look at Education and Training '15-16, and now, these are final numbers—these are final numbers—these are written-in-stone numbers: 4 billion, 136 million dollars is what was spent on education by the NDP government in the '15-16 budget.

Now, let's have a look in the '19-20 budget. Let's have a peek. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 4 billion, 560 million dollars. So, you might ask: How much difference is that? Well, it is \$424 million more that this government is spending on education than the previous government ever did.

Let's look at families. Families—so this is the '15-16 from the previous NDP government—'15-16,

what they spent on families is 1 billion, 938 million, and what are we budgeted for '19-20? Mr. Deputy Speaker, 2 billion, 174 million dollars. That is, you might ask, \$236 million more that this government is spending on families than the previous government ever has.

*(15:40)

So how are we lowering the PST and increasing services, you might ask? Members of the NDP are yelling that the sky is falling, the sky is falling, the sky is falling. We've got Chicken Little over here.

So individual income taxes are up \$267 million. How are individual income taxes up? Well, when you make an environment for businesses to thrive and prosper as they are in Manitoba, they create more jobs. More jobs creates more income tax, \$267 million alone increase in income taxes here. So that is how you can increase your spending and decrease taxes.

The NDP government, previously, ran on a promise that they wouldn't raise taxes. Look what happened. They not only expanded them, they go and raise them. And, while doing that, while raising taxes, they doubled the provincial debt. So let's look at another bit of maybe percentage of expenditures. So here we have a total per cent: Health, Seniors and Active Living is 38 per cent of our total expenditures; Education and Training is 26 per cent; Families is 13 per cent. But debt servicing, the interest that we pay on our debt, is 6 per cent of our budget. It is the fourth largest department, thanks to the previous NDP government.

If they kept that growing the way it was, and doubled the debt again, we would eventually end up with Health and Finance—for departments there would be no money without raising the PST to 10, 12, 14 per cent. Who knows what their sights were?

We're not only making credit card payments on their debt; we are decreasing. Okay, so now, our net debt—so our net debt, it kind of looks at the affordability of the 'futurement'—the future of government services. So what this boils down to is we are making future government services affordable for not just ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

So we have a very unique economy in Manitoba, thanks to our farmers; we have mining; we have oil; we have construction; we have manufacturing; wholesale-retail transportation. We're

pretty much the hub of Canada, but we are very diverse. And, as a financial adviser—if you go to your financial adviser, he's going to try to diversify your portfolio to make sure it's stable. So we've been very fortunate to have a stable government here in the last three years. Prior to that, well, not so much. There's the odd rebellion here and there. But Manitoba is one of the most stable provincial economics—provincial economies in Canada.

So, that is helping us through—not everything is all in oil and gas, like the oil sector. We have a record-setting pace in the private sector as well. Why is that? Well, we have allowed companies to prosper. They're investing in Manitoba. They know that with—under this government, they have a very, very good place to invest in. So there's HyLife. I'm just going to go through a few of them: HyLife, MDI, Bell MTS—they're upgrading and expanding their wireless service—Simplot, 'broquette'—Roquette alone is about 400—over \$400 million of private investment. McCain Foods, they're not far off. They're—we have over a billion dollars invested between all of these. McCain Foods is way, way up there. Maple Leaf Foods, Canada Goose, Ubisoft—how many jobs did Ubisoft just put on here, lately? Lots. Lowe's Canada moved in. True North Square. A near-record-setting pace of new accommodations in the country. That's new home starts—[interjection] Yes, Andrew wouldn't go see Ubisoft, no.

So we have thousands and thousands of workers increasing—increasing—even when the rest of the country is decreasing, we are increasing in the number of workers by allowing Roquette, all these other ones, a friendly place to operate their companies. And when you have more employees, they pay more income tax, plain and simple. So how can we not only spend our money more wise, decrease the PST? That answers a good portion of it right there.

So I can see I'm—the whip's going to be on me here pretty soon. I wasn't supposed to be talking that much, but we have Manitoba exports, the best in a decade. Well, it's very good to get—when you're selling something, it's great to sell it to your neighbouring town, have money coming into your town. It's great to sell it to another part of the province, even better to export things out of the province, but when you export outside the country, you're getting money into Canada.

Oh, I—there's so many things to talk about here, I'm going to have to skip closer to the end and go

through my conclusion. But that's how you encourage for more jobs, and when they have more jobs, they pay more income tax. So that's how you can lower taxes while spending more on health, on education, on families, and, sadly, we're spending more on our debt servicing as well, but that's from the previous government to answer.

We're also saving a lot of money too. We have the idea fund. Now, when people ask their government, you know, I have an idea, previously, nobody would listen. Previous government, the NDP government: No, we know how to do everything. We're open to ideas as a Conservative government. So we're not open—we're not only open to ideas, but we also put \$25 million for capital idea fund and \$25 million allocated for projects that expect to generate over \$50 million in savings. So you spend money to save money. If it has a rate of return and you get the money back, then it perpetually slows down the spending. You have now saved not just in this budget year, but for future budget years. So it's similar to buying LED lights for your house, right? How much is it going to save you? You probably don't know. You probably don't know. But it's going to have a saving, and it's going to have savings for future years as well.

But I can see my time is running short here, so I guess, in conclusion, all that the previous government did, they increased deficits while raising taxes and delivering worse outcomes. We're eliminating our deficit while lowering taxes and delivering better outcomes, better in health, better in education, better in families, and, sadly, we are also spending more on our debt servicing costs due to the previous government doubling our debt in the last 10 years that they were in office.

So responsible fiscal management is hard work. We're going to do that on this side of the House. We do the hard work. It's not a single decision that one needs to take, but rather, it is a accumulation of thousands of decisions. Sometimes they're small decisions; sometimes they're larger decisions. But all the decisions have to be made. The work is relentless, and we roll up our sleeves every day. We remain committed to doing the work for Manitobans, who deserve a better tomorrow not just for them but for their kids and grandkids as well.

* (15:50)

Our results speak for themselves. There is much more to do, but we are already Canada's most-improved province and we are getting the job done.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): You know, I had an opportunity on Friday to begin some of the debate here this—with regards to this budget on—in that case, with regard specifically to the budget implementation and tax statutes act. I do have a lot more to say.

I want to get to the budget itself, Mr. Speaker, but I just wanted to start, if I could, very briefly to address something I think that's very concerning in this House that I've heard a few times now, that I think should give all of us in this House pause. You know, and this is not a reflection in any way on the work that's done by the Speaker or by our wonderful clerks, but the language that I've been—heard recently used in this House is very concerning, because I've heard the phrase fake news thrown about a few times in this Chamber. And this is really concerning for me.

It's concerning for me because, you know, I've been spending a lot of time travelling around to different schools, talking to—obviously, talking to teachers and educators. But I've also been spending a lot of time in social studies classes in various high schools. And one of the things I talk to students about in these classroom settings is how fragile democracy truly is. And it's something that young people understand, I think, very acutely. And they—you know, they—we often get no opportunity to sort of rap back and forth about this subject, and it's one of the things that's very concerning to them, as well. They see what's happening down south. They see the attack on our media—on the media there in the United States. They see a sort of decimation of the discourse and a pushing of the voices out to the far right and to the far left.

And I just want to just, you know, caution all members here. I really do feel that it's something that we should be very, very keenly attentive to because I don't think it helps anybody. And I'm happy to stand up here and debate this budget bill. I have a very specific point of view about this budget bill. I know members opposite have, you know, the opposite—or, a different view. I think that's what this House is all about, is debating those. But when we hear phrases like fake news—or, today, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) using language—I think he said campaign kickbacks when characterizing the protection of democracy and public financing when it comes to democracy, to keep powerful interests out of our politics and out of

our democracy here in Canada, it just freaks me out, Mr. Speaker.

And so I just think that we should be of—extra careful when talking about this and just stick to the facts, stick to what we have in front of us because we have a budget here, Mr. Speaker, that is very concerning to Manitobans. You know, we—as I said, I had an opportunity on Friday to address the BITSA bill. I guess we heard the budget back on Wednesday. And I've had a lot of time in the interim to talk to my constituents and various stakeholders about their first reactions on the budget bill. And there was a lot of concern.

First and foremost, what Manitobans were telling me over the weekend was how is it that, you know, our No. 1 priority in this province, which is our health-care system, can be hacked and slashed in a way that has never been seen before in this province and, at the same time, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) wants to walk out and say, mission accomplished. You know, let's call the next election. We're ready to go. You know, you're—don't look over there at your health-care system; don't look over there at the closing of your hospital; don't go over there and look at how we're cutting in so many different ways. Let's just all focus on one thing.

And, well, Manitobans aren't buying it. They're not buying it, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to—as I said in my—in the debate on the BITSA on Friday—I, at every opportunity, am going to stand up. I'm going to talk about the Concordia emergency room because it's hitting the families in my community the hardest. I'm going to talk about health care because it's the No. 1 priority of Manitobans, doesn't matter where you live, and I'm going to keep talking about that. I'm going to start and end with that every single opportunity that I get.

But what I did realize on Friday was that I talked about health care. I think, I mean, I may have thrown a few other concerns that I had in there, but I realized after I sort of sat down and came down from that debate in the morning, I realized, oh my goodness; there are so many more cuts that I didn't get a chance to address.

And so, you know, I asked forgiveness of my constituents who were all listening along dutifully, I'm sure, who were saying, well, wait a minute—what about the education cuts, what about the infrastructure, what about the?—I said, I'm sorry; I'm going to spend my time today talking about those cuts. I'm going to get to health care, hopefully, later

in my time this morning—or this afternoon, but I do want address these other cuts.

Then what I realized is I started going through the notes that I put together here and, I realized, oh my goodness; there's too many cuts for the amount of time that we have here. So, once again I—you know I'm always asking the House for any kind of leave they want to give me; you know, we could go do unlimited time. I do want to make sure, though, that everybody gets a chance to speak to this, so—because I'm sure the notes that everyone else has are the same in their length and so everybody's going to want to spend that time speaking to this.

But I wanted to start here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, talking about education because education is one of the items that people are most concerned about when it comes to the cuts that they see coming from this government. The reason why they're so concerned is because this government has already, you know, gone through the health-care system, made all of these cuts. They continue to cut, but made sort of these major monumental cuts to health care, and they had their minister, the minister responsible for those cuts, the one who is wielding the scissors out front in front of this government, is now the minister responsible for education, so that gives everybody pause.

But what gives them more pause, or what furthers that concern that they have is the fact that they don't have to guess about what's coming down the pike when it comes to education. They can, in fact, look at what this government has done in the past three years that it's had power here in Manitoba. Given the opportunity to say, look, the best investment—I mean, we say this this all the time—and, you know, I mean, talk about a head-nodder, you go into a room of parents, of educators—heck, you go into a room of business leaders and you say education is the best investment that we can make in the future of this province, and they all go well, yes, of course; it's a no-brainer.

So, given that kind of, you know, framework, that beginning, that starting point, just the very starting point. I'm not talking about the deep cuts that we know are coming. I'm just talking about where we are starting from, and this government, you know, right off the hop, automatically wanted to start cutting in education. And the cuts are being felt throughout the system.

You know, many—so, classroom sizes, right, is where I'm going to sort of go with this on this

concern because this is the kind of thing that just, again, is just a head-nodder for people. Everyone gets this. You know, we want to make sure that our kids have small class sizes because not only is it common sense that you're going to get better outcomes from students if you are providing more one-on-one time with the teacher. But, beyond that, we actually know that experts agree about this to the extent where the members opposite who were running in the last election went around the province saying that well, yes, we agree. The experts say small class sizes are important. The first thing that they do is get rid of that legislation, that requirement to have some kind of control over class sizes and ability to make sure that resources flow where those class sizes are getting biggest, and then the cuts start coming.

Now, it's interesting, I—my daughter's in grade 3 now, and, you know, I've never, ever talked to her about class sizes in terms of outcomes and sort of the language that, you know, we hear from our stakeholders, the experts who understand education, you know, really, from an academic point of view or from a, you know, front-line work kind of point of view. I've never approached things in that sense with her, but, totally unprompted, the other day she says, well, you know, did you know I have 20—I think she said, 28 kids in my class? Whoa, how does my daughter know how many kids are in her class? Well, she understands it because she understands that that's a full classroom already in grade 3. My son's class is even bigger in grade 1. And they get it.

* (16:00)

They get it because they know that in a school in our community, that when we invested—'we' being the previous government—invested in that school and built new classroom space it was full almost immediately. And this is not an abnormal situation. I could probably pick—half of my colleagues here could stand up and say, we've got schools that have classrooms that are bursting at the seams. This affects teachers. This affects the outcomes that students are getting, and this is the government that's cutting those resources and making these teachers do more with less. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, and it's just—they're just getting started when it comes to those cuts.

You know, we know that this government is cutting in a variety of different ways when it comes to education. And it's concerning to Manitobans. As I said, we know that giving those teachers that support

and that one-on-one time in their classroom is so very important, and when we talk about the supports that they've been getting for educational assistants in the classroom, we see that that's being cut as well. So we know in this budget, in particular, supports for special needs kids in the classroom has been cut \$1.8 million. And that's the priorities of this government, not to actually support students and not to support teachers in the classroom.

And then, on top of all of that, so, you know, this government—well, they tried this over the past couple of years, three years—they said, well, hey, okay, we're going to cut your educational supports. We're going to cut funding for schools. And, at the same time, hey, why don't we do—why don't we have some innovation in education? Why don't we have—we're going to give you an opportunity to innovate. So teachers sat around a, you know, conference hosted by the government. And they said, well, look, we've got a million good ideas about how to improve education in this province. And then, you know, the person at the front said, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait, wait, wait, no, no, no. We—you can't—we don't have any money for this. There's no additional funding for this. There's no actual commitment to this. We just want innovation to just happen out of the blue. Well, that doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker. And it's certainly not going to happen under this kind of austerity agenda by the government.

And now, when they go around saying, we want to have a review of education, well, the review is starting from a place of cuts. It's starting from a place of austerity. So it's not starting in an honest way. It's not starting in a way that actually will improve outcomes. It's actually starting in a place that's saying everybody hold pat—hold on to your hats because the more cuts are coming. Here's a budget that shows that. And, by the way, we want some great innovation when it comes to health care.

Manitobans aren't buying it. They've seen this government when they talk about innovation; it's cuts. It's cuts in the health care system. It's a minister, who was in charge of the health-care cuts, is now being tasked by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to be the man in charge of cuts to our education system. It's not an honest way to approach this issue, and it is not what Manitobans are asking for. Those are the priorities of Manitobans: health and education. And this government has just shown cuts.

Another area that Manitobans, just over this—well, I guess, they've been acutely attuned to this

because of the public spat between the Premier and the mayor over the last little while. Sort of bewildering, I think, to most people. They sort of go, wait a minute, aren't these guys, you know, supposed to be kind of working together, to give us the best services that we can get here, in our city and beyond? And, you know—but, no, the Premier's taken a totally different tack. Instead of working with the City and going, you know, look, we need to make sure that we're investing in these things that are most important to Winnipeggers, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has started from a point of just, sort of, you know, I'm not even going to sit at the same table with you. And I'm not going to discuss this.

And what are we seeing? We're seeing a budget that actually cuts into infrastructure. Infrastructure in our city and infrastructure across the province when it comes to highways. Now, you know, members opposite don't like to hear this because you know, they've got a certain view of the world that's pretty divorced, I think, from the reality, but, you know, this province, when we were hit with a major economic downturn that was felt across the world—you know, I think Manitoba, we generally ride these—ride out these storms a little bit better than other places—but it was certainly something that was coming. And, you know, all the best economists and all the smartest people said, well, you know, you've got to have a plan to deal with this downturn in the economy.

Well, you know, that's where the—you know, Manitobans came to us and said, you know, if you want to improve our economy—invest in our economy, start with our infrastructure. Start with our crumbling roads, our bridges and our highways. And, you know, so we saw a summer of unprecedented construction across this province. We couldn't get the projects built fast enough. We were looking for new projects at every single turn.

And I remember—maybe I'm hearing them now—members opposite who were there at that time coming, you know, being a lot of bravado out in the hallway and then they'd come, you know, whisper in the minister of Infrastructure's ear: well, listen, I've got a project in my constituency, it really needs to be done. And what did the minister do? The minister said, absolutely, let's fast-track that. Let's get that built. Let's get those highways and bridges up to snuff.

Now this was a slow chipping away of the infrastructure deficit—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —in this province, but it was only a start and we knew that it would take a sustained investment. And that's why we said this was important, Manitobans said it was important and, lo and behold, the members opposite went out and campaigned and said, we think it's important. We think highways and bridges and roads are important as well.

So they went out in the election campaign and they said, we're going to make sure that we maintain the spending on infrastructure. Well, lo and behold, first budget out—you know, I think it was at this point—I think it was still the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) who's, you know, been very, very good on making sure to hold the government to account on this, he said: Wait a minute, where's the beef? You said you were going to put the money into the—into infrastructure and you've dramatically cut it the first year out. Well, since then, Mr. Speaker, we've see nothing but cut after cut year after year to a point, now, where we have a year where we see a major flood situation potentially coming to this province. And is that money there to protect Manitobans? No, no it is not. And Manitobans are very concerned. So flood mitigation, another issue that's very concerning.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Job strategy—I mean, you know, the list goes on, Madam Speaker, but, you know, this is something that, again, when you talk to—it, you know, left/right political ideologies mean nothing when you talk to people and say, do you support investment in our young people, training with—for our young people and a job strategy that actually makes sure that people are working not just today and for the next five years, but into the future where the job market is changing. And there are head nods. People get it; they understand it. Doesn't matter where their ideology is, they seem to understand that. And yet, we see a government that has no job strategy whatsoever, completely falling on their face when it comes to this important challenge that we all face into the future. And I think that's a real shame for all parents going forward.

Now, I—what I'm concerned about is where the investments are going. And that's really the concern I think Manitobans have. Because they're not seeing it in their health-care system. They're not seeing—they're seeing post-secondary education, you know, costing more and more and more. And what do we

see again in this budget? More cuts when it comes to post-secondary education in this province. They're not spending it on the priorities of Manitobans. So you got to ask yourself: What are they spending it on? Where is—you know, what priorities are we talking about? And, you know, I heard the member across the way say, well, you know, it's about choices. Well, you're right, it's about choices. It's about making the priorities of Manitobans into a concrete budget document that can be communicated in a way that people say, yes, that is our priority, those—that's what we're all about.

When I talk to the people in northeast Winnipeg, they say, first and foremost, Concordia Hospital ER. And they say, you know, is there a way that this could remain open? I say—I tell them, absolutely there is. When there's \$120 million being cut from our health-care system at a time when transfers are going up from the federal government, when you've got a Prime Minister who's just, like, well, I—you know, trying to, you know, give money to the Province and you've got a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who won't work with him—they're saying could we not prioritize Concordia Hospital? Just pause it. Just stop it now. Let's make sure that we've got this plan right. Let's invest in these resources rather than cutting them.

They say: Can this be done? Well, you know what, Madam Speaker, it absolutely can be done. It's a choice. It's a choice being made at the Premier's office and the minister's office. It's not the—a choice that's being made at the community level, because I can tell you the members for Transcona and for Radisson and for River East and for Rossmere, they could stand up to this Premier and they could say my community prioritizes health care. They prioritize the Concordia Hospital emergency room. They want to see that protected and not cut.

And yet we see a Premier who's so out of touch that he will forge ahead at all costs and at the cost, potentially, of these members.

* (16:10)

I say shame on them, and I say that this is an amendment that I can support and a budget I cannot.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I move now, right? I'd like to move—oh no. Speak first. All right. I'd like to move to St. Boniface, Madam Speaker.

One of the things I'd like to talk about in the bigger picture is just tax rebates and provide a

detailed critique of the budget speech and all the, I would say, inaccuracies in it.

One of the things that we've said to this government very often is that they need to do a better job of being honest when it comes to accounting. The former minister of Finance asked us to present—to meet with him, and that was one of the recommendations they made, in part because what has happened over and over again is this government has made high-dollar promises in their budget which they, by the end of the year, only actually look at what spending looks like. It's often, maybe, hundreds of millions of dollars less.

So I want to address this because after 17 years of mismanagement by the previous NDP government that left our province with a growing debt, the longest health-care wait times in Canada, and the worst education outcomes, Manitobans chose a new path.

Now, it's important to recognize, Madam Speaker, that Manitoba relies very heavily on federal transfer payments. This is hardly a secret. So one of the things that happened prior to 2015 was that federal transfer payments to Manitoba were frozen for a number of years. In fact, they were frozen on a per capita basis. That was the federal Conservative government which froze payments even as inflation went up, even as Manitoba's population continued to grow.

So the fact is, is that as we've sometimes put it, Manitoba suffered a one-two punch, suffering under a federal Conservative government that was starving it of funding as well as being run by an NDP government.

And, actually, it's right there in the budget, actually, where the budget itself cites federal figures. We can see that federal totals or federal support, basically between 2009-10 through to 2015-2016 was basically frozen, and what's changed since then is that there's a new government which changed the formula and has seen over \$731 million per year increase in total funding to Manitoba.

And, when we look at the government budget and how it's been able to reduce the deficit, the single greatest factor in that is increased transfers from the federal government.

The budget speech goes on. It says in 2016-2017 we reduced the summary deficit and so on. One of the things that's worth noting is that the Auditor General has objected to the fact that this government

has continued to have not just one but three definitions of deficit which happened under the NDP as well. The Auditor General complained about that last August and said, really, it's not helpful in terms of the public being able to understand what is going on.

But the other thing is that the Auditor General wrote a letter of special concern, which was really quite exceptional, because it turned out that the government was overstating the deficit by several hundred million dollars.

Now, there's an argument that this happened when this government was first elected in 2016, Madam Speaker, and one of the results of saying that the deficit was twice as high as it had been previously declared to be under the NDP was that Manitoba suffered a credit rating downgrade. That was the first credit rating downgrade under this government which results in the government of Manitoba having higher interest rates, hydro having higher interest rates, and all municipalities who have to borrow under that as well.

Now, interestingly, it's exactly the same thing that happened under the Ford PCs in Ontario. They also, this year, massively overstated the deficit in Ontario, with the result that Ontario had its credit rating downgraded and a senior official in Finance ended up resigning in protest.

This is, of course, highly relevant, from the point of view of what—of this government's claims about health care. They say we've increased our investment in health care, for education and for families to record levels in each of our budgets to the highest levels in history. Again, this is a—this is not entirely accurate because what has actually happened is that the government has promised spending, only to not do it later on. So they've been saying we're spending more and more than ever, and it simply is not the case when you look at the actual numbers. What has been promised in one year—there was a one-year increase in 2016-17 when the health-care budget went up, but in the following two years, it's basically been frozen. The actual health-care spending in 2016-17 was 6 billion, 546 million; 2017-18, the next year, was 6 billion, 483 million, which is considerably less. And the year after that, it was 2018-19, 6 billion, 533 million.

So, in fact, for 2017-18 and 2018-19, this government has spent less on health care than they did, though they promised much more in both those years. During that time, the Canada Health Transfer

has been increasing every single year. And I've often—as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has often pointed out, he said that it's now reduced to 18 per—that the federal government's contribution has been reduced to 18 per cent, which, again, is not accurate. At this point, it's been climbing steadily to the point that it is now at 21.62 per cent, when, three years ago, is at 20.18 per cent.

The fact is that all of the growth—all of the growth—in investments, in health care in Manitoba has come from increased transfer payments from the federal government. And, again, this is important because we've got when it's—when this—when the government says the proof is found in the progress we're making in reducing the deficit each year. Again, the deficit has been reduced in not only by the fact that there is \$731 million in—from—in total transfers from the federal government, but also because this government, just as the NDP did prior to this, continue to raid Hydro and treat it like an ATM and lard Hydro with debt and shift public debt onto Hydro for costs that are actually being—that are actually part of what the government is doing.

It says, once again, here, when the nation says—they say the nation has led in private capital investment over the past year; the reality of this is it's in part because private investment has absolutely collapsed in most other provinces. In Alberta and in Saskatchewan, because oil prices have collapsed, there's been an incredible drop in investments in those, but the other thing is that it's actually really only about three or four projects. HyLife, which has produced a lot of good-paying jobs in Neepawa, a great Manitoba company—but when it says that these investments are creating good-paying, long-term jobs throughout the province, the challenge is is that some of these projects, though they are going to be—they create lots of money in the start-up phase, or when it comes to building the actual machinery, in the long run, the jobs that are going to be created are going to be limited. For example, the new Simplot—I had the pleasure of visiting the Simplot plant in Portage la Prairie, and they expect that once they finish their major expansion that they're only going to employ about 120 people because a new part of that plant is going to be completely served by robots. So that's—that obviously is a huge challenge.

And this is one of the things is that when I've expressed concern about this because I think that this budget and the way the—the entire way that this government has been running is that it is basically—it is putting the finances of the Province at risk. It's

been warned by bond rating agencies who've downgraded them to say that—bond rating agencies that have downgraded them because they have had a plan. They promised to reduce revenues and to cut all sorts of taxes without actually investing and finding any other revenues or investing in growth. And one of the things that's happened is they say—they criticize when it comes to what the NDP did, they said, look—they raised fees for a range of services Manitoba's—Manitobans rely on. The NDP refused to index tax brackets and taxed even the poorest Manitobans, which, of course, is true, but it's also important to look at the impacts of the kind of changes that this government has made because, essentially, they've been balancing the budget in part by—again, by taking money from Hydro and taking from the federal government, but also forcing everybody else to—putting their bills on everyone else's tab.

*(16:20)

So, for example, if you say, well, they've indexed the basic personal amount. They say, well, they've—I can say it's positive that 8,000 low-income Manitobans no longer pay Manitoba income tax, but the way that this was introduced meant that, because it's a progressive tax, most—the highest dollar benefit is going to people who make the most money. The people at the very bottom, who are no longer on tax rolls, are no longer—are maybe—may experience a few dollars relief, but the people at the higher end of the income scale are going to be seeing \$400 to \$500.

And one of the disturbing signs that this isn't working, that the economy is not working for Manitobans is that we currently have a record number of people on EIA. There are already over 70,000 people on welfare in Manitoba, and that number has gone up by about 3,000 people every year since this government was elected.

The other is that—they've made tax changes which increase all sorts of costs for people, for example, the elimination of the education tax credit. This was—we've been hearing from municipalities all over Manitoba. The government was warned not to do this by AMM. AMM said, look, this is going to have a real impact on a lot of people. And in, for example, the town of Rosburn, which is near where my family and I have a farm, 90 per cent of taxpayers—90 per cent of taxpayers—are facing an average increase of \$250 a year. Some people are seeing an increase of \$500 a year. And we've been

hearing that from across the province. And these are people who are lower-income. Many of them are seniors on fixed incomes.

And I also add that I don't understand many of the cuts that this government has made. They cut—made cuts to the life-saving drugs program. I had a constituent who said he had to choose between buying insulin from—for his ageing mother, who's on a fixed income, and having her go bankrupt because for her entire lifetime, she'd been able to have support for diabetes testing supplies and insulin. And, when that ended, you know, as somebody who is a—as someone who is in her eighties, she certainly cannot go back to work and cannot go and find all the extra money that was required in order to pay for those drugs.

And I will also say, when it says—when they say when others are taking more money off kitchen tables all over the provinces with higher municipal property taxes, and they say, higher NDP hydro rates, even though they've made absolutely no objection or made no effort whatsoever to try to reduce hydro rates and higher federal deficits, they say, well, our PC government is cutting the PST. Well, the fact is that this government has been leaving \$1.9 billion in federal funds on the table. They talk about leaving money on the table. Their decision to not charge PST on the carbon tax sounds good, but it's \$3.6 million. On average, that's \$3 per Manitoban. It's not much.

So they're leaving—giving—making sure that Manitobans save \$3 while leaving \$1.9 billion in investments on the table. And this is—I mean, some of those are not even marked matching dollars. We have \$400 million, which is a \$400-million fund for mental health care and for home care. We don't know why the government has not signed it. This is—these are desperately needed funds. We have huge problems having people access affordable mental health care across Manitoba, and this government is basically turning this money away.

But the other question is one of return on investment. It says, by the end of the second term, this rate reduction will save an average family of four more than \$3,000. Now, average is a bit of a weasel word, Madam Speaker, because there's a difference in terms of statistics when you talk about what is typical and what is average. If you're talking about average, we can all walk into a bar, and if Bill Gates is there, then on average we're all billionaires. And, if he walks out again, we're not

billionaires anymore. So part of the issue, here, with average is that it is not an expression of what is the typical savings for most Manitobans, because there may be people who can afford to buy \$100,000 boat or a \$70,000 truck, and they will be able to save lots on PST, whereas the savings for people will be much, much—for others, will be much, much less.

But the others, the question, they say, well, this is going to cost the public purse \$300 million. If we look at what the return on investment is, they say, the earned income, including wages and salaries, will grow by \$50 million per year. So it's costing us \$300 million for a benefit of \$50 million. And Manitoba's nominal GDP will increase by \$90 million. So it's costing \$300 million for a benefit of \$90 million. This is not even—this is a terrible return on investments. It's not a return at all. It's a loss. And, when you contrast this with the \$1.9 billion that we're losing, the \$1.9 billion is almost all going to something productive. And this is an absolutely critical thing for people to understand. It's the difference between borrowing money to buy seed that you're going to plant and borrowing money to buy seed that you're going to grind up and eat. If you grind up and eat it, you're not going to be able to pay your bills again. But, if you can plant it, you can actually grow a crop and have something to sell and be able to pay your bills and have something for yourself.

This government isn't investing or reinvesting in anything productive. That's the hugest problem. The investments are inadequate.

And when they say that they're talking about seniors living on fixed incomes and single parents and small business owners, we know that there is—basically, a private debt crisis in this country, and it is harder in Manitoba than almost anywhere else.

There are—over 50 per cent of Manitobans are \$200 away from being insolvent, and what this government doesn't realize is that they are—by their cutting back, they're actually making it harder for people because they're cutting jobs, because they're turning away \$1.9 billion in investment.

And again, when they make the statement that Budget 2019 increases funding for health care by \$47.8 million, that is extremely hard to believe, because they have made that promise for the last two years in a row, and they haven't kept it.

That increase translates into the highest levels of health underfunding in Manitoba's history for the

third year in a row. It's simply that that amount of money has been flatlined for the last three years. When you look at the name—and when you look at the amount of funds that are being committed, extremely serious problems.

For example, the challenge of methamphetamine addictions, with \$1 million in new funding for the expansion of withdrawal management beds in Winnipeg and Brandon—that's a drop in the bucket for what is actually required to deal with this crisis.

They say when—they're proud of the Pharmacare program when it increases \$270 million. Well, the fact is that they eliminated the life-saving drug program last year, so there are hundreds of people who used to be able to—who needed those drugs to be able to live, people with cystic fibrosis, people with diabetes, who used to have all their bills covered, and it was taken away from them in a way that's absolutely dangerous, and Pharmacare is not adequate in Manitoba.

And again, when it comes to saying, well, that we've taken steps to ensure that thousands of low-income Manitobans no longer pay Manitoba income tax, that they've been increasing all sorts of other costs as if they have—it's basically saying, well, we're only going to look—we're going to put blinkers on.

We're only going to look at what the Manitoba budget does, and we're not going to look at all the costs that we're forcing onto everybody else, all the stuff we're putting on everybody else's tab.

So they're forcing students to take on more debt, they're forcing municipalities to make—either make cuts or raise taxes. They're forcing school divisions—they're, well, actually, they're taking away from school divisions the ability to—and bullying them online, which is preposterous—to raise taxes, while cutting at the same time.

I mean, the—austerity is—it doesn't work. It only works when we're growing, and the fact is we are not growing fast enough to justify any of these kind of cuts.

And we've been hearing two very different stories from—on the one hand, we hear what a great job—how great the economy is, how unemployment is low and all these other things, but at the same time, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) speaks to—talks about the federal government, he says, look we're still in recovery mode. Well, we're in recovery mode but we're trying to cut.

And austerity is basically, you know, it's a fat person telling skinny people they've got to cut back and tighten their belts. It doesn't work. And frankly, that is the history of austerity.

It tends to lead to recessions, and that's what we're seeing next year, is that the lack of investment that this government is making—\$1.9 billion could be the difference next year between whether we grow or whether the economy fails. That's how stark it is.

And it says: our government continues to support innovative solutions to pressing social problems. This includes a continued investment of social finance tools such as social impact bonds.

And, frankly, I—it might be old-fashioned to say I find social impact bonds offensive and immoral, because they're something that allow people who want to make investments and who can get tax write-offs on their investments in something—in an essential social service, an essential public service, and they're treated as philanthropists and not as investors.

There is nothing philanthropic about trying to make money over children in care. There simply isn't. And I will contrast the fact that they're deciding to use the Manitoba—the social impact bond for kids in care and pairing at-risk mothers with indigenous doulas, with what they're doing for the WHRAs.

The WHRAs, they said, well—and that's maybe one of the few positive things I can say about this budget, is that they said, well, the RHAs have got to—don't have to keep financing through private banks, because it's so much cheaper to be able to finance through the Province.

Well, that's one of the things that makes borrowing important. That's one of the things that this government can do that the private sector can't. It can borrow safely at lower rates than anybody else, but instead, what they're expecting to do is everybody else to pick up the slack, and it is really going to put people at risk.

It's going to put—it's already—we already have families at the breaking point, and the decision to be able to keep cutting back means that we're actually shrinking the economy. And this is a basic—this is the basic element of understanding the economy of Manitoba as a whole. We have the private sector and we have the public sector.

* (16:30)

What we keep hearing is, well, the public sector's too big, the public sector's too big; we've got to shrink it. Well, what about the other way around? There's another way of thinking about it. Maybe the private sector's too small and we need to grow it. That's what we need to do, because if we don't do anything to do—to grow the private sector and all we're doing is shrinking the public sector, we're shrinking the economy.

All spending is somebody's income. All spending is somebody's income and that's true of public spending as well as private spending. So what this government is doing is deliberately going out of its way, whether they realize it or not, to shrink Manitoba's economy. And I've seen evidence of that across the province.

When it comes to—oops—when it—again, the argument that Manitoba's operational support for municipalities is among the most generous in Canada, or that strong, sustainable municipalities are the backbone of our province, the fact is that municipalities have very expensive programs that they need to be able to pay for.

The City of Winnipeg alone has huge, absolutely colossal backlogs in terms of infrastructure that needs to be built. And this government, instead of doing that, has capped infrastructure spending at a billion. They keep saying we'll promise to spend at least \$1 billion in strategic infrastructure, which is actually \$300 million less than was promised.

And what's happened, again—I'm hearing from people in the private sector—I—heard from people in the private sector, people working construction, that they're struggling, that for three years they've been hoping that there would be some spending on—adequate spending and investment in health care and infrastructure and—sorry, in infrastructure and roads, and it simply hasn't happened. And I had a letter from a constituent who's located—whose business is located—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

There is quite a bit of conversations going on in the House, so—if people could take their conversations to the loge or at least bring down the level so that we can properly hear the member that is speaking.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Mr. Lamont: And we—and one of the thing's that happened is there was a cancellation of the roads and

bridges program. Or it was—and I've spoken with municipal officials who talked about how hard this was—how hard this made things for them, because they made plans last year with the expectation that the roads and bridges program would be in place, which pays about half of their—half the cost of infrastructure in their municipality. And then, in August, all of a sudden there's a change. Well, they've already made their commitments, they've tendered their contracts and all of a sudden the rug's been put out—pulled out from under them. If they were lucky, they had reserves they could draw on.

And the same thing's happening with the City of Winnipeg, where you have tens of millions of dollars that were promised in the 2018 budget, and it's not entirely clear—and then all of a sudden, again, it looks like the Province is pulling the rug out from under them. And we're seeing tens of millions of dollars in cuts at the provincial level when there is infrastructure that needs to be built. These are all—many of these are projects that have to be built at some point in the future, and some of them are—some are—many are projects that are long overdue.

But what's happening instead is that we're kicking the can down of the road when it's going to be even more expensive.

It says municipalities outside Winnipeg will receive support for water—wastewater infrastructure projects—again—and provincial cost-shared funding for federal infrastructure opportunities. It would have been much better if this had actually happened in the last year. It's a mystery to everyone how this government could sign a—an—in federal-provincial infrastructure agreement last May and fail to even apply for much of the funding.

It says they boast of their—the fact that the progress in treaty land entitlement—which, again, is—that is much more a federal issue than a provincial one. And, frankly, when it comes to this government's contempt of their—towards various indigenous organizations, whether it's the Manitoba Metis Federation, or whether it's infringing on First Nations hunting rights, it's—I—it's very difficult for me when they pat themselves on the back about it.

When they talk about Manitoba's Climate and Green Plan, they say it's a best-in-Canada approach that respects our clean energy investments. I said many times it's not a plan at all. It is not a plan at all. It has no—it has—the only really concrete thing about thing about it was when this government proposed a carbon tax that was going to be two and a half times

the initial cost of the federal government. That it has no timelines, it has no outputs, it has no commitments, it asks continually about whether such and such should be a pillar of the plan, whether they're doing it right—there is nothing there. So they're going to spend \$2.3 million for a new climate and green plan implementation office which does not actually—which is not actually a plan.

When they say they include \$40.8 million in funding for cultural and heritage grants and they're increasing Manitoba's film tax credit, which is a fine idea, the fact is that nothing is—virtually nothing is flowing to other cultural organizations, and this is—one of the things that is—that I think is very important because—for people to understand in this House and in Manitoba, is that this—because the Progressive Conservatives have stuck to the line that the NDP overspent on everything, the fact is that there are groups and organizations who have had funding frozen for 40 years.

When I talked to—when I went to the university of Brandon, they have a capital grant that is \$300,000. It's the same as it was in 1976. When I talk to cultural organizations all over Manitoba, they have not seen an increase since the 1970s.

And so the fact is, is that there are all sorts of ways in which there are funding for organizations that have actually basically been frozen for 40 years, and those organizations have still been able to go, to move along, but they desperately need renewal in investment infrastructure, like the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, who actually stood and said look, they're getting nowhere because they have an essential piece of infrastructure that's actually required for musicians to be able to hear each other and for the audience to be able to hear the orchestra properly. But that's not happening, I mean, because nobody's been willing to make that investment, even though we make investments elsewhere.

Again, when they say after a decade of debt, we're fixing the finances, this is largely due to the federal government, over \$730 million in new finances. When they say after a decade of decay, we're repairing our services. That is absolutely not true. They're dismantling them at the health-care system. It's impossible to really understand what's been going on with the education review because we thought there was an education review. In May 2016, the education review was supposed to be ongoing. A year later, in 2017, it was supposed to be ongoing. And all of a sudden it disappeared. There's no

reference to it anymore, and we have a new education review, which, judging by the Minister of Education's comments towards people on Twitter, they've already seemed to have made up their mind about what it's going to be, and it's not about quality education. It's not about curriculum; it's all about saving money.

And yet the problem here is that the—I think the PCs are operating on the assumption that the NDP were wildly spendthrift when part of the reason the NDP were in trouble, were in financial trouble, because they were undermined by a federal Conservative government that robbed Manitoba of hundreds of millions of dollars in funding—*[interjection]*—well, I'll show you the chart otherwise.

So, but, and I say again, why this is reckless, it's putting their Province's finances at risk. We've had warnings from S&P, who downgraded Manitoba's credit rating twice, and I will say, I mean, there've been wonderful things that have been said by DBRS, which is Dominion Bond Rating Services agency. They say, well, it's the fourth largest ratings agency in the world, but the fact is it's actually tiny compared to the other big three, and just two years ago in 2016 it had to pay a multi-million dollar fine to the SCC for not doing its homework properly. And in 2008 it had to be sold because it raided \$33 billion of investments which turned out to be worth nothing even at the height of the financial crisis. They were the only bond rating agency in Canada that was still saying, no, no, it's all going to be fine, even as the entire market was falling apart.

But I'm serious it is—but the question of it is of putting the Province's finances at risk because we have become more reliant than ever on federal transfers instead of growing the economy and making sure that we have enough money to pay our bills.

I don't know—in terms of the PST cut, I don't know how much, and I'd like to know how much this is going to cost us in terms of new debt because we could, as far as I can see, we could almost be balancing the budget this year and we could start reinvesting and building, but instead what they're choosing to do is to move ahead with a PST cut that is going to, essentially, by putting it on our credit card. We're going to be borrowing money with interest in order to pay for this cut, and it will reduce the government's ability to raise revenues or even to raise revenues especially next year when we are—the Conference Board of Canada has projected a serious

drop in growth. And part of that is because Keeyask is going to be online; part of that is that northern mines are closing because this—and this government has done absolutely nothing to make sure that new mines will open.

* (16:40)

Again, if we had one—if we're committing to \$1.9 billion in—if we're putting in \$1.9 billion in investments that are being held back, we could actually help reduce the possibility of a recession next year. But I think one of the things that this decision makes really clear is that deficits are—there's this idea that deficits are being caused by spending. This government is choosing to extend the deficit and to borrow for years and years more than we need to, in order to be able to deliver a politically motivated tax cut now. It's that this is—there's this idea that spending causes deficits when, in fact, tax cuts and lack of revenue cause deficits as well.

Now, I just wanted to touch on some of the issues that were raised by the Business Council of Manitoba because they actually have also said they've highlighted some of the exact issues that I've talked about. It says—because they've said, as it important—as important as it is, expenditure 'maged' alone is not enough. While federal transfers are currently important, Manitoba's objective should not be to maximize equalization from the federal pool but to grow our own source revenues. That includes increasing yields from all sources without raising tax rates. Personal and corporate tax revenues grow when the economy is growing, as does the PST.

So, once again, the challenge in Manitoba continues to be how do we grow our economy, and it's not by leaving \$1.9 billion in federal funds on the table. They say, over the past year's discussions with your colleagues and publicly, we've stressed the importance of growing the Manitoba economy, arguing that it is equally important for fiscal management. However, managing expenditures does not reduce the provincial debt. A growing economy benefits government, businesses and employees. We advocate a stronger focus on job growth is needed, building on the strengths of various sectors to yield increased employment opportunities and more incomes for Manitobans. The commitment to economic growth is in your government's mandate and is a key responsibility you, as Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), share with several of your Cabinet colleagues. Manitoba enjoys a

relatively low unemployment rate. But, despite that low unemployment rate, too many Manitobans remain unemployed or underemployed at the same time Manitoba businesses are identifying a shortage of skilled labour. Our objective should not be just more jobs, but jobs with higher skill levels and ensuring we have a predictable and stable means of producing, attracting and retaining the talent we need in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

And, again, this goes to the fact that this government is essentially underspending on infrastructure and turning away infrastructure funds from the federal government because, I'm hearing from the industry, that we are losing jobs, we're losing people who want to work and that Manitoba businesses are at risk. Manitoba businesses—this is the private sector. This is one of the most important things that this entire attitude that if we just keep shrinking the public sector and if we just—if we don't spend, that money flows into the private sector. It's part of a bigger cycle.

And, when they talk about issues like improving Manitoba's competitiveness, one of the most important things, and again, this is—we have a fundamental difference of opinion about how—what kind of—how to make an economy competitive.

They're—this government generally has said, well, we just have the weakest regulations and the lowest taxes, and in some cases, if we can have low wages, that'll do. That—but we do not want to compete based on a race to the bottom. That's a race that nobody ever wants to win. The fundamental way to have a competitive economy is to have good education, good health care and good infrastructure, and that benefits everybody. It benefits businesses. It benefits families.

If people are healthy and workers are healthy, they work, they work more. If we have a well-educated workforce, it means that individuals can make the most of their talents and get the biggest reward for their work and their businesses can prosper as well. And when it comes to having good infrastructure, if we have good infrastructure, it makes it better and more efficient for families as well as for businesses to get their products where they need to go. But that's not what we have.

We don't have a situation where we have good health care or good education or good infrastructure. We need investments to all of them, and what this government is proposing instead is cuts. They complain about how much money they have to spend

on health, they complain about how much money they have to spend on education while not actually doing the hard work of—the boring term is social impacts of health, but to actually do things about poverty, to make sure that we're investing in early childhood education and so on.

And, again, these are—we have a fundamentally different view of the way the economy works and what makes an economy competitive, and that's why we're in different political parties. But I would also note one of the challenges, when it comes to growing the private sector, is a lack of capital, and I've talked about this very often.

What we need to do to make this province prosper is to grow the private sector. We need to have good education. We need to have good infrastructure. We need to have good health care and we need to have good services, but we also need to grow the private sector, more than anything.

And that is not possible when this government is cutting back on assistance to commercialization programs which exist elsewhere. I've talked to many entrepreneurs who say their major challenge is the ability to access capital, and the critical aspect of this is that much of what this government is doing, in terms of trying to make things more competitive, is that it is for existing businesses.

It is for established businesses, but established businesses, which are mature businesses—they may be profitable, they—which is great, they may be great corporate citizens, they may be—they may support our community. All that's great, but to actually grow the private sector, we need new businesses and we need new jobs, and that takes investment.

Again, it will not happen on its own, and Manitoba has a drought when it comes to venture capital and access to capital. And, again, the Business Council of Manitoba says the absence of a venture capital program in Manitoba is a significant weakness.

Last year, we complimented the government for issuing a request for information to seek partners in a venture capital fund. We are disappointed with the ongoing delays in announcing progress and urge the government to move more quickly. Start-ups and small businesses would benefit from such a program.

And, again, I've worked with entrepreneurs who face this exact challenge. It's easy for big businesses to be able to access capital. They can access capital at low rates of interest, but if—but banks, to a great

degree, have gotten out of what they call the risk game. They're not interested in actually lending money to any small businesses, and if they are, it's at a prohibitive interest rate.

So you have entrepreneurs who are working hard who want to stay here in Manitoba. They want to build the business in—here in Manitoba, because in all sorts of ways it's a great place to live, but they can't actually get the money they need, and so they—and they have to leave.

And this is a huge problem because that's exactly what we need to have happen, and what people need is access to capital to build and grow their businesses and not have to mortgage their house or put everything on credit cards in order to take huge personal risk.

And, frankly there is a long history of very successful businesses who have benefited from that kind of capital support. Apple Computer is one. Apple Computer received \$500,000 from a small-business bank in the Midwest in the 1970s that helped it get off the ground.

Alberta has its own bank. Alberta Treasury Board has—provides start-up funds and funds to scale up. North Dakota has its own bank, but we're not seeing that.

I will also add, from my travels up North when I was in Thompson and Flin Flon, these are communities—especially Thompson, where they're—Manitoba has one of the world-class deposits of ore, and they cannot access it because this government is not releasing permits. They're not releasing permits to let prospectors out.

I mean, the fact is that, you know, sometimes people have said, well, it's because there's people worrying about consultations with First Nations. Well, there's a First Nation that is partnered with a mining company that is not able to get a permit.

The prospector said, look, it's going to take two—at the current rate of exploration, it's going to take 250 years for us to have a sustainable mining industry. And, again, in Thompson, what's happened is that they're—it's particularly clear the way—there the way this government is choking off growth, because they're not handing out permits for prospectors in order to be able to find the next new mine.

They've closed government offices, so people who do want to start a new business can't get a

licence to start a business without travelling to Winnipeg.

And, again, this is an area where—lots of other people have criticized it, but when it comes to mining, the Business Council of Manitoba says: In 2018 the provincial government released its mining protocol, respecting indigenous participation in future mining exploration and development of Manitoba. It was received—well received in northern Manitoba and we support that policy. Some important joint initiatives between mineral development companies and indigenous communities are on the horizon and should be encouraged.

Last year we recommended the government improve its internal operations with respect to mining and mineral resource development. For several years, exploration and development in Manitoba has languished. Manitoba's share of national expenditures for prospecting and exploration continues to decrease.

Unfortunately, we must repeat that recommendation this year.

Northern Manitoba residents will not benefit from the employment potential through mineral development unless the provincial government takes immediate action to demonstrate its commitment to the mining sector and proves that Manitoba is a jurisdiction that welcomes mineral exploration. For many communities, the mining sector, together with the supporting services, is the only basis for well-paying jobs. Manitoba should actively pursue and support mineral development in partnership with northern and indigenous communities.

*(16:50)

And the frustration level here is that it's palpable when you travel to these communities, who've also—they're—one hopes certainly that they're only going through a temporary slump, but for years these communities have been paying into a mining reserve fund which they're not able to access even at their time of need.

And when I've asked the Premier (Mr. Pallister) about it, his response was to talk about pipelines. Well, ore doesn't flow through pipelines. Nickel and—not last time I heard. Maybe—I'm not—absolutely not an expert on the mining and resource industry, but the last time I checked gold, copper, zinc and nickel don't flow through pipelines. So it's—the point is moot.

So, once again, when they—when it comes to—again, this is the Business Council of Manitoba. These are not people who are—I'm not—some might say, well, it's not the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. This is the whole point. This—these are groups who are the leading and largest businesses in Manitoba who actually want to see investment in—and who have a huge stake in the investment and prosperity of our province said the Business Council and post-secondary presidents of Manitoba are collaborating on a report and strategy focusing on the development of people and talent. The private sector will not have the capacity to generate wealth and employment opportunities without a highly performing education system. Government must be a full partner in putting into action a common strategy. Our joint report to government will be submitted soon and we look forward to discussing how we can 'advance' the recommendations.

And this brings to mind last year's Deloitte report, which showed that the government had no plan and that based—that people had no idea who to—how to approach—who to approach whether they were in academe or they were in business—who to approach in government about how to make things happen.

And, in fact, the government cancelled a joint-funding agreement for research for post—or, refused to match funding with the federal government for research with the result that we ended up losing a two-for-one deal basically on research in Manitoba.

It says, the Business Council has consistently advocated its support at a comprehensive provincial and for infrastructure investment strategy that includes investment in strategic infrastructure that supports and contributes to growth; trade-related infrastructure throughout Manitoba; community infrastructure, including education to train future talent; and community assets, including arts and culture that support Manitobans, adds to our tourism product and contributes to our economy.

On the whole, Madam Speaker, this government—this budget fails to do almost any of those things. We—I've said this many times, we cannot cut our way out of debt. We can't build—cuts don't build bridges. Cuts don't build roads. Cuts don't treat diabetes and cuts don't put people through school. The only thing that'll do that is investment, and that's what this government needs to do and what they're failing to do.

That's why we will absolutely not be supporting this budget—spoiler alert.

And if I could—oh, good, they're all here. If I could move—move by—I move—okay, here we go.

I move, seconded by Cindy Lamoureux—oh—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: So close. So close, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I think the member is aware now of what just happened, so I'll give him a chance—a second chance on that one.

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

That the amendment be amended after clause (f) the following clauses:

- (g) failing to ensure mining operations in Manitoba stay viable and threatening the economic viability of northern communities by delaying mining permits as a result of firing mining branch staff; and
- (h) failing to properly implement health care system reorganization, causing crises in emergency rooms and primary care; and
- (i) failing to invest federal funding increases in Manitoba into crucial services and infrastructure for Manitobans; and
- (j) failing to support Manitoba's economic health and choking off growth by falsely inflating the Province's deficit, budgeting increased amounts in departments for which there is no intention of spending the increases and allowing Manitoba's GDP to slip below 1 per cent, putting growth to slip between 1 per cent—putting Manitoba at risk of a recession, claiming it as the new normal; and
- (k) failing to ensure that wealthy Manitobans pay their fair share of taxes by defending tax loopholes that allow the wealthiest to pay a lesser tax rate than medium- and low-income Manitobans; and
- (l) failing to protect the public universal health-care system by reiterating plans for a grand bargain that would prioritize cheaper wine

imports over the federal government maintaining its role in health care; and

- (m) failing to ensure Manitobans are earning a living wage by freezing wages, not increasing the minimum wage to a livable amount and prioritizing the needs of corporations located outside of Manitoba at the expense of workers; and
- (n) failing to cut from the top by increasing executive support for ministers by 2 per cent, which is well above increases to the health budget; and
- (o) failing to show any clear plans to improve emergency management and increased climate emergencies, including more increased floods, droughts and forest fires; and
- (p) failing to improve the health system in Manitoban—in Manitoba by completely stalling provincial increases to health funding and solely relying on federal increases to fund health-care cost increases; and
- (q) failing to support Manitoba by acting as a barrier to municipalities and First Nations to access much needed federal infrastructure funding; and
- (r) failing to support children in the care of the CFS by slashing funding under the guise of block funding for agencies; and
- (s) failing to meet or work with the trilateral methamphetamine task force; and
- (t) failing to allow jurisdiction over First Nations' children in CFS; and
- (u) failing to support Manitoba's incredible arts and cultural communities by allowing cultural infrastructure to crumble and freezing or decreasing funding to arts and cultural organizations.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition (Mr. Lamont), seconded by the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux)

THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (f) the following clauses:

- (g) failing to ensure mining operations in Manitoba stay viable and threatening the

economic viability of northern communities by delaying mining permits as a result of firing mining branch staff; and

- (h) failing to properly implement health care system reorganization, causing crises in emergency rooms and primary care; and
- (i) failing to invest federal funding increases in Manitoba into crucial services and infrastructure for Manitobans; and
- (j) failing to support Manitoba's economic health and choking off growth by falsely inflating the Province's deficit, budgeting increased amounts in departments for which there is no intention of spending the increases and allowing Manitoba's GDP to slip below 1 per cent, putting growth to slip between 1 per cent—putting Manitoba at risk of a recession, claiming it as the new normal; and
- (k) failing to ensure that wealthy Manitobans pay their fair share of taxes by defending tax loopholes that allow the wealthiest to pay a lesser tax rate than medium- and low-income Manitobans; and
- (l) failing to protect the public universal health-care system by reiterating plans for a grand bargain that would prioritize cheaper wine imports over the federal government maintaining its role in health care; and
- (m) failing to ensure Manitobans are earning a living wage by freezing wages, not increasing the minimum wage to a livable amount and prioritizing the needs of corporations located outside of Manitoba at the expense of workers; and
- (n) failing to cut from the top by increasing executive support for ministers by 2 per cent, which is well above increases to the health budget; and
- (o) failing to show any clear plans to improve emergency management and increased climate emergencies, including more increased floods, droughts and forest fires; and
- (p) failing to improve the health system in Manitobans by completely stalling provincial increases to health funding and solely relying on federal increases to fund health-care cost increases; and

- (q) failing to support Manitoba by acting as a barrier to municipalities and First Nations to access much needed federal infrastructure funding; and
- (r) failing to support children in the care of the CFS by slashing funding under the guise of block funding for agencies; and
- (s) failing to meet or work with the trilateral methamphetamine task force; and
- (t) failing to allow jurisdiction over First Nations' children in CFS; and
- (u) failing to support Manitoba's incredible arts and cultural communities by allowing cultural infrastructure to crumble and freezing or decreasing funding to arts and cultural organizations.

The amendment is in order. The floor is open for debate.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'm very pleased to put a few words on the record about our historic investments in Manitoba, but I do want to pick up on something that the Liberal Leader had said earlier, when he had said that the only thing of substance was the carbon tax.

Now, let's be clear. We've got a Liberal Leader here advocating that the only good thing in a Climate and Green Plan is a carbon tax. Compare that to a \$102-million investment in our Conservation Trust. No, he'd rather have a carbon tax than investments in—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable minister will have 19 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 11, 2019

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