

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	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, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 15, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 16—The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I move, seconded by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 16, The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act; Loi sur la mise en oeuvre du Plan vert et climatique, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act. The bill sets out a legislative framework for our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan. The plan sets out a bold vision for Manitoba to become Canada's cleanest, greenest and most climate-resilient province.

Bill 16 measures—contains measures that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions while promoting sustainable development and a green economy. It implements a made-in-Manitoba carbon price that keeps jobs in Manitoba and supports carbon revenue recycling measures and establishes a structure for government accountability and transparency of actions for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Termination of Special Drug Program

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Pallister government is terminating the special drug program. The elimination of this program will have a very negative impact on those who live with cystic fibrosis. Cystic fibrosis is a genetic condition. A protein, the cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator protein, is altered in function or decreased in amount.

Individuals with cystic fibrosis easily develop lung infections, and their lung function may be so severely affected as to lead to severe disability and death.

The life of someone with cystic fibrosis can be dramatically improved by medications to decrease infections, to improve absorption of food and vitamins and to treat CF-related diabetes when it's present. When the lung is severely affected, lung transplantation can help. Many adults with cystic fibrosis are able, with this support, to work and be significant contributors to the economy and their community.

It is vital that the financial support is there for the medications, as has been the practice up until now in Manitoba through the special drugs program. These medications are expensive and the extra costs can mean great uncertainty for a person with cystic fibrosis. Consistent financial support for the medications is essential for their mental as well as their physical health. This support is what makes it possible for people with cystic fibrosis to lead a better life.

Such support is available in other provinces through a specific cystic fibrosis drug program in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the Yukon and through an exceptional drug program in Quebec. Manitoba has similar coverage to these other provinces now, but would fall well behind all other provinces if the special drug program was cancelled.

The government has a choice. It can have a special drug program so that people like Devin Rey

and others can stay well and work and contribute to society and have a full life. Or it can eliminate the special drug program and have people with cystic fibrosis get anxious and sick so they end up in hospital, lose their income—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Assiniboine Community College Cougars

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): We know that there's many families, friends and relatives from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario that have plenty of reasons to celebrate this week. You see Brandon's own Assiniboine Community College women's hockey team, the Cougars, are currently in Columbus, Ohio, where they are competing in the American collegiate women's division 2 championships.

Assiniboine Community College qualified for the 12-team tournament as the West Region's third seed. The Cougars enter the national tournament with 19 wins and eight losses overall, while tallying 100 goals during the regular season, while only allowing 36 goals from their opponents.

Out of these 12 teams at the nationals are split into four pools of three, with the ACC grouped alongside the Adrian College Bulldogs, ranked fifth in the west, and the Bishop University Gaiters, who are ranked second in the east.

This is a team of resilience and determination. When the team's flight arrived in Columbus, they unfortunately found themselves without their equipment. You see, Madam Speaker, these young ladies had to attend the afternoon practice before their game without hockey sticks.

Fortunately, a former NHL player from Manitoba, Arron Asham, connected with both the hockey stick manufacturer Bauer and the Columbus Blue Jackets, asking for their help in getting the women new equipment. Fortunately, the ladies' sticks arrived on time before the game. The ladies also get to spend some pre-game time with former Brandon Wheat Kings and current Columbus Blue Jackets player, Matt Calvert.

Madam Speaker, the Cougars opened their tournament last night with a 6-1 win over the North Dakota State University Bisons. Today, the Cougars face the Gaiters and then follow up with a qualifying game against the Bulldogs on Friday.

Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating head coach Terry Arksey and

the ACC women's hockey team on a great season and wish them all the best of luck in their remaining games so that we can watch them in the championship final on Sunday.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon East.

Mr. Isleifson: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include the names of all the players on the ladies Assiniboine Cougars in Hansard.

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

2018 Assiniboine Community College Cougars Women's Hockey Team: Alyssa Alderson, Haylee Anderson, Lauren Blight, Blair Bodie, Rachel Charles, Chelsey Collier, Miranda Cook, Erin Doherty, Brooklyn Elek, Karli Frederick, Kenzie Heide, Mariah McCue, Brooke Mead, Alyssa Neufeld, Sierra Parenteau

Education and Jobs Plan

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, I am proud to work for Manitoba students who fight hard to be heard by this government. I was proud to see fifteen—sorry—1,300 Grant Park students yesterday walk out of classrooms in solidarity with the victims of the Parkland shooting in Florida. I was also proud to see post-secondary students in the gallery of this Legislature yesterday to take a stand against cuts to education and health coverage for students. Their advocacy reminds us students are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but, in fact, the leaders of today, going out there and making some noise until they are heard.

* (13:40)

However, this government refuses to listen. Our unemployment rate is above the Canadian average for the first time in a generation. Instead of a robust education and jobs plan, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is cutting support for training and apprenticeships and making it more expensive to get a post-secondary education in Manitoba. We believe the Province needs to make strategic investments that will help young people get good jobs, while keeping education affordable for parents and students. New Democrats know getting more people access to a better education and in-demand skills will translate into a workforce that's ready for the future.

Instead, this government wants to deter students from making Manitoba home. Seven out of 10 Canadian provinces currently cover health insurance for international students, but the Premier (Mr. Pallister) wants to cut it and put Manitoba at the bottom of the barrel. This cut will mean losing our international students to other provinces and forcing universities to hike tuition even higher for our domestic students. International education is an important piece to Manitoba's economy and its perception on the global stage. We're known as a welcoming society, as friendly Manitoba. International students have helped the affordability of our universities and increased the diversity of our post-secondary institutions.

On behalf of all students who have shared their concerns with me, I urge the Premier and this government to listen to Manitoba students and invest in our province's future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2018 Manitoba Winter Games

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Madam Speaker, in 2018, Manitoba Winter Games kicked off in Thompson March 4th with a spectacular opening ceremony that included drums, parade of athletes, prayers from Elder Jack Robinson, national anthem, speeches from dignitaries, including a welcome from the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox), local musicians, traditional Metis and modern dancing, raising of the Sport Manitoba games banner and, of course, the lighting of the torch.

Throughout the week, Manitoba's best athletes, aged 12 to 17, from all over the province competed in events ranging from outdoor sports like cross-country and alpine skiing, indoor sports like gymnastics and badminton and rink sports like hockey, ringette and, for the first time ever at Manitoba Games, short track speed skating.

It was my pleasure to welcome to our beautiful north all the participants and spectators, CEO from Sport Manitoba Jeff Hnatiuk, their board of directors and staff, as well as title sponsor representatives from Manitoba Hydro.

I want to thank mayor-Thompson mayor, Dennis Fenske, City of Thompson councillors and local games co-chairs Murray Kissick and Sandra Ross-Hitch, for accepting the challenge to host the games 12 months ago, and it was a daunting challenge.

We are blessed in the North to have had over 800 volunteers who worked very hard over the past 12 months, showcasing our welcoming northern spirit.

We owe our gratitude to all the sponsors, City of Thompson staff, games co-ordinator Dave Martin and all the volunteers who contributed to work extra hard throughout the final week to ensure the games were successful and memorable for all of us.

And what a success it was, Madam Speaker, boasting events at 13—boasting most events at 13, most participants at 1,400, most spectators ever at a Manitoba Games, estimated at over 10,000, and the Thompson hockey—host society raised over \$300,000 in cash and donations in-kind, over double their original target, all done in half the normal time, and all in support of our young athletes who showed their appreciation by raising—rising to the occasion.

Manitobans are proud of our athletes, our volunteers and we sincerely wish them the best of success at future events, future games and throughout their lives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Football Officials Association

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I know you're a huge football fan and some of us are very passionate about football—the football teams we cheer for. But there is also a third team on the field, like you, Madam Speaker, who enforce the rules.

The Manitoba Football Officials Association, the MFOA, was formally established in 1951. Since that time it has been providing tackle football officials to most leagues within the province of Manitoba. These leagues operate primarily within the city of Winnipeg and the surrounding area. At the present time, the MFOA provides officials, timekeepers for local community club and high school leagues, through to senior players competing nationally as far up to the university level.

I myself have been officiating with the MFOA and have been a proud member since 2005. I have had the pleasure to work with fellow officials here in Manitoba, across the country, at the 2009 Canada Cup, at junior- and university-level football games and as a member of the Canadian Football League support crew.

One thing I take pride in, and that all Manitobans should take pride in, is that the MFOA has produced 29 CFL officials that have worked

in games during the CFL season, past and present. MFOA alumni Neil Payne and Glen Johnson have risen to the office of director of officiating and vice-president of CFL in charge of officiating, respectively. For a number of years, the MFOA had the large number of officials in the CFL.

Today, I would like to recognize the Manitoba 'fitball' officials association for their outstanding contribution to the game of football from the amateur levels all the way to the pro ranks of the CFL.

Joining us today are five members of the MFOA: Ryan Gagliardi, Cesare Sacco, former CFL official James Carlisle, timekeeper Richard Pilbeam and, last but not least, I call him my Ukrainian dad, former CFL official Ken Lazaruk, who has officiated 11 Grey Cups and a total of 54 years combined in amateur and professional football.

For more information on becoming a football official, please go to mfoa.mb.ca.

On behalf of my colleagues here at the Manitoba Legislature, thank you for your passion game, enforcing the rules.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery from HBNI-ITV out of Fairholme school 22 grade 9 students under the direction of Evelyn Maendel, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Wishart).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lifelight Air Ambulance Privatization Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): In the last election the Premier said that there were no sacred cows, and now families in our province are wondering if there's any service that he won't cut.

Now, I'm not sure if the Premier knows just how front-line a service that Lifelight is. You know, he wasn't aware that it was an essential service, or at least the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) was not aware that it was an essential service, but the Premier should've known. The Premier was the

minister responsible for air services when The Essential Services Act was passed in 1996.

Lifelight transports high-risk patients from rural and northern Manitoba when they are critically ill or injured. When a patient needs a ventilator to breathe or when an infant needs heart surgery out of the province, Lifelight makes sure that the patient gets the care that they need. But the Premier is focused only on the numbers, not on the people.

Will he back off his plan to privatize government air services?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member claims that we're making cuts and he isn't focusing on the numbers, Madam Speaker. The numbers are clear. We've actually increased investments in the most caring portfolios of government—Education, Child and Family Services, and health care—by more than 10 per cent in each department in the last two years. We've increased our total funding to these three portfolios alone by more than one and a third billion dollars, and so the myth of cuts is just that; it's the myth of cuts.

We value important services. We'll continue to invest in them.

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

Mr. Kinew: Now, for some reason the Premier has tasked this Minister of Infrastructure with trying to force through the privatization of Lifelight and water bombers. We're not sure why. This minister couldn't remember whether or not a \$10-million contract was tendered. He thought money for schools comes out of the highways budget line; then he put out a press release advertising an RFP that isn't even available online.

To top it off, when it comes to Lifelight this minister claimed that 50 per cent of government air services are already provided by the private sector. However, I would table today for the Premier's consideration information that shows that it's 60 per cent of air services are always provided by the public.

So why is this minister giving incorrect information to Manitobans? Better yet, why is the Premier allowing a minister who is clearly struggling with his portfolio, to privatize an essential health service that Manitoba families rely on?

Mr. Pallister: Appreciate the member has expertise on struggling with a portfolio, Madam Speaker, but our minister's doing a commendable job in his role.

As the member struggles to do identity politics, Madam Speaker, and make this all personal and about him, he neglects the record of the party he leads. He neglects it in his literature and he neglects it in his memory.

The privatization of the Property Registry unit, affecting literally hundreds of government employees, millions of dollars, was done by the previous government. They had a rationale for doing it, and they did it because it made sense to them to do it. It was a measure they described as practical at the time.

We're practical people on this side of the House. We're looking at getting value for money for Manitoba tax dollars because they know, Manitobans know, how hard they work and this government, unlike the previous one, knows how hard Manitobans work for their money too.

* (13:50)

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

Mr. Kinew: This is not the first time a PC government thought it should privatize Lifelight. We went on a little digging expedition here. We found that the Filmon government—*[interjection]*

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

I would just indicate to the member that props are not to be used in the House—*[interjection]*—but the member's not allowed to be holding up a document, as such, and everybody, I think, knows the rules about props in the House.

So I would appreciate everybody's co-operation.

Mr. Kinew: So I will table the document that we were able to dig out, right? The Filmon government commissioned a report in 1992. Now, the Premier served under that government. I'm sure, if the Premier or his minister has read the report, they would see that the commission's conclusion was that Lifelight is an essential service. It provided value for money, made sure rural folk and northerners in our province had access to health care when they needed it most.

Now, it's clear that the Premier's being driven by ideology and consultants, not by the people of

Manitoba and what is in their best interest. It's time for the Premier to stop this ideological attack on health care, the most valuable—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —of public goods.

Will he reverse his decision to privatize Lifelight?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Pallister: Well, with reference to our guests today, I'd say the member's offside. He's guilty of objectionable conduct, and if he's going to scrimmage with members on this side of the House he should get his facts right.

Now, the fact is that ideology doesn't guide this government. What does, though, is results—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: The previous administration's ideological practices resulted in net decline in available child-care spaces, Madam Speaker, because they refused to work in partnership with those who wish to provide space for children in our province.

Their unwillingness to look at viable options except vote-buying options, Madam Speaker, resulted in the waste of literally millions of dollars. I don't know what ideology guided them in offering contracts to donors, but that's what they did. I don't know what ideology guided them in covering up those contracts, but they did. I have no idea what ideology guided them in throwing millions of dollars away, but they did. They doubled our provincial debt in six years.

We understand how hard Manitobans work for their money. We value that, and we'll make sure we safeguard the safety of Manitobans and the safety of their pocketbooks at the same time.

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

Municipal Infrastructure Federal Funding Available

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, the Premier is starving municipalities of funding and the cuts that he's handing down represent another broken promise. The head of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities said it well: you can't fix 2018 problems with 2016 funding.

Mayor of Brandon was also clear. Quote, he said: We can't keep up with all the costs going up and resources staying where they are. End quote.

And the Premier continues to download costs onto the City of Winnipeg, cutting transit and police services and then applying the carbon tax to services like transit. And the \$150-million cut to the Infrastructure budget that they brought in this week will only place more stress on the roads and highways right across Manitoba.

Why is the Premier shortchanging municipalities?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, again, the member ignores the record of his own party, the party he leads whose name he is afraid to say. It's a Voldemort situation. He will not express the name of the party that shut down a third of municipalities in the province of Manitoba. This is the best reflection of the genuine disrespect that the NDP felt for local governments.

Madam Speaker, we will maintain the most generous arrangements with the City of Winnipeg of any Canadian city. We will maintain a strong relationship with all municipalities because we value the work they do and we understand the difficult decisions they are faced with. We will also make sure that they have less red tape, less overlap, less duplication in their operations by basket-funding money to them and allowing them the discretion they deserve when they spend it. Unlike the previous government which had its hand in every pie and made sure that it was interfering in the decisions of local governments, we respect them; we will work with them as genuine partners.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, the Premier, his whole idea of what it means to work with other people certainly puzzles me. He says he's going to work with other levels of government, and yet the mayor of Winnipeg has said that the Premier here does not want to meet with him—should be one of his most important partners. The federal government will not meet with this Premier.

So, again, how is he going to be working with other levels of government? The City has been very clear what they want from this Province. They want this Province to support their—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —bid for \$182 million from the Building Canada Fund. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Again, this would be federal dollars that the Province would not have to kick in on. They merely have to express their support.

So why doesn't the Premier pick up the phone? Why doesn't the Premier send an email? Why doesn't the Premier shoot somebody a text?

Now, we know that the Premier has trouble with his communication habits, but that shouldn't be an excuse when it comes to working with other levels of government.

Will the Premier support the City's request for \$182 million from the federal government to fix our streets?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I'm disappointed the member would choose to go to the personal attacks, Madam Speaker, but if he wants it, he'll get it back. He'll get it right back.

Here it is. If the member wants to question my ability to work as part of a team, go ahead. But I'll question his. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Pallister: I'll ask him to expound with—at some length on his ability to work as part of a team in his previous occupations. I'll ask him to explain to the people of Manitoba how well he's worked as part of a team since becoming leader. I'll ask him to demonstrate to Manitobans what respect he has shown for the people, like the former leader, Greg Selinger, who backed him up when he was under difficulties, and then he returned that favour by throwing the leader under the bus and telling him he was yesterday's man.

Madam Speaker, if he wants to talk about being a team player, he should demonstrate it. I have, and I'll continue to, as will this team on this side of the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

I would just urge that—might be a good idea if just everybody kind of took a big breath. *[interjection]* And I heard people doing that. It's probably, you know, everything gets a little passionate in here and I understand that and we should be passionate. But just—I want to just urge

some caution with words that are being used in the House so that we can indeed serve the purpose we're here for.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, the Premier won't meet with the mayor—apparently not a priority for this Premier. The federal government won't meet with this Premier. Premier won't send an email, won't make a phone call, won't send a text to get any of these meetings happening, and then he comes down here and talks about how well he works with others. That just doesn't make sense.

But what is particularly bothersome is that his refusal to communicate with the municipal, federal partners is now actually going to hurt Winnipeggers. The City made this request of the Province, to access this \$182 million in federal funding, in July of 2017. It's now March of 2018. The City is long overdue for an answer.

Now this, again, won't cost the Province a single dollar, but the Premier's refusal to act is just another broken promise.

Will the Premier support the City's ask to access \$182 million in federal government money to fix our streets?

Mr. Pallister: I've enjoyed, like many of the members on this side of the House, the opportunity in my life, Madam Speaker, to help build winning teams, and I know how it—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —how hard it is, and I know it's—it takes a great deal of effort. But I welcome the challenge, and we are doing that. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: We have frequent, very frequent contact with other levels of government, as recently as a few days ago with the Prime Minister personally. Madam Speaker, that is not the point.

* (14:00)

I think the point is that the member is speaking from a position of tremendous weakness, because he has had the opportunity for some months here to express views on issues of importance beyond just accusing the government: issues like standing up with us against federal Liberal health cuts; standing up alongside us when the federal government

threatened to take away a \$60-million Factory of the Future investment; standing up with us against the possibility, very real, a proposal by the federal government to decimate small businesses in our country with excessively high taxes.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, in having no opinion, he's taken an opinion. His opinion is for health cuts to Manitobans; his opinion is for less jobs for Manitobans; his opinion and his party's opinion is for higher taxes on Manitobans. He's had the chance to say what his position is, refuses to do so. I invite him to do so now.

Death of Tina Fontaine Request for Public Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Justice Minister has no plans to call a public inquiry into the death of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine, instead shirking and diverting her responsibilities onto the children's advocate office. Certainly, the children's advocate office will conduct a review, but not at the same level of resources, transparency or the ability to call witnesses and with no assurances that the report will be released.

Manitoba has a responsibility to find out, in the most comprehensive manner, how one of their most vulnerable citizens fell through the cracks and lost her life in one of the most grotesque and tragic manners.

Will the Justice Minister call a public inquiry on the death of Tina Fontaine today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Our thoughts and prayers go out to Tina's family and to those in the Sagkeeng community.

Madam Speaker, the member opposite rightly stated that this is—Tina's death is currently the focus of a special investigation under the purview of the office of the children's advocate. And because of changes that the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) recently made, that—the results of that report will be released to the public. We need to allow that process to take place. We will await the results of that process.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The reality is the very structures meant to protect the most vulnerable and in need of care systematically failed Tina and, many have suggested, are complicit in her death.

Sandra Delaronde, chair of the coalition for MMIWG families, stated today, and I quote: We need a public inquiry to shine a light on the systems that failed Tina.

Human rights lawyer, Corey Shefman, suggests this government's, and I quote, decision not to call an inquiry is a clear sign that this isn't a priority for them.

The minister has a responsibility to call a public inquiry to ensure that no child ever faces the same horrendous outcome as Tina.

Will the Justice Minister call a public inquiry into the death of Tina Fontaine today?

Mrs. Stefanson: I will let the member opposite know—obviously she's aware of the fact—that there is national inquiry right now to MMIWG families, and that is taking place. And that is looking at a broader, systemic view. So that is taking place at that level, Madam Speaker, and the office of the children's advocate is looking into the specifics of the issues around the death of Tina.

So we believe that those investigations are taking place right now, Madam Speaker. We will await those processes to go through, and we await the review being made public to Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: I've shared time and again my home community of Sagkeeng First Nation has one of the highest levels of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, not only here in Manitoba but across the country. Our chief, Derrick Henderson, is in the gallery with us today to highlight the importance of a public inquiry, not only for the family of Tina but for the whole community of Sagkeeng. Tina's aunt, Thelma, our chief and council, our community and, I would suggest, most Manitobans want justice for Tina. Tina deserves justice.

Will the Justice Minister call a public inquiry into the death of Tina Fontaine today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I want to say our heartfelt sorrow goes out to Tina's family as well as the community of Sagkeeng, Madam Speaker.

As the member opposite is aware, there is a national inquiry—MMIWG inquiry—right now that is taking place. I signed a letter, along with the Minister responsible for Indigenous and Northern Relations,

along with the grand chiefs, and called on the national inquiry—made a strong recommendation that Manitoba should be represented at the commission the—in—within the existing leadership.

We have been calling from the—day one to have a seat at that table. We hope that the national commission and the national inquiry will see fit to do so to ensure that Manitoba has a seat at that table. We will continue to work with the grand chiefs in those efforts.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding with oral questions, we have a new school group that has just entered the gallery and I don't think they're going to be there for very long, so that I would like to introduce them to you now.

We have seated in the public gallery from Royal School 26 grade 4 students under the direction of Lauren Friesen, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), which would be me.

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

Scholarship and Bursary Initiative Government Funding Contribution

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): The cuts just keep coming for students in our province: tax credits, cut; health insurance, cut; tuition is increasing at the same time we see cuts to funding for universities and colleges.

Now we've learned that the government is coming up short for students yet again. It promised millions in scholarships and bursaries, but it's not coming anywhere near its own budget.

Why is this government shortchanging students in this province once again?

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

He should certainly remember that the cost of tuition in Manitoba is the second lowest of any province in this country. So we are certainly considered a very cost-effective place for post-secondary education. And as before, when the member wanted to talk about the value of Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative, which our government has raised from \$4 million to \$20 million, he actually likes to

talk about it before the end of the fiscal year because he's really probably afraid that we'll meet our target.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, funny, Madam Speaker, that's the exact same answer the minister gave last time I raised this. He said wait until the end of the year. That's when the money—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Wiebe: Wait 'til the end of the fiscal year, that's when the money rolls in. Well, it's March 15th. It's pretty darn close to the end of the fiscal year.

I'd like to table these documents that we obtained through a FIPPA request that shows that the government has raised barely 60 per cent of the amount that they claimed that they would as of March 15th. In fact, right now—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —the minister—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —is behind their goal by \$5 million.

It's report card season here in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, and I don't think anyone would be happy with a grade of 60 per cent or a D.

Why is this government continuing to fail students?

Mr. Wishart: The member likes to quote numbers from an incomplete year. I guess that's what they're used to, as previous government could never seem to get the numbers to come together when it came to budgets in the past and they simply ignored the year-ends because they were very often way out of line with—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: —what their Estimates were.

I would encourage the member to be patient and wait 'til the end of the fiscal year and see what the final results are. I'm happy to take his compliments at that time, or his criticisms, based on the actual results. But speculation gets you nowhere.

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

Mr. Wiebe: A previous FIPPA request showed that the government spent tens of thousands of dollars advertising this initiative that they're now talking

about. Students have been left holding the bag on this in the province.

* (14:10)

The government is on track now to contribute \$800,000 less to the MSBI than in 2015, and the numbers are right in front of the minister. All this is while tuition is going up and funding is going down.

Why is this minister shortchanging universities, shortchanging colleges and shortchanging the students of this province?

Mr. Wishart: I think the member should actually look back a little bit in history and see which government actually cut MSBI. Oh, wait, it was the previous government. The NDP government cut MSBI and then froze it for three years and called that support for students, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Social Housing Units Provincial Funding

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): This budget fails to build one single social housing unit. It fails to increase this housing budget even by 10 per cent.

I'll table a freedom of information request which shows the minister failed to build one single social housing unit from May 2016 to October 17th, 2017.

The Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage may call 50 beds at Siloam Mission's shelter housing, but we certainly don't.

Will this minister admit that he hasn't funded one social housing unit since taking office?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): You know, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It's unfortunate that she would make a comment with regard to Siloam Mission and the very important work they do here in our province, and talk about 50 additional beds to support women as being absolutely, you know, unimportant. I am very disappointed in the member for her comment like that. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mrs. Smith: Well, we certainly can't call those 50 beds at Siloam Mission social housing because

those are only beds for after-hours use. We need housing for 24 hours a day.

So this minister has refused to commit into a national housing strategy that puts \$15 million into affordable housing for Manitobans. Given this minister's dismal track record on housing, this radio silence is worrying us.

Last year—and all of Manitobans—last year he ignored social housing and funded just 137. This year he's ignored it again and failed to increase the budget by even 10 per cent.

Will the minister tell the House if he plans to chip in or will he leave it all up to the federal government like he did on child care?

Mrs. Cox: I would just like to say that we are developing a made-in-Manitoba housing strategy.

Members opposite sat on their hands for 17 years and did nothing, left over \$500 million, I believe, in deferred maintenance, which we were forced to be responsible for now, as the new government, and the minister talks about, you know, funding—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cox: —for families.

I am very proud of our government and the commitment they're making to health, to education, to families, an increase that we've never seen before in the budget, 10 per cent more than previous, Madam Speaker. So when the member opposite makes comments like this it's very inappropriate.

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

Rent Assist Benefit Funding Concerns

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): This minister sat on his hands since May 2006.

Last year the minister cut Rent Assist benefits for hundreds of families. Housing advocates are concerned that this was a first step to plan to dismantle all of the funding for Rent Assist—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Smith: —and backfill it with federal dollars instead. This will hurt Manitobans, Manitoba renters who stand to lose up to \$100 a month in subsidies.

We must maintain Rent Assist levels so that Manitoba families can access affordable housing.

Is the minister abandoning his responsibility to Manitoba renters and leaving them at the mercy of the federal government?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): You know, I acknowledge the question, the comments that the member opposite made and, again, I would just like to, you know, refer to the comments that she made with regard to Siloam Mission.

You know, here yesterday we had Jim Bell in the Chamber here, in the gallery, and we had the member from Logan talking about the important work that they do, and I think it's totally disrespectful that this member here would go on and talk so disrespectfully about Siloam Mission and the very good work they do here in Manitoba to help those that are vulnerable, Madam Speaker.

But I also would like to say that under our new government more than 2,700 more Manitobans are supported under the Rent Assist program. I think that speaks, you know, accolades to what we're doing here in our province.

Low-Income Manitobans Cost-of-Living Concerns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the health of people is improved in countries with greater equality, yet the Finance Minister's budget has no benefit for a fisherman who makes \$9,000 a year. He gains nothing from the increased personal exemption, yet has to pay higher costs for gas for his boat, to heat his home, for electricity to turn his lights on and higher tuition to send his children to post-secondary education. The government is taking a lot of money off his kitchen table.

Why is the Minister of Finance with his budgetary approach creating greater inequality and throwing struggling people with low incomes under the bus?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to respond to that question.

The member for River Heights could not be more wrong. As a matter of fact, not only are we bringing the largest tax cut to Manitobans in the history of this province, I recently saw a CBC article that says if you want the poor in Canada to do

better, the way to do it is not by increasing the minimum wage, but it is by raising the basic personal exemption because that is how you put more money back in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans.

We're giving Manitobans a break because they deserve it.

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

Cystic Fibrosis Medication Coverage Cuts to Special Drug Program

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): It doesn't put a penny in that fisherman's pocket.

Madam Speaker, speaking of equality, those with cystic fibrosis start life with a disadvantage. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: All they ask for is equal opportunity when compared to others by having their medications fully covered under the special drug program, as happens in every other province, as I table.

The Minister of Health can have a special drug program and keep people like Devin Rey well so he can work and contribute to society and have a full life. Or he can eliminate the program, as he's doing, so people will get anxious and sick so they end up in hospital, losing their income and costing the provincial health program a lot of money.

Which will the minister choose?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, in Manitoba we are fortunate to have one of the most comprehensive Pharmacare programs in all of Canada. In fact, it is such a good program the federal Liberal government is actually looking to emulate that program. All of those in Manitoba who need specialized drugs are eligible for the Pharmacare program. It is an income-based program. It is comprehensive, it is fair and it is a leading standard for all provinces in Canada.

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

Mr. Gerrard: But after April the 1st, people with cystic fibrosis will be less well off than in other provinces.

Madam Speaker, in this year's budget, the Minister of Health shows his budget increasing by \$56 million from last year's budget. The budget also

shows that the minister is receiving 86 million more dollars for Health from the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —federal government than last year.

* (14:20)

This means that the provincial contribution to health care is decreasing this year by \$30 million.

Why is the provincial contribution to health care decreasing by \$30 million? Is this because the minister is cutting back on funding for people with cystic fibrosis who need life-saving drugs?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I am encouraged on this day that the member opposite, the member for River Heights, the Liberal member for River Heights has finally acknowledged that health-care investments are going up in Manitoba. He's been trying—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: —for two years to spin the myth, the wrong myth, that spending was actually going down in Manitoba. Of course, where the investment was going down was in Ottawa on a percentage basis, in Manitoba—but in Manitoba, it's been going up.

But I will say the member opposite is consistent on one thing. He said nothing when the federal Liberal government were reducing the percentage of health-care spending in Manitoba in the last few years, and he said nothing when he sat in the Cabinet under the Chrétien government when funding was going down then as well, Madam Speaker.

Climate and Green Plan Government Initiatives

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, for 17 years the NDP promised Manitobans that they had a green strategy. They failed their legislative greenhouse gas reduction targets in 2012 and even admitted that they were unachievable. Furthermore, the Auditor General's report on the NDP's climate change initiatives was scathing, stating the two hundred and—or 2015 emissions reduction plan was not supported by comprehensive analysis of the benefits, risks and costs and different approaches and policy tools and lacked implementation details and cost estimates.

What a difference from our PC government.

Can the Minister of Sustainable Development please remind the Assembly how our green and climate plan is keeping our promises and providing real progress for Manitobans? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I would like to thank my honourable colleague for that question.

Our climate plan is better for the environment and better for the economy. We're going to be working with industries throughout Manitoba and ensuring that they contribute to our climate mitigation plan while protecting their industries and the economy as well.

I'm tremendously proud of our government and our initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint while ensuring that our economic growth continues to grow. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Infrastructure Department Responsibility for Maintenance Costs

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, another day and more chaos and confusion from the Minister of Infrastructure.

The minister's department is no longer—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —paying for the capital costs and the maintenance of anything related to water. That includes things like clearing grass from ditches and fixing culverts.

I'd like to ask the minister: Who is paying for these things?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): I'd like to say to the member for Elmwood he puts about as much misinformation on the record as his leader.

I'd like to point out that the aviation services procurement consultant, which we had put in our press release—press release, was put on MERX March 13th. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition should start doing some research.

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

Mr. Maloway: The minister should try answering one question at a time because he didn't answer my question at all.

Madam Speaker, the minister is playing a shell game. He's getting millions from Ottawa for climate change initiatives and he's taking hundreds of millions dollars from the pockets of Manitobans from his new carbon tax. Barely has any of this new money—it's almost all from existing programs.

I ask the Minister of Infrastructure: Are things like clearing grass from ditches and fixing culverts now being paid from the climate fund?

Mr. Schuler: Well, in typical fashion the member for Elmwood and the NDP across the way opposed the carbon tax and have spent it already five times over.

Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the House our record. Already we are building: two schools under construction. Five more schools have been announced. We are on our way to completing Freedom Road which was talked about for 17 years under the NDP. We have started the Lake St. Martin channels, the Lake Manitoba channels, \$500 million in infrastructure and maintenance, a billion dollars in private investment. The list goes on and on. Where they failed, we succeeded.

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

Mr. Maloway: Well, that's two questions and no answers.

Madam Speaker, every day brings more chaos from the Minister of Infrastructure. He hands out sole-source contracts to friends, but says they are—they were tendered. He breaks his promise for our highways with a \$150-million reduction, but says it isn't a cut. And now his climate fund is made up almost completely with existing programs.

When is this Premier going to step in and fix this minister's mess? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, order, order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I accept the one aspect of the member's question, Madam Speaker, he is a bit of an expert on ministerial messes. He was watching them for 17 years when the NDP was in power. He watched ministers give contracts to their pals, cover it up, not put it on the Leg library website like they're required to do until about eight years later, hand them out—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —year after year after year to the same guy—happened to be a big party donor—never made it

public, covered it up—covered it up. Some say caused a rebellion in his party, and now he talks about us shopping properly.

We're going to manage the dollars that are entrusted us by Manitobans really, really carefully and well to get maximum value for money, and we sure won't overpromise and underdeliver when it comes to investing in infrastructure.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Vimy Arena

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

- (1) The residents—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —of Assiniboia, St. James, greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg to use the Vimy Arena site as an addiction treatment facility.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and the City has not considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as the St. Boniface industrial park or the 20,000 acres at CentrePort.

(3) The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addiction facility and has not sought public input from the community to consider better uses for this facility consistent with a residential area.

(4) The provincial licensing system is akin to that of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site by the city and the province.

* (14:30)

(5) The proposed rezoning changes the fundamental nature of the community, zoned as a park area, and the concerns of the residents of St. James regarding safety, property values and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

(6) The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue-collar and middle-class citizens who are family-oriented towards children and seniors and do not have the financial resources of other neighbourhoods.

(7) This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine Park or for Heubach park, the park between Park Boulevard East and West, even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.

(8) The City and the Province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this, quote, unquote, process that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.

(9) The Province needs to be inclusive in the decision-making process and improve its programs to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provisions of drug prescriptions that could lead to addictive behaviour.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the member has not read the petition as printed and ask if there is leave to accept the petition as printed. Leave? *[Agreed]*

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

The background to this petition is as follows:

1. *The residents of Assiniboia, St. James, greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg (City) to use the Vimy Arena site as an addictions treatment facility.*

2. *The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes and the City has not considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface industrial park or the 20,000 acres at Centre Port.*

3. *The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addiction treatment facility and has not sought public input from the community*

to consider better uses for this facility consistent with a residential area.

4. The provincial licensing system is akin to that of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site by the city and the province.

5. The proposed rezoning changes the fundamental nature of the community, zoned as a park area, and the concern of residents of St. James regarding safety, property values, and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

6. The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue collar, and middle class citizens who are family-oriented toward children and seniors, and do not have the financial resources of other neighborhoods.

7. This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine park nor for Heubach Park (park between Park Blvd. east and west) even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.

8. The City and province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this "process" that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.

9. The province needs to be inclusive in the decision making process and improve its programs to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provision of drug prescriptions that could lead to addictive behaviour.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.

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

Medical Laboratory Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service.

It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to

seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

Under the present provincial government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a US company, has acquired Unicity labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

With the creation of this monopoly, there's been closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has made it more difficult for some medical offices by changing the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charging some medical offices for collection services.

These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. This situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening based on their individual health situations.

Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all patients requiring immediate results, STAT patients, such as patients with suspicious internal infections, be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. This new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice, which increases costs to the public health-care system.

Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop shop, acting as a health-care front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to provide high-quality and complete services to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow

Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs in clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

To urge the provincial government to ensure high-quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

To urge the provincial government to address this matter immediately in the interest of better patient-focused care and improved support for health professionals.

Signed by J. Papa, P. McLeod, C. Lavich and many more.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I would just point out that the member has not read the petition exactly as printed, and ask if there is leave to accept the petition as printed. *[Agreed]*

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

The background to this petition is as follows:

1. The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service.

2. It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

3. Under the present Provincial Government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a U.S. company, has acquired Unicity Labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

4. With the creation of this monopoly, there has been the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity Labs, Dynacare has made it more difficult for some medical offices by changing the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charging some medical offices for collection services.

5. These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. The situation is particularly critical for

patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life threatening based on their individual health situations.

6. Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all patients requiring immediate results (STAT's patients, such as patients with suspicious internal infections) be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. This new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than traveling twice, which increases cost to the public health care system.

7. Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop service, acting as a healthcare front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to provide high quality and complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

1. To urge the Provincial Government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs in clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

2. To urge the Provincial Government to ensure high quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

3. To urge the Provincial Government to address this matter immediately in the interest of better patient focused care and improved support for health professionals.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Would you resume debate on the budget motion.

BUDGET DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of

Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon, who has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I won't repeat everything that I said yesterday in the short time I had but I do have more things to say.

Let's talk about the Growth, Enterprise and Trade budget, shall we—things like, oh, I don't know, conciliation and mediation services—cut, drastic cut. What does that mean for labour relations and timely settlement of people trying to organize, people trying to get collective agreements set? Well, I guess we don't know that yet. Time will tell.

But let's move on to workplace health and safety. It seems there's cuts there too, because, you know, safety's not important. There's no bottom line in safety. We're not making money by keeping workers alive and healthy.

Oh, wait a minute. Yes, you are. It saves money to do things safely, and we cannot just leave it up to private enterprise. There has to be inspectors. There has to be regulation. There has to be people enforcing the regulation because just leaving it up to the individual corporations never worked in the past, and it won't work today.

So cutting the budget for workplace health and safety is yet again the wrong way to go. But, you know, what else have they cut?

Well, let's look at employment standards—cut. Everything that affects working people seems to be cut from this budget—not cut completely, but makes it that much harder for working people to stay safe on their jobs makes it that much harder for working people who have problems with problem employers accessing employment standards, making sure that employment standards are there in place where they need to be and updated regularly to remain properly.

Let's talk about Enterprise, Innovation and Trade—cut, drastically cut. Maybe that explains why industry is not really being attracted, the new growth industries, the technologically advanced industries, that aren't coming to this province that this government isn't doing anything to attract them.

So those are some of the lowlights of what's happening in the Growth, Enterprise and Trade. Well, not quite.

Let's look very briefly at what's happening with mines. I don't know whether any of the members opposite—I suppose the member from Thompson should be paying attention to mines branch. Oh, wait a minute, that budget has been cut too.

* (14:40)

They did, in their budget, say the word north, they said the word mining but never said anything about a plan to attract mining, never said anything about a plan for the North. For the last two years, we've heard about various iterations of a Look North plan that's going to have a plan to have a plan—so far, no plan. Now, I certainly don't want to belittle the people that are trying to make the Look North plan into something and I commend them for their efforts to try and do something while this government does nothing—no plan for the North, no job strategy for the North, no exploration strategy for the North, no consultation strategy for the North. They committed to have this done by I believe it was May of last year—not done. We're very quickly approaching May a year later—not done. Mining companies that want to invest in this province want to know what that consultation process looks like. They don't know the answer to that. At least one mining venture or exploration venture has already pulled out because they don't know what that process is going to look like. So they need to get busy and quit looking and start doing, start doing something for the people of the North.

Did they talk about Churchill in their budget? It appears no, they did not, Madam Speaker, because clearly Churchill is not a priority for this government. If it was a priority, perhaps they'd get on board with our complaint to the Canadian Transportation Agency, instead of being like the federal government that was going to file a lawsuit, then backed off on who they were suing, and now, as reported in the press today, the chances of that ever succeeding are slim, nil and none, whereas the complaint to the Canadian Transportation Agency does have a hope of doing something to get that rail line up and running, to make sure that Churchill maintains its place as a port in Manitoba for shipping grain, for shipping other matter.

But this government isn't concerned about the people in the North. They're not even concerned about their base of support, the farmers of Manitoba. Keystone Agricultural Producers agree that being able to ship grain through the Port of Churchill

would, in fact, allow them to move grain, whereas right now grain is not moving east and west. CNCP are not providing the rail cars that they need. They're not meeting their obligations. If we had a functional rail line and port going to the North, our farmers could, in fact, be moving their grain and could, in fact, be making money. Instead, they're left holding the bag while this government fails to even recognize that there's a problem there.

Madam Speaker, there's so many things that are missing from that part of the budget that really protects people with Growth, Enterprise and Trade part. Let's talk a little bit about the Infrastructure budget, things like highways. The only thing that this government has ever talked about that might maybe someday form a part of a plan, if they have one, for the North, is tourists. How shall tourists get there when they've cut the highway budget? Rail line clearly doesn't operate going to Churchill.

Let's talk about something more basic for people in the North: airports. Well, it appears they've cut the runway infrastructure budget quite dramatically too, which will, again, make it that much more difficult for northern communities to ship and receive product, groceries, fuel and all the rest of it, yet this government continues to just cut—no thought to what that's going to do to people in our northern communities.

Madam Speaker, we talked a little bit yesterday about health care in the North in particular. We hear lots from our colleagues in the south about what's happening with health care in the city and in the ERs closing. It's already quite challenging for people in the North to access health care. When I talked to the CEO of the northern regional health authority, she tells me that they're on track to meet the mandated \$7-million cut that this government forced on that regional health authority. What is not public knowledge, though, is exactly what all they cut. Nobody will tell us that answer. Was it the budget for doctors, because, certainly, we don't seem to have doctors in the North anymore?

Our clinic is budgeted for now only three doctors while, in fact, we only have two, and very soon, I'm told, that'll be down to one. Snow Lake has no doctors. So, every time somebody goes to the doctor in one of these communities, it's a different doctor. So they start all over again. They have to tell people in—the doctor, again, what's the issue, what they need, why they need it. The doctor's got to go through all the stuff so that that doctor's familiar with

their file, and so it's just an endless cycle of always starting over.

And yet we didn't see anything from this Minister of Health that said there's a problem with health care in the North. Apparently, he's quite happy with things going down, with things being cut.

I want to thank our former government for investing in things like a new ER for the Flin Flon hospital. But I'm left to wonder, with this government's cuts and austerity, who's going to be in it? We don't seem to have doctors.

We had, actually, a surgeon who was interested in setting up shop in Flin Flon, thought maybe he could actually expand and start doing some surgeries there, I'm told. That was discouraged. It's too bad because, really, with mining on the wane throughout the North, communities are struggling and trying to find a different reason to exist. Health care could certainly be one of those reasons. I've long championed the need for an—or a MRI machine in the North. Flin Flon would be an excellent place to put it. It would certainly spur some economic development in our community because we'd need hotels; we'd need restaurants; we'd need all that infrastructure that goes along with people coming to our community.

But, apparently, this government isn't really interested in spurring economic activity in our northern communities. There should be at least three major hubs, and maybe four, in the North that allow people to access care that people in the south take for granted. But, again, no plan—no plan—in their last budget. No plan in their—this budget, and I suspect no plan in the next budget for people in the North.

My time is very quickly running out, so I just want to make sure that this government understands that people in our northern communities deserve better. People in our northern communities deserve to know that their mother can be looked after in a care home. They deserve to know that their disabled child can get the kind of care that they deserve, and they're certainly not getting it from this government today.

I've asked the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Goertzen) to come to Flin Flon, to listen to people, to hear what they have to say, but no response from the minister, no desire to come and actually hear what people are feeling, what people are saying. I guess that's too bad that he's that uncaring. It's too bad that this government is that

uncaring that they don't want to actually listen to people. So that'll be up to us to make sure that the people's voices are heard, that this government understands that cuts are not the way to make this the best province ever.

*(14:50)

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Madam Speaker, Manitobans and northerners deserve a break, and that's what this Budget 2018 delivers.

Through effective co-operation in a range of sectors—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bindle: —and services, our government is working with the federal government to improve lives across our province.

An example of this partnership is our joint investment with the federal government, announced in February, of nearly \$47 million to create up to 1,400 new and newly funded early learning and child-care spaces in Manitoba, including expansion of 18 preschool spaces at Thompson Children's World and Early Learning and Child Care Thompson, as well as expansion of 20 nursery school spaces at Riverside Daycare in Thompson. The agreement focuses on improved quality, accessibility, affordability and inclusivity in child care with consideration for families that are most in need of these services, because Manitobans deserve a break.

Our government remains committed to strengthening and sustaining our government's future with an ambitious focus on this goal. We are continuing to fix the finances our government inherited following the mismanagement of the previous NDP administration while we improve services for Manitobans and rebuild the economy. With several important measures, we are creating a stable foundation for Manitoba to be successful as we proceed along our path to making our province the most improved one in Canada.

Our government introduced Budget 2018 that further reduces the provincial deficit by \$319 million while raising the basic personal exemption on income tax and delivering the largest tax cuts in our province's history, saving Manitobans more than \$230 million over the next two years. As well, Budget 2018 increases funding for health care, living—to its highest ever level in Manitoba. It further reduces ambulance fees, creates 60 full-time paramedic positions province-wide and boosts

spending for the home cancer program by nearly \$14 million. The budget also includes investments in five schools and provides \$350 million in capital infrastructure spending.

Our legislative agenda will continue to implement the key changes that Manitobans voted for in bringing in our Progressive Conservative government in 2016. During the next several weeks of this session, we are proposing more improvements to child welfare in order to decrease the number of children in care and to give the system better supports. In addition, we are introducing legislation to increase safety on our highways, to further cut red tape, to implement the comprehensive Manitoba Climate and Green Plan and other priorities such as the Look North initiative.

The joint action group on resource development met in Thompson this week as part of the Look North initiative to develop a long-term economic development strategy for sustaining growth and prosperity in the North, and our government continues working with industry and First Nation communities to unlock the economic potential that exists there.

We will, at the same time, push ahead with legislation we introduced last fall to modernize the Manitoba government, bring in responsible and safe cannabis retailing, increase accountability and public sector compensation, implement the Canadian Free Trade Agreement to enhance economic growth and create the strongest law in the country for sustaining watersheds.

This legislation—this legislative session will allow us to continue making our province a better place for generations to come by staying on track with improvements in finances, services and economy—and the economy to provide stability, security and opportunity for families in the North and throughout the province.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve a break, and our government 2018 delivers that break. Not just with some Manitobans, we stand with all Manitobans, and as MLA for Thompson representing northerners, I'm proud our—of our government's commitment to Manitobans and I'm proud to support the 2018 budget as presented this week and proud to speak to it.

I consider myself very fortunate to be part of this government because we are a team with strong leadership and an unwavering commitment to do

what is right for Manitobans, united in our goal to build a better Manitoba. I'm proud of our team's accomplishments over the past two years and I'm proud of the vision we have for the future of Manitoba.

After a decade of debt, decay and decline, Manitobans feel betrayed by the previous government's culture of deceit, tax hikes and reckless spending. Madam Speaker,

Manitobans deserve a break. Over the past two years we have followed through on the commitments we ran on in the past election. We will continue to meet our commitments to Manitobans by following through with budgets that continue to reduce our deficit, provide financial relief for Manitobans by allowing them to keep more of their hard-earned money on the kitchen table.

We will continue to fix the province's finances because Manitobans deserve stability. We will continue to repair the services of the province because Manitobans deserve security and we will continue to rebuild the economy because Manitobans deserve opportunity.

Madam Speaker, after a decade of debt under the previous NDP government, Manitobans deserve a break. We are, and we will continue to restore Manitoba's trust in government through our actions. We will continue to show our integrity by being open and honest, by listening to Manitobans, by facing the storm from the previous government's misaligned, misguided and mismanaged decisions and by focusing on what is best for all Manitobans.

All Manitobans want what our government promised—value for money, long-term stability, security, peace of mind and the opportunity to reach their potential, and our government is committed to delivering on those promises because, Madam Speaker, after a decade of decay under the former NDP government, Manitobans deserve a break.

The previous government's process of consultations resulted in no budget. They were, essentially, all preparation, no H. After drifting off into fantasyland on their spending promises, they had no idea what to do after their consultations because they knew Manitobans couldn't afford them.

Basically—basically—while the NDP were sitting on—after drifting off into—after drifting off into fantasyland in their spending promises, they had no

idea what to do after their consultations because they knew Manitobans couldn't afford them.

Basically, while the NDP were sitting in that fantasyland dithering on whether to deliver a budget or not, Manitobans were left wondering, what shall they do now, what shall they use to fill the empty spaces. Shall they set off across a sea of faces in search of more and more applause? Shall they buy a new guitar? Shall they drive a more powerful car? Shall they work straight through the night? Shall they get into fights, leave the lights on, drop bombs, do tours of the east, contract diseases, bury bones, break up homes, send flowers by phone, take to drink, go to shrinks, give up meat, rarely sleep, keep people as pets, train dogs, race rats, fill the attic with cash, bury treasure, store up leisure, but never relax at all, keeping Manitoba's back to the wall.

In addition to some of those things, the NDP did worse things by putting up growth signs and manufacturing fear by trying to convince people that cancer drugs were under threat just before the election. And now they use words like egregious, chaotic and pyroclastic.

Furthermore, under the previous NDP government Manitobans saw their democratic rights eroded when the NDP took away their right to vote on major tax increases. The NDP increased taxes when they promised—in fact, ran on the promise—that they would not increase them, and once elected the NDP did exactly what they promised they wouldn't do—they raised taxes.

First, they expanded the tax to items that weren't taxed before. Then they increased the tax. Manitobans found themselves paying 8 per cent on items that weren't previously taxed, like home insurance and other essentials. Manitoba did not have a revenue problem; the NDP had a spending problem. And, instead of looking for savings within government, they increased their spending and taxed citizens with a PST hike to cover it.

By contrast, our government, by engaging Manitobans in budget consultations, which we continue to do year after year, we get a real understanding of what Manitobans feel is important and from those consultations we actually deliver a budget. Imagine that—the best budget Manitoba's ever seen. Plus our government's budget focuses on long-term sustainable measures to fix our finances, improve services relied on by our citizens, sparks the

rebuilding of our economy and puts our province on a responsible fiscal track, benefiting all Manitobans, because, Madam Speaker, after a decade of decline under the former NDP, Manitobans deserve a break.

* (15:00)

You don't have to be poor to care about helping the poor. You don't have to be indigenous or Metis to care about helping indigenous or Metis people. You don't have to be female to care about supporting gender equality, and you don't have to have ability issues to care about accessibility—and the list goes on, but you get the point. We work towards equality for all.

Teamwork is how past generations survived on this land, teamwork built the province in the North and teamwork is required to build a better province. I'm proud of our team and our record, and although our inherited challenges are significant, including multiple long-term contracts signed by the previous government just before the last election, we are up to the challenge. We know that decisions today can affect tens of thousands of people for generations and we take that responsibility very seriously.

As we fix the finances, restore services, rebuild the economy, we'll focus on helping people in need today while protecting our ability to provide services to future generations. I'm proud of our record, proud of our vision and proud to continue to work with Manitobans to become the most improved province in Canada, because, Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve a break.

House Business

Madam Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum). The title of the resolution is Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that, pursuant to rule 33(8), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

The title of the resolution is Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities.

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Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It's an honour to stand in this Chamber as the MLA for The Pas to put on record my concerns regarding this budget.

In regards to health care in northern Manitoba, Madam Speaker, after 21 months this Premier (Mr. Pallister) continues to make deep, long cuts to health-care services that Manitobans rely on. Northern Manitobans want to know if they'll be able to access the care they need when they need it. Pallister has abandoned northern and rural families, leaving them to travel farther and to wait longer for care.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

On February 13, I hosted a town hall forum on health care in The Pas at the Metis hall. We had a great turnout.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind the member that if you're referring to some member of government, refer to the Pallister government, not the name of the individual premier.

Ms. Lathlin: Basically, this was our way to meet with our constituents to hear them and to discuss public issues such as health care. Our folks were able to participate, voice their opinions and question their MLA. We had very informative discussions and respectful discussions as well, and I just appreciate everyone's input.

The concerns that were discussed were the long waiting times at the ER, mental health and Northern Patient Transportation Program, and jurisdictional issues regarding disabilities for our people living on reserve, which is just across the river on OCN.

The Premier has cut \$1 million from the Northern Patient Transportation Program. That funding helped our patients to be assisted by escorts or usually family members to escort our patients to Winnipeg to access health care. Somebody at the town hall meeting described how they get flown—medevac'd out to Winnipeg and it's up to them with the only clothes on their back to find their way back home, either by getting a bus or even having to get a ride with somebody from Winnipeg back to The Pas. We deserve way more respect for our people, especially in a time of crisis and stress.

Also, too, in regards to mental health, our folks talked about there was no services for our youth in regards to assessment. Our youth have to be flown out to Winnipeg and Brandon to receive that assessment. And there's also no long-term medical treatment for our folks with mental health issues. Right now we only have a reactive health services for our folks who are over the age of 18, and that is it.

I'm requesting that this government invest in providing mental health assessments for our youth in northern Manitoba, instead of our youth and their families, including mine, having to leave their home communities in order to be assessed in Winnipeg or Brandon. This is not helping our families and this is not helping our children. This only adds to the torture and the stress by having our families leave our homes to have our children to access the urgent care needed to address mental health, especially, when we deal with suicide crisis. Just recently, we lost a 16-year-old boy in my community.

In regards to child welfare, the budget states that—and blames—I quote: Far too many children are in the care of child-welfare agencies. That was the legacy of 16 years of the previous government. End quote.

Deputy Speaker, once again, I'm glad I'm here as an indigenous woman and as a intergenerational residential school survivor to once again educate this Chamber that this legacy goes beyond any previous government. We are in an era of reconciliation. Thank goodness for that. I'm grateful for this epic change in our country's attitude towards indigenous people and working towards educating our country on the cultural genocide from the residential school impacts. This gives me a sense of relief for my daughters as I raise them to be strong indigenous women. Our country's road to reconciliation needs this government to fully understand the true history behind why our indigenous children are the highest population in care. We must work together.

Last week, I attended the MKO child-welfare reform held in Opaskwayak Cree Nation on March 5th and 6th. This meeting—this gathering of chiefs and social workers from northern Manitoba gathered together in hopes of providing our input as indigenous people to work towards a goal of bringing our children home.

I was asked to bring greetings as my community's MLA. I shared my experience as a foster parent and a difficulty of our families

navigating and communicating within this system, even just to get a call back from a social worker as we shared stories. Those two days were very difficult for me as a foster parent and as an indigenous mother. Those two days of speaking about child welfare reform were two days of triggers of—for my mental health.

I shared our experience as legislators when there was a peaceful protest that happened in the gallery on our last day of session in the fall. I shared that there was many indigenous youth and elders in the gathering—gallery.

I will recap this truly amazing experience as a legislator in this very Chamber, in case you missed it. What happened after—we had indigenous youth and elders up there with T-shirts that said, bring our children home. They rolled out a flag—again, bring our children home. And there was—a woman had a—she had, like, a warrior cry. And that's when the drumming started: bring our children home, bring our children home. That truly affected me because I'm so going through what they're going through. I truly understand their cries for help.

The Speaker of the House called for a five-minute recess. Lot of our folks left, but we stayed here and listened to their cries for help. That's why I want to make sure that this story, this experience that happened here, is on record. It's—this will be shared on Hansard forever. There was no media in the gallery there. Instead, they were at the Chamber of Commerce.

And what made the news that day? It was that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) commented on a woman wearing high heels and dressing up. Instead, this did not make the news. So it is my duty to make sure that is recorded so many other Manitobans will know what truly happened here on that last day.

*(15:10)

An executive director of a northern authority shared an experience of grandparents who were punished for waiting and not responding quick enough to the agency to get their grandchildren back. They were punished for their patience. They were punished as they waited for the assistant to get back to them about their grandchildren.

In regard to the guardianship bill, I agree with many First Nations on guardianship that will make it easier for our indigenous children to be separated from their families and lose their identities. These are the concerns of having their children placed in

non-indigenous foster homes. To emphasize this fact, I will share this personal experience. My good friend is a respite worker. She was taking care of a young Cree girl. She is living in a nonindigenous foster home. My friend was concerned that she did not know her identity. During a visit with my friend and this young girl, I asked her, do you know that you're Cree? Do you know where your home community is? She had no idea what I was talking about. I did my best to teach her about her—our Cree identity in a matter of an hour. That made me very sad for her future and her lack of connection to her home community which is in northern Manitoba. Imagine the impacts from this loss of our identity. The TRC prioritized placing our indigenous children into culturally appropriate care, always. This permanent guardianship must ensure that our children in care maintain their cultural identities.

Last week I took part in a walk for justice honouring Tina Fontaine and Colten Boushie on March 6th, and we also honoured their families. Our walk ended at the Kikiwak on the very last day where the child-welfare reform gathering was taking place. Deputy Speaker, it was no—it wasn't a coincidence that this walk ended at the Kikiwak right next door to where our chiefs, social workers were gathering to talk about reform and improve the system. These two issues are braided together, which results in what we are dealing with, which is missing and murdered women, girls and men.

In regard to child care, this budget says it will support more than 700 newly funded spaces. Deputy Speaker, I really hope, on behalf of us—northern Manitoba—that some of these spaces find their spots in northern Manitoba as well. Right now in The Pas we have two daycare centres that do not operate in the summer or Christmas holidays because they're placed in schools. Right now the Uptown Day Care in The Pas are wanting to accommodate these families who deserve these services as well. During the times when our daycares are closed, the centre wants a bigger facility to help out our families so they can go to work and go to school.

I want to talk about the Look North budget. This budget focuses on tourism and mining activity. However, this strategy is not inclusive of all our diverse communities in northern Manitoba. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government does not understand that economic development needs to come with education, access to health care, better housing, access to daycare and access to potable water. The strategy says to increase tourism and

mining activity. So why does this strategy not aim to increase their role in addressing the lack of basic life necessities in northern Manitoba, particularly in First Nation communities?

This strategy is a backward strategy. Who are they partnering up with, people who are already privileged with these basic life necessities? We need healthy and educated communities to be part of this economic development strategy. This will need to include all of our communities, especially our northern community councils and our First Nation governments.

As an indigenous woman who has worked and gained knowledge and experience at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for eight years and as a former band councillor for Opaskwayak Cree Nation, I'm truly aware of the jurisdictional issues between federal and provincial interactions with our First Nation governments.

I was also a policy analyst for the Cree Nation Tribal Health Centre, and my job was to analyze the jurisdictional issues in regard to health-care services for on-reserve communities. The analysis was First Nations living on reserve have less access to provincial health-care services. This jurisdictional barrier needs to disappear. After all, First Nations are Manitobans too.

In my constituency, our community of Pimicikamak Cree Nation are working towards a hospital that will provide access to health care in northern Manitoba. I attended the announcement in our community—and I'll put on record that I was the only rep from the Province who was attending the announcement. Chief Cathy Merrick spoke about how our women are taken to Thompson or Winnipeg to give birth. As a mother, she struck me at my heart when she shared with our community that this—that with this hospital we can look forward to our first baby to be born in his or her own community of Pimicikamak Cree Nation. Imagine framing that birth certificate in that hospital.

I must put on record that the Throne Speech indicated that this government will provide more health care for on-reserve communities. Well, Deputy Speaker, time to step up. This is an excellent opportunity for this government to come to the table and work with this community to make this crucial need for this hospital become a reality. The people of Pimicikamak Cree Nation are Manitobans, too.

Lastly, I just want to end with that Churchill was not even included in the budget speech, despite being a major issue for this past year. Clearly, issues facing the community are not a worthwhile issue for the Premier (Mr. Pallister). Our team sees the North's full potential. We want to see Churchill to become a northern health hub, reducing the need to transfer patients south for treatment in Winnipeg. An NDP government will build and grow for the long-term future of all northern Manitobans.

I just want to end off by—thank you for hearing and listening to my personal stories and especially in regards to child welfare and what's going on with my family. I only brought this up because it's not only happening to me. I brought this up because there's many, many families that are going through this torture of not being able to get our children back. That's why I thought it was crucial and it struck at me of having this peaceful protest that should have made the news, that should have been honoured at least, but having our members remain and listen to their cries for help.

Again, I just want to close that it is an absolute honour to stand here as the MLA for The Pas, as a mother, single parent, struggling, somebody who leaves my family every week to come here. I perform this difficult duty, but I must be here because, after all, I was elected. I will do my best and be strong on behalf of my family, my constituents and fulfill my duties. I'm speaking on behalf of our people who are affected by this budget. I'm representing those people. Those people are me.

Thank you.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): I just want to acknowledge the passion and emotion that went into the member from The Pas, her statement, and it's words we're listening to.

Today I chose to wear a St. Patrick's tie today and I want to wish everybody here happy St. Patrick's Day because I won't be able to do that on St. Patrick's Day. So it ties—in the House I won't be able to do that on St. Patrick's Day. So the shamrocks, though, on my tie, they don't represent how this budget was put together. It's not the luck of the Irish. It's a lot of hard work that's gone in by our ministers, Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and not just them. It's also their staff, the staff in Treasury Board Secretariat, their support staff in the building, and it's many, many hours that they spent on this budget. So I just want to acknowledge how much work and dedication has gone in by many people—

and their families have given up a lot. They have to be away.

* (15:20)

So I also like to thank my Treasury Board colleagues that spent many hours in the room there from December through February. The Minister of Health, he's done some wonderful things: good spending, good choices, some good things for Manitoba's families, education as well. All the ministers put in so much time, and I just want to personally thank them for bringing this budget forward.

There's been—historically, there's been a lot of increase in the debt, and when you have more debt you have more debt servicing costs. So we always say debt servicing, but let's put the word out there: it's interest. We are paying interest on stuff that we've accumulated in the past, taking more money out of Manitobans' pockets that aren't going towards services. So we—probably everybody here in this room has credit cards, and if we're going to go along and just pay our interest, that credit card bill gets out of hand if we make the minimum payments on it. We can't run our province like that. We have to make meaningful reductions in our spending to—so there's something there for future generations.

Our kids, when they grow up, our grandchildren, they need the services that we have here today. And, if we keep going into debt, keep running up that credit card, we—those—our kids will not have those services. There's about \$1 billion a year that's being spent on debt servicing, or interest. That's \$1 billion that is not going towards a new hockey arena, new hospitals, roads, any projects that we all lobby for in this very room. Those projects can't go forward with a lack of money. They all need money. So, when you spend more than you take in, you're mortgaging your kids' futures, and grandkids.

So the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living and Finance, they've put some major, major efforts into getting spending under control. All the ministers put in tons of work for that. But if we would've continued on the existing trajectory where with the—yesterday's NDP, I guess we'll call them—we would've been at \$1.7 billion a year. That's going into debt \$1.7 billion a year. That would have been roughly 4 and a half million dollars a day—spending 4 and a half million dollars a—more a day going out than we're taking it in.

So just \$1 billion a day—\$1 billion a year alone of that is interest. That is \$3 million a day, Mr. Deputy Speaker—\$3 million a day, as I mentioned earlier, that we can't be spending on important projects: health, infrastructure. The Infrastructure Minister's very upset. He wished he had a lot more to spend, but this billion dollars of interest a year that we spend on interest, it's things that our kids are going to be missing out on.

The credit card interest also—if you make poor financial decisions, your interest rates go up. If a business makes poor financial decisions and you go to the bank and try and get more money, your interest rate goes up. They give you a credit downgrading. That's what the Province of Manitoba under yesterday's NDP has done to Manitobans. Our credit rating has dropped and that increases the interest rates even more. So, how do we get out of a situation like that? It's no different than a business that's in financial hardship or somebody that's gone bankrupt. They have to start making wise financial decisions.

And that's what this budget does. That's what this boils down to. Why, because Manitobans deserve better. Our government is speaking not just for the people of today, but their kids and the unborn that don't have a voice yet. They're the ones that are going to ultimately pay for all the services—the interest that we keep running up as a government, so that has to stop.

So Manitoba has a green plan that has been criticized by some. But let's be very clear here—this is something that's forced upon us by the federal Liberal government, the carbon tax. We have a legal opinion and we've done our due diligence. This train is coming down the tracks. So, you know, I appreciate Saskatchewan's, you know, we're just not going to do it, and force the federal government into implementing it for them. And, when you stand on the train track, chances are you're going to get splattered by the train.

So what we're doing here as Manitoba is we're trying to build another set of tracks and maybe direct that train in the direction that will serve Manitobans better.

So, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) says, the previous—yesterday's NDP has just derailed the government and the spending but we're building track to try and direct that train into the direction that we want it to go. Why? Because Manitobans deserve better.

So we came up with the Manitoba green plan. So thank you, the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) and also the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox), as, you know, this is a long-standing file. It's not something that just comes up in a day or two.

So we're trying to redirect that train and, due to the work of these hard-working ministers, they're also speaking for the ones that are unborn yet. They're speaking for our children that don't have a voice; they don't have a vote. They're speaking for the—their children that aren't even born yet, and the grandchildren. Why? Manitobans deserve better.

So there—the carbon levy—every dollar is going to be repaid to Manitobans in the form of tax breaks, not special interest groups. If we don't build these tracks and redirect this train, one—all this money is going to go to Justin Trudeau in Ottawa. So we have no choice in how that money comes back to Manitobans, if at all—if all of it even comes back.

So this is a very, very important part of the budget and this bill coming forward to help the province of Manitoba actually prosper from this. It's not something that we chose to do, but we have to bring it forward anyway.

So Manitobans deserve their fair say. Manitobans deserve better.

One point on the carbon tax, as well, I want to bring up is that marked fuel is exempt, so farmers, fishermen, they can continue on. They're producing. They continue on working, so they're exempt from the carbon tax, and that really helps our rural areas, but they can also participate in carbon sequestration if they choose. So there's lots of options out there for them.

So this is important to the Interlake. Why? Well, there's lots of farmers, lots of fishermen in the Interlake, but Manitobans and Interlakers, as well, deserve better.

So there's lot's of talk about the health care, the poor health, the health-care cuts, the health-care cuts. There's more being spent on health care than there has in the history of Manitoba. So I just want to tell a little personal story, I suppose, of the—I had a experience with health care here just recently—not myself, but my wife. She was in a car accident. She was pulling out of a crossing and inching forwards and, lo and behold, a high snowbank, she didn't see a car coming and she was T-boned by another car coming down the road.

So all I can say is thank goodness for side-impact airbags, but we had to make a trip to the hospital. She had a head injury, large goose egg on the head. So, within a matter of a few minutes, we're sitting at the triage desk; she's got a—from entering the hospital, not from the car accident, but bring her into the hospital, she's got a blood pressure cuff on, they're taking her—all of her stats and she's answering the questions, producing her card and, you know, a few medical questions. In less than 15 minutes, she's actually in a room, an emergency-room bed.

*(15:30)

So, of course, she had to change into the gown and all that lovely stuff that we look so good in at the hospital. But in—you know, by the time all this happens it's maybe a half an hour or so into the actually getting to the hospital. So less than a few minutes later a doctor comes in. So this is less than 40 minutes, you know, and the doctor takes the stats again and looks at the impact on the head. And, of course, schedules with a head injury, they want to have a CT scan. So short story long—obviously, it's going on—but it's a matter of two hours later, in and out of the CT scan, you know, back down to the ER, two and a half hours later. So at about three hours later, getting report and changing back into street clothes.

So a matter of a few years ago, a visit like that, to my understanding, you'd be waiting, I don't know, seven and a half, eight hours—a long, long time. So I just want to thank the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Goertzen) for the changes that he's made and the benefits we as Manitobans and my family personally has seen.

So we always see these—the union propaganda that's—well, we're all fortunate to see, I suppose—but the facts are the facts. Health-care spending is up 10 per cent. More is more. That's a fact. It's the highest spending per capita in Canada. In all of Canada, Manitoba has the highest spending on health per capita—fact. Layoffs—of course, that's a myth. That's yesterday's NDP's propaganda. So our government is protecting front-line workers. That's a fact. And why do we do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because Manitobans deserve better.

So the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living, he's also a voice, a voice for those people that can't speak yet. Whether they're in a coma or whether they're unborn, and I think he's carrying a very strong voice. Those people that aren't born yet, they deserve the same services we get here today.

And how do we do that? We have to make sure health care is sustainable. If we don't have sustainable health care, we have nothing for our future. The kids, when they get to be old—nothing. So they won't—potentially won't even have services for childbirth when they're born, when they have scrapes and breaks throughout their lives as they grow up—no services. These services have to be sustainable. When they have their own children, these services need to be available. So—when they age, they need to be available. If they have any health concerns through their life—a lot of people don't go through their whole life without a major health concern or accident or something through there. These services need to be there for our kids, our grandkids. And how do we do that? We have to ensure it's sustainable. So the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living is preserving our system. He's making it sustainable for our future generations. So, once again, my hats off to him.

With the previous—or yesterday's NDP, they were going in a path that was not sustainable. Manitobans deserve better. We as PCs are concerned about public interest. We're not concerned about special interest lobby groups. So that's how we direct. We want this to be here for generations to come. So what has NDP done over the last 17 years? We've been making some major changes here lately which are very positive to the sustainability. So what's NDP done for the last 17 years? Well, let's call it the bipole levy Keeyask. We're paying more for hydro than we ever have before due to a mismanaged project, multiple projects, from yesterday's NDP. They interest—increased our interest rates. As Manitobans, we're paying more, just because of the credit downgrades from the bad spending choices. You can't keep charging on that credit card without making the monthly payment. Best case scenario, pay your card off every month. We all have credit cards. We know how that works.

Yesterday's NDP increased tax, almost every tax imaginable: the PST, insurance on our homes and on our vehicles, basic personal exemption stayed stagnant for years. They even taxed haircuts, out of all things, and I'm sure if they were in for multiple—another term, they would have thought of everything else imaginable to tax.

So these actions threaten Manitoba's security and stability, and that's what we need as a province—security and stability. This budget, as presented, not with these nonsense amendments, it will do that.

So what will it do? Well, stability. We've had credit downgrades. We have security, security in our health, our education. Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) has brought very good programs forward. Infrastructure, Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) is working hard. Opportunity, there's jobs. Health care is an opportunity. There's businesses. There's more businesses starting than ever and bringing money into Manitoba to continue on.

And I see my time is running short here. So I want to table a little document here, because I'm going to refer to it and it's about keeping our province—promises.

So the Manitoba government's plan to fix our province's finances, repair our service and rebuild our economy is working. It's working. Yesterday's NDP and their propaganda says otherwise, but that's why they're yesterday's NDP.

So we're about keeping our promises. We have consulted 35,000 Manitobans in the last—35,000 people were consulted in the last budget. And what do they say? They say we didn't consult with any Manitobans. It delivers the largest tax cut in Manitoba's history. We are keeping our promises. It continues to fix the finances of Manitoba.

The Manitoba government, we are on schedule to reduce the PST, and it's going to happen within the next two years. Budget 2018 recognized our health care and the No. 1 priority for Manitobans.

And, once again, I want to thank our Health Minister for his hard work. I want to thank my constituents. I want to thank all of the ministers' departments, Treasury Board Secretariat and, once again, my constituents, because I have the best ones in the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I appreciate the opportunity to keep Assiniboia awesome again. And Assiniboia is certainly much more awesome than the previous speaker's riding—but, Interlake—actually, Interlake's kind of nice, too. Anyway, we're all very fortunate to live in this great province.

I'd also like to thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for the opportunity to speak as a Conservative in this House and to reflect on the budget from a Conservative point of view, a Conservative who's also a naturalist, compassionate and concerned.

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker, first, let's start about the good stuff in the budget. I was very pleased to see that there was recognition of the museums in Manitoba, over 200, and an ability to allow those facilities—and often run by grassroots, ordinary citizens—to expand their program and to help educate Manitoba, Manitobans, Canadians, tourists, our young people, about the great history of Manitoba. That's important, even in this place, because if you don't know where you have been, you probably don't know where you are, and you definitely do not know where you're going. So I applaud the initiatives around museums. I also applaud the investment in the Royal Aviation Museum, capital investment; Manitoba is the centre of the aerospace industry in Canada, at the beginning of aerospace, in the mid- and early 20th century.

I also applaud the increase in the personal exemption tax threshold. When people start talking about taxes, most eyes glaze over, especially with the personal income tax exemption. Anyway, increasing it is a very good thing, particularly for the people at the lower end of the income scale. Manitoba is about half that of Alberta on this scale, and many thousands of dollars behind our neighbouring provinces. So what that means is people on the low end of the income scale pay taxes sooner, the lower that number is. So, by increasing that number, people do not pay tax on more of their money that is earned. We hear a lot about minimum wage increases. Well, there's two ways to look at this. Why work and get taxed, or is it better to work and not get taxed for the work that you are doing? The fact is, it is better to—there's a balance there, but Manitoba is way off on the left side of this equation, and, hopefully, we can increase it so the people at the low end won't be taxed on the earnings that they earn.

Now, let's talk about the big picture. Now, Madam Speaker—or Mr. Speaker, I do not have any notes with me. I don't use notes or electronics like many of my other colleagues. But these are the figures from a 30,000-foot level. Expenditure's gone up by \$370 million in this budget. Revenues have gone up by \$600 million. So the difference is 230 millionish. Now, if you look in the revenues, where that comes from, it's comes from federal transfer payments, yes, and there's been this huge increase in that. But there's something very interesting in the revenue side, and that is there's a \$240-million reduction in the personal income tax revenue.

So somewhere the government has had to make that up. In other words, there has—not only has it

been a \$600-million increase in revenue, but they must have made that \$200 million to get to—so there's actually \$800 million somewhere in that budget that did not exist before. And nobody seems to have noticed this. So I bring forward this observation and ask where the money has come from. So of the \$600 million—we actually have to find \$800 million today. So we find the carbon tax, we find the increase in transfers from the feds, but that still doesn't cover where this revenue's coming from.

So I, in the budget lock-up had to—I asked the obvious question, and after a bunching of humming and hawing, this is where the money has come from. It has come from hydro water levies, so the water coming down—so that's money out of Manitoba Hydro, incredibly, and this has to change. But the more debt Manitoba Hydro gets or takes on, in a cash-flow point of view, the government of Manitoba receives money. So the greater the debt, the more revenue the government receives. And this is not a partisan issue; this is just a crazy way of accounting. So the government gets money from Hydro going down the river and gets it going up, plus the revenue from whatever they can generate.

Like, that is just—and this is why I am conducting a Hydro inquiry, this reason and many others. But how did we get to a situation where we have a huge flood of supply, demand is going down, prices are going up and service is going down. I think that's fair.

How does that happen? And we ran on an inquiry. There was no downside to having an inquiry, but the government didn't do it so I've done it with a great group of interested stakeholders who are highly qualified to help with such an inquiry and the next date is March 28th. We've already had our first set of hearings, which people can see on Facebook or YouTube and if you're interested you can register through the websites or Facebook pages.

Madam Speaker, in the budget, it's not clear how much this new Crown corporation, Efficiency Manitoba, is going to cost but we do know that the NDP apparently left \$50 million on the table and that is going to be used as the seed money to create this new Crown corporation.

* (15:50)

Now, I know what people are thinking. NDP left money on the table? Is that possible? Well, apparently it is. And, rather than putting that money towards anything else, their government's decided to

create this new Crown corporation, which I've been very critical of and for good reason. And the other interesting thing in the budget is that the operating of that Crown corporation, given the Hydro documents and so on, looks like it's going to be about \$100 million a year. So that's a—for what? It's not going to reduce any greenhouse gases. It's just going to be—*[interjection]*

You know, they—you know, Mr. Speaker, the member from Springfield, you know, and St. Paul—the member from St. Paul, who's not even in his seat, is able to heckle without notes. I wish he could speak without notes. And perhaps he could offer us the same courtesy, not heckling or talking around the Chamber. And perhaps the Speaker should—or perhaps could consider calling out that member.

Now, in regard—now that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, for a point of order.

Mr. Fletcher: I—the member from St. Paul continues to cause disturbance. I've alluded to it. He continues to do it. I wonder if you are able to stop that member from interrupting the speeches.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable—the interim House leader from the House leader—the honourable member for Rossmere, on the same point of order.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is no point of order. Frequently, conversations happen around the House. If, on occasion, something is overheard, that's not at all uncommon. The member is being unnecessarily picky on this point. There's no point of order. You can hear right now it's a fairly quiet House. Like the member to finish his speech, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the point of order, there—I would agree with the member from the—Rossmere. There was no point of order.

I know the member for—from—the member from St. Paul did—made a comment to another member, but I still was able to listen to what you had to—the member from Assiniboia had to speak on. So, if there was—if it got to a point where I couldn't understand or I couldn't hear you, I would have called it as a

heckling, but I will continue to have the member from Assiniboia with his speech.

* * *

Mr. Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, I—I'm—I do not heckle ever, and it's unfortunate that other members don't provide the same courtesy back.

But, as we go on, the carbon tax—this is going to touch every Manitoban. I have been a vocal opponent of the carbon tax, and this is why. It doesn't have anything to do with carbon. It is a tax—is a tax like the PST. It is—and it's been imposed on Manitobans by the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Now, Ottawa can introduce the tax, and I say the government should challenge them in court like Saskatchewan, like the Leader of the PC Party in Alberta has stated and probably the next leader and premier in Ontario in six weeks. That is the trend, because if your goal is to reduce taxes, that is not happening. If your goal is to reduce carbon, that is not happening. And we ran very clearly on no new taxes. So I'm very clear on that. I've been recessed from the government on this issue and that's fine, because this carbon tax does not do what it was—what people espouse it to do, nor was it ever. Carbon pricing this way does not reduce GHGs ever. Now—but it does cost people money, money out of their pocket.

A carbon tax is like a Manitoba mosquito. It is annoying, it's like a blood-sucking parasite that spreads disease and illness and makes people sick, and what do Manitobans do with mosquitos? They just squish them. They swat them, but first they try and prevent even getting bit. So that's what we should do with Ottawa. Don't let them bite. But instead—this would be akin—this carbon tax, instead of fighting the carbon tax, what we're doing as a province through our elected representatives is basically taking off all our clothes, going into a swamp and saying mosquitos, take my blood. Let me feed you. No Manitoban would do that, but that seems to be what is happening, and sure, they might be swarming in Ottawa, those mosquitos. I say let's get the spray and kill the mosquitos. Get rid of the mosquitos. Get rid of the carbon tax. If you want to reduce carbon, do it.

Now, to fight Ottawa on this, there's lots of ways to do it. We could say, well, we have a boreal forest, agricultural land, a tundra, all our carbon sinks. If you look at the total equation of carbon emissions, which is not only emissions but also absorption—carbon sinks like trees, wheat, muskeg, those are all

carbon sinks. So, if you take all that, take our emissions, it would be very close if Manitoba is a net emitter or a net carbon sink. Like, that's the way to fight Ottawa, but they don't do it.

I was in Germany recently, just in December, on an energy study paid for by the German government. There were members from Midwestern United States and Prairie provinces. Three members from this Chamber were invited, one member cancelled at the last minute, but this trip was fascinating. All the slides and presentations are on my website and on my YouTube channel, and there were live tweets from this trip, but even the Germans when asked, does a carbon tax reduce GHGs? The answer was no, to a person. There was one guy said, well, sure, if you increase to like 300 euros a ton that would affect it, yes, well, sure. If you get rid of all the humans, that would affect it too.

* (16:00)

But, for all intents and purposes. So rather than go with the orthodoxy, yes, Mr. Speaker, I called it: the emperor has no clothes, and therefore is a great target for blood-sucking mosquitoes or open to be taxed without any kind of results. If you look at the budget as a whole, there's a massive amount of revenue, including the agricultural levies in insurance programs.

Thank you.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for giving me this chance to put a few words regarding this budget.

As you know, I don't have any speech writer and, therefore, if I say some words and it's improper, I will apologize before I start.

And, first of all, I have been put at a disadvantage, because I'm not able to ask a question during question period because I have been given the 11th question, which is not practically possible. And, if it's fair, then it should be turn by turn: one day—the second question; one day—the 11th question; one day—the ninth question. And, if it's fair, it also should be something like 12 or 13 ministers, they agree to speak, and it should be turn-by-turn. Once government MLA ask the question, then the opposition ask the question. It's not that way. So I'm just telling how much disadvantage I have and—that's why I couldn't get my speech ready.

And—but I will start with the points. First of all, in this budget, I don't see anything for the seniors

because, first of all, the seniors need personal-care homes and there are not enough available. And even in one question period I asked, why minister, honourable minister, is not providing some funds for culturally sensitive personal-care homes. Because sometimes people come from other countries, they cannot speak English language and there are cultural differences. They are totally isolated in the personal-care homes, and to provide them better—their last years, there should be personal—culturally sensitive personal-care homes.

Neither there are some facilities, assisted-living facilities.

So I would say, even in general, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is underspending his Health capital budget by \$175 million, resulting in cuts to improve personal-care-home projects.

So I think the Premier must—should think about the seniors. Seniors have worked over here all their lives. They built Manitoba and they deserve better than this.

A few years ago, there were promises that seniors will get a school tax rebate, and that was supposed to be \$2,300. It was promised by the NDP and, at the same time, during the election it was also promised by the PCs. PCs said we will do the same thing.

But, once they came in power, they changed their mind. They did not increase the school tax rebate to \$2,300. After that, they also did not keep the system the way it was. First year, it was \$235, but that cheque will come directly to the seniors and that will put some kind of smile on their face. Then it was \$470, and as soon as they get it, they were happy. But what this government did, they put that into the tax form, which won't be visible. Not only that, they put the limit: if you have up to \$40,000, you will get maximum \$470, and if you are going up, I think closer to 53, I'm not quite sure, just around there, then you will get zero. If you are getting some other benefits and you are a low-income person, then also some amount will be clawed back and will be taken out.

So this is not helping seniors. So we must think about the seniors. Perhaps they should bring back the school tax rebate, and in that way seniors will be able to stay in their houses a longer time. If they stay in their houses a longer time, that will cost less to the government. So somehow government will be, in that way, saving some money.

And also, on the caregiver side they also get some help, because seniors can have their relatives living at their houses, and therefore governments don't have to provide those services up to the amount they provide otherwise.

And there is also—few days ago I sent a letter to the Immigration Minister—the federal Immigration Minister—and I also asked this government to lobby for it, because this government can save money in that way too. If seniors have come from the other countries and they can only be better served if they have family care—a live-in caregiver whom they can trust. They can be their relatives. In that way, those seniors will be mentally served better, physically served better. And what the federal government does at this point, they have to go through LMIA—Labour Market Impact Assessment. And that way they won't be able to bring their seniors—their relatives over here as a family care worker—family live-in care worker. So I think the government can save this money in this budget if they go for that and they ask the federal government. They should eliminate that LMIA requirement and let them. Now, point comes—there's an income requirement. If a senior couple does not have enough money to pay the caregiver, they should ask the—their children, their sons, daughters. They should be able to come up with that amount of money. If they're able to qualify for that income, they should be allowed. Even somebody else, other relatives want to support, they should be allowed. So I think there's many ways—innovative ways this government can save money, but we have to convince the federal government.

Other thing—first of all, I appreciate the Education Minister. At least he put two schools in The Maples on the list. Past—previous government announced those schools will be built, but then it had been—were taken from the list or something was happening and it was delayed—delayed—but at the end, at least the minister has put those schools back on the list.

*(16:10)

I hope the promises will be kept and those schools will be built, and The Maples residents will be happy, because The Maples constituency is the constituency which is expanding—lots of immigrants coming in that area, and they're staying in The Maples. And so I think that will be good if those schools are built.

But I also suggested—and even Estimates, I questioned the Education Minister why we will

benefit as a whole when we were dealing with—in foreign countries if a third compulsory optional language is made—is brought into the curriculum, and so students must have to have a third optional language, and that third optional language should be part of the curriculum up to grade 12. Somebody can take Punjabi; other person can take Ukrainian; other person can—but that should be. Sure, it will cost some money, but on the other hand, that will give us more well versed, and it will be easier for us to deal with the business community in the other countries.

So that's—that should be a priority.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

I'm—let me—why I am saying: in my area, Tagalog and Punjabi, lots of people speaking those languages, and they want their children to know their language. It's better. By knowing their language, they will better know the history. And also, I know that's not happening.

Also, I proposed a culturally sensitive training so people may not be misunderstood. And that kind of initiative, we need in this multicultural society, but that's not happening.

I think the Education Minister or this government should put some funds for these kinds of programs, but I don't see anything in that way.

Also, I suggested I thought there will be some kind of program in the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program when people come from the foreign countries, newcomers, they have a different culture—work culture, and we have a different work culture over here, they normally don't understand the culture, and they are being put in a disadvantage.

So what can be done if those people, when—as soon they come over here, immediately, they should be placed—there should be placement in their trades or their professions, maybe two months, three months. The government should pay the wages for that time, and—because the employer otherwise won't have them because they may not need them, but in that way, they won't be able to say no to them. And therefore, they will get to know the workplace culture, and they will know what they're supposed to do to improve or qualify, even, for that particular certification. And that's not happening.

We have to be innovative. Sure, this Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program has been made harder than before. Although, immigration minister says, well, we've cut down the time, but people are so

confused which trade they can apply for or not, when they are going to apply, when that—their turn will be assessed. And all this is really confusing for the applicants and even for our staff, who are confused what to do, what to tell people, because people ask you to—all those questions, but there's not answers.

So it's so much confusion over there. So we must have to make user-friendly programs, not just hide under those different categories and different kinds of excuses.

And I think the other thing, which is really confusing: the carbon tax. Carbon tax—sure, government will make money, \$263 million or whatever the amount will be, but they have not told us how they will reduce that carbon emission, carbon dioxide emission. It's not clear there. I could see if they say, okay, you can buy a car—electric car or hybrid car—you will get that amount of rebate on that. That's not there. So it means the government will take that money, use for other purposes, but low-income people or middle-class people, they will be paying for it far extra at the cars—when you fill up your cars, gas—at that time, you will be paying 5 cents extra or something like that. So that will be an extra burden on ordinary people. On the other hand, industries don't have to pay anything. So, if industry doesn't have to pay anything, but the—which can afford, in other words, rich people don't have to pay, but ordinary, low-income people have to pay.

So all that, it does not make any sense. People are confused, and I think government should make it clear how they will use that money, how they will reduce that carbon dioxide emission, and at least it will make some sense. I'm hearing every day it's the most improved—we are going to make this the most improved province, but people will be most impoverished in this province, the amount of tax they are—they will be paying through this carbon tax side. So people must—have to know where this money will go.

And at the end of—Madam Speaker, you know I don't get that much amount to speak or ask a question other people ask.

I was—there was conspirator a year ago. There were conspirators now, who are sitting in this Chamber, who put me in this situation. Therefore, Madam Speaker, look at my situation carefully, and I should get as much time as anybody else. And I should get people, also—speech writer, as other people get speech writer, so that I can put forward properly ideas of the people. The Maples

constituency is—there's lots of immigrants in The Maples constituency and, in a way, I am representing them, their diverse community. But I'm not able to represent them properly. Maybe there should be some kind of budget, and even there should be some people in Hansard who are more well-versed with the accent and—or even people can call me over there if they cannot understand some words. So at least it's properly—my words are put in the Hansard. I don't think it will cost that much money, I don't think it will have that much dent on the budget. So I propose this and, hopefully, a more—systemic discrimination will be removed, not only systemic discrimination from this House, also discrimination, racism will also will be removed. And so we can become a more better-understanding society and this House can work better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (16:20)

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to get up and speak to Budget 2018 today.

But I want to start by saying that last night I had the chance to go see Santana with my wife, who gave me a fantastic Christmas present. It was delayed a few months but it was fantastic. We had a fantastic time and I don't need to tell you just what a virtuoso performer Carlos Santana is. He's a astoundingly good guitar player. But he's only so good, Madam Speaker, because of the virtuosity of the band behind him. They are a rocking hot band that it was just humming along last night, and we were so busy bopping and having a good time that all the travails of the world were suddenly gone for at least a couple of hours and we enjoyed ourselves very, very much. It was a singular musical experience. It's a symphony of harmony wrapped in one of—wrapped in the name of one of the great, great musicians of our time.

But I tell you that not just to brag about going to the concert last night or even that my wife will take me out for the odd night out, but that there's much, much more to Sinatra or—to Sinatra—to Santana—much, much more to Sinatra, too, way more—much, much more to Santana than just the music side.

In fact, the music embodies a message of peace and love and understanding. And on the screen at the end of the night—and I'm paraphrasing here because I was too busy bopping to write it all down—but on a big screen at the end of the night behind the band it said, every act of compassion brings us all a little

closer to heaven. And I have to say that—I don't know how many people were there—10,000—everybody stood and applauded that message. It was a community reaction to a very, very humbling message, and one that asks us all to do so much better each and every day on behalf of our fellow citizens.

So I'm going to segue now just to get to the point about the budget. But there are many things to say about Budget 2018, not many of them good, I have to say. But the hallmark for me in reading through the budget, listening to the Finance Minister, listening to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) defend it every single day, listening to the speeches by Conservatives across the way, both on their side and our side of the House, the hallmark of the budget is its absence of ambitious compassion, the very thing that Santana was saying to us last night.

Now, the other day the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) argued in this House in his speech that it was a budget that lacked vision. And I would respectfully disagree with the member for River Heights; it does have a vision, has a vision of a very, very small, ineffective government and state that doesn't stand up for the very people that it's designed to serve and represent.

In fact, it strikes me that this is kind of a Hobbesian vision of the world, and here I'm speaking of Thomas Hobbes, the great 17th century English philosopher, not, for members opposite, Calvin and Hobbes that you read about in the local comics every day. And I know you're still confused about what—who's Calvin and who's Hobbes. But I'm talking about Thomas Hobbes, and Hobbes is, as we know, suggested that a society without a strong state reverts to a state of nature where in the absence of a strong state, life for humanity is solitary, poor, nasty, short and brutish.

And this is what this budget really seems to me to be about, is the attempt to take the state out of the very society that we have before us and that gives over all authority, all power, to the rich and powerful in our society.

And there's no better example of that, I have to say, than the personal exemption itself, which the Finance Minister, that preening peacock of—let's see, get that right—of parsimony seems to say. He suggests—*[interjection]* No, I just had it written down. Thanks. I wanted to make sure I've got it perfectly right.

But the personal tax exemption, well, he wants to pretend that this is something for those with less than our society is effectively for the very rich and the powerful and the well to do in Manitoba. It is of little value to those who make the least in our society. It actually does very little for them and every study shows that the real benefit of the personal tax exemption is for those who have the means to enjoy the very best that our society has to offer. The result of that, I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, is a budget which does very, very little for the vast majority of citizens in our province and seeks to serve the minority interests of the rich and the powerful and the well to do.

Millions and millions of dollars—*[interjection]* and my friend from Radisson will have the opportunity to speak, I hope, if he's in line, if he's on the list of speakers, have the time, but I would ask him for a little bit of respect as I try to go about making my response to the budget if he's okay with that. But millions and millions of dollars over the next several years will be spent on this particular item when those million and millions of dollars should be spent on the very services and programs that benefit every citizen in Manitoba and help to bridge the inequality gap in our society.

This is a budget that does nothing for income inequality in our society. It does nothing for gender inequality in our society. It does nothing to bridge the inequality between newcomers and settlers in our society. It does absolutely nothing to bridge the indigenous gap in our society. It only serves, Madam Speaker, to create a more effective bridge, a longer bridge between those who have and those who have not. This is a government that's intent on reducing the size of government, to reducing it into a modest shell of itself to allow those with the most power and the most wealth to continue to live a life of luxury while everyone else suffers.

I don't agree with that. I don't think that's right. That's not why I was elected. That's not why I came here. That's why none of the brothers and sisters on this side of the House that I stand with get up every day and fight for that kind of inequality. We fight every day for equality for everyone.

But what makes this really worse, Madam Speaker, is that it—not this tears apart the social fabric of our society. They just don't get it. When they reduce the programs and services to Manitobans, whether it's in health, whether it's in social services, whether it's in education, they're

doing a disservice to all Manitobans and, as a result, they rip apart the very social fabric that binds us all together.

But what's worse than all of that is the use of the carbon tax to pay for those tax cuts for those that will benefit most in our society, the rich and the powerful. Let's be honest, and I think it's become patently clear—although the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen) seems not to care a whit about any of these issues—this is not a carbon pricing system that we have here. It's by no means even close to it. It's a gas tax imposed on every Manitoban in order to pay for income tax benefits for the rich and the wealthy in our society. That's not right. So not only are they tearing apart the social fabric of our society, Madam Speaker, they're also tearing apart the ecological fabric of our society because not a thing's going to happen to address climate change as a result of the gas tax that's been imposed by this government to provide tax breaks for those who least need them.

* (16:30)

This is why, Madam Speaker, the Winnipeg Free Press, in an editorial the other day, called this budget a sleight of hand, smoke and mirrors, bait and switch. You can characterize it any way. That's not me saying it, that's the Winnipeg Free Press editorial. I'm sure that you read it, I have no doubt that members opposite read it or had somebody read it to them. Either way—either way—the fact of the matter is this may not be the greatest budget of all time; I agree with my friend from Transcona, who also said that's not the greatest budget of all time, but it may well be the greatest swindle of all time. And that's where we take exception. That's where we part company. That's why we're going to continue to oppose this budget and continue to offer amendments to it to try to serve the very people that we were all elected to represent.

The only thing—the only thing—about this stage, and I see the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) get up, and she's not really defending the talking here, heckling from across the way, and she gets up every day—every single day, talks about the NDP, never once getting up and saying what she's going to do to address climate change in this province. She's got some empty plan, some phony, phony kind of gas tax masquerading as a carbon tax, but not one thing does she ever get up and say she's done to address carbon—to address climate change. She needs to do better and, in fact, she gets up every

day and says where we failed, they're going to do better.

Let me tell you: You're doing much, much worse. That's for sure.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. I would just like to remind the member that all comments should be made through the Chair, and I know sometimes it's easy to forget that, but I would ask for co-operation of everybody so that we can all properly carry out our jobs here without personal attacks against anybody.

Mr. Allum: Madam Speaker, I certainly accept your wise ruling in that matter.

You know, the only thing that this government has retained of the state is the authoritarianism, the paternalism and the patriarchal nature that's been central to Conservatives since—conservatism since the dawn of time and will continue throughout the 21st century. I have no doubt about that.

Each day the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of this province, the Finance Minister and every single member who gets up to speak to defend the budget on the government sides pat Manitobans on the head and say to them: You know what, we can't afford to address your needs. We can't afford to do anything for your family. We can't afford to do any of the things we need to do in order to address the colossal needs in our society.

As MLAs, every backbencher here in this House—New Democrat, Conservative, Liberal, independent—comes into contact with the colossal need in our society, and what we get on the head from this government is a pat on the head that says: Sorry. We can't do anything for you. Premier puts his hands in his pockets, shrugs his shoulders and says: Sorry. Nothing I can do.

They're off-loaders, they're freeloaders, they're downloaders, and the people of Manitoba are paying the price for this kind of government. How else to explain a government that lays off health-care workers at the very time we need health-care aides and nurse practitioners at the bedside? How else to explain cutting nearly \$9 million from Pharmacare? How else to explain cutting the special drug program? How else to explain the closing of Concordia, the closing of Misericordia, the closing of Seven Oaks? How else do you explain that except a paternalistic, authoritarian government that doesn't really care about the real needs of Manitobans, but instead—but instead—is doing what Conservatives

always do: Preserving the power of the wealthy in our society.

And then we have, on the education side of things, and I just want to spend a few minutes on that—although our Education critic, our friend from Concordia, did a superb job in outlining this—but the government makes a big deal out of how they're going to build, allegedly, five schools. Two of those schools would have already been built if they hadn't spent the last two years jerking around with the triple P thing that was never going to work in the free—first place. We told them that. Two of those schools were announced and would have been built with students in them today if they weren't fooling around, wasting the time of the people in Brandon, people in north Winnipeg.

I think it's quite interesting, in fact, that six months ago the government identified Morden-Winkler as being a place where we needed to build a new school—although we built a beautiful new school there not so long ago—but they need another one. As a former minister of Education and Advanced Learning, I can attest to that. Suddenly, that's forgotten. But we have two schools in the Premier's backyard now in Waverley West for the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) and the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes). Others are being left out in the cold. That's not right.

They should've been on the school construction business right away, just like we did with 35 new schools. But, more than that, Madam Speaker, we built new gyms, new shops, new science labs. Has there been any announcement about that? No, nada, nothing.

On the advanced education side, on the post-secondary side, what's happening there is absolutely tragic. Foisting the cost of post-secondary university onto the backs of parents and students is no way to run a post-secondary education system, Madam Speaker. And I am telling my friends across the way, who—I have to say, you didn't do your job yet again. You didn't go in and see Cabinet ministers, and you didn't tell them how—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Again, just a reminder to the member that all comments should be made through the Chair, avoiding pointing fingers and saying, you, you. It inflames the—or it inflames the debate when we don't work respectfully through the Chair. And so I would

just caution the member again to make his comments through the Chair, and I'd appreciate that.

Mr. Allum: Couldn't agree more, Madam Speaker. Sometimes my emotion gets away from me, but I certainly want to be sure that I operate in the right way in the House and respect this Chair. I shouldn't have said you; I certainly should have said they didn't do their job.

You know, when we were in government, we met constantly with all members of our caucus to talk about the needs. They brought to Cabinet ministers all the time the colossal needs in their community, and we responded. What happens on their side, it seems to me, is that they either aren't—they aren't doing their job or they're being ignored by the Cabinet and the Premier (Mr. Pallister). That's a sad situation. And, frankly, when they go to the doorsteps of Manitobans in two years, or if they're on the doorsteps now, they're going to hear about it. And they're going to wonder why MLAs from the government's side aren't doing their job. And, well, I have to say, we're a little unsure why they're not doing their job for them. But, rest assured, Madam Speaker, we'll not only do our job; we'll do their job for them if we have to.

So I see that my time is growing limited, Madam Speaker. And so I just want to say that, of course, no member on this side of the House will be supporting a budget that looks like this. And nobody on this side of the House will support a budget that tries to undercut the very important work that government does day in and day out to serve all the people of Manitoba all the time. We're just not going to do that, and I want to assure my friends across the way that this group of people are going to continue to fight for Manitobans day in, day out. We're going to take the fight to them. It's them who's going to have to defend their situation. We'll let the people of Manitoba decide what's right, what's wrong, but we're confident in our position.

* (16:40)

And the final thing I want to say, Madam Speaker, is that I seem to be the subject of some gossip that goes around; any number of members on the other side of the House seem to come over and talk to me. The Liberals are talking to me as well today about what you're doing. And so I just want to make it crystal clear right now: I ain't going anywhere.

I'm not running for mayor; I'm not running for counsellor; I'm not running for school trustee; I'm not

running for dog catcher; I'm staying right here. I can rail against you everyday. We're going to hold you—hold them accountable, hold the government to account and continue to fight for a more just, more equitable, more fair, more inclusive society for all Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere, on—

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Yes, Madam Speaker, comments have been made in this House about the tone—

Madam Speaker: Are you rising—is the member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Micklefield: It's a point of order. Yes, I did say that. There was a lot of noise when I was saying that and—

Madam Speaker: Okay. The honourable member for Rossmere, on a point of order.

Mr. Micklefield: You know, Madam Speaker, it was stated by yourself and acknowledged by the member who was getting rather lathered up that he should abstain from pointing and using you language, but, you know, those admonitions were disregarded yet again. There was another repeated use of the word you and that's not how we do things here. I think you've made that plain and I just wanted to draw attention to the fact that, again, that was disregarded this afternoon and just a few moments ago, maybe in a frenzy of emotion, but that is unfortunately what happened again. I'd be remiss not to draw your attention to it. I'm sure you noticed it, but I wanted to just mention for the member as a reminder that if he could direct his comments through the Chair, I think that's how we're supposed to do things.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the member does have a valid point of order.

It was raised with the member and I think the member did understand that that was happening and I do get it, that sometimes emotions—people get carried away and can forget some of the rules sometimes. So I recognize that. I just would urge everybody to I guess—this place does tend to draw out a lot of emotion in people and people are here because they care very much about something, but there are rules in place and I would ask everybody—I know it's getting to be the end of the day and everybody is getting a bit tired, but respect for the

rules is really important because that allows us to properly debate and provide the kind of respect for each other that we sometimes fall afoul of. And so I just would urge people to just, you know, be cautious. There shouldn't be name calling or—you know, you want to attack positions, that's one thing, but certainly—we're starting to move a little bit in a direction which I will not accept in this Chamber and that is where we start to denigrate individuals, and I don't want to see that happen. It—fair game on policies, you know, fair game on issues like that, but not—it is not fair game to be going down the road of starting to name call or to, you know, personally attack somebody, and I just would urge some caution on that issue.

So I would ask for everybody's co-operation.

* * *

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

I, first off, would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to Budget 2018, our budget titled Keeping our promises. Real progress for Manitobans.

Budget 2018 had me thinking about the differences between our government's approach to the working class and how we on this side of the House care about them and feel that their money will be better left where it belongs, on their kitchen tables and not on Cabinet tables. For those of you who do not know this, when I sit down to write speeches for this House, I often listen to music. *[interjection]* Not Santana. It just so happened a song by John Lennon, covered by Green Day, came into my shuffle of music. The song titled Working Class Hero inspired me today to compare the differences between a government who cares about Manitobans and the NDP government who only seem to care about re-election.

Budget 2018, brought forward by our Finance Minister and PC team, can tie into the lyrics of this song. I will start to draw the comparisons in the next few minutes as I speak to Budget 2018. The first few lines of the song go on like this: As soon as you're born, they made you—they make you feel small / By giving you no time instead of it all / 'Til the pain is so big you feel nothing at all.

I often heard on the campaign trail that the NDP were not accessible and that there were—they—when they were able to access them, they often seemed uninterested in listening. We all know the NDP had

created a deficit not only for the Province; they seemed to have done this in pretty much everything they did. They created significant shortfalls in daycare, and that is why I'm happy to stand in this House and say that we are investing in child care in Manitoba families.

Budget 2018 puts Manitoba's economy on the road to recovery and provides a solid plan for making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. We're investing in priorities that support families across Manitoba, including \$60.5-million increase in the department budget over Budget 2017; introducing a new refundable corporation income tax credit, called the Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit, to stimulate creation of licensed child-care-centre spaces in private workplaces; investing \$3.3 million to increase the number of new and newly funded child-care spaces, including support for more than 700 newly funded spaces and funding for new construction in schools and communities across Manitoba; providing \$700,000 in new funding towards children's therapy services, delivered through the Children's Therapy Initiative, to reduce wait times for preschool children referred to speech language therapy and occupational therapy services; increasing funding by \$35.3 million for child protection, delivered through Child and Family Services.

I recently had the opportunity not too long ago to announce 90 daycare spots in my riding of Dawson Trail. And this is great news for the hard-working people in the riding who provide for their families while being working class heroes. The next few lines of the song go on to say: They hurt you at home and they hit you at school / They hate you if you're clever and despise a fool.

Unlike the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), who seems to have no problem using colourful language in his rap lyrics, I cannot repeat a word in this next lyric at risk of being unparliamentary. So bleep will do in this spot: 'Til you're so bleeping crazy you can't follow their rules.

The track record of the NDP, when it came to the education services in this province, speaks for itself.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So just a point of order. We just had a conversation about not personally attacking. And I didn't rise when the member opposite rose in respect of his point of order and spoke about the previous statement. But I do want to point out that we were hearing things from the members opposite as well, including, and we're not entirely sure what was said, but something along the lines of shut up, something, something. We're not sure if that was what that was.

But we just heard right now a personal attack on the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), but that seems to be acceptable. There seems to be—that is a—I would argue that that is also a personal attack on the member for Fort Rouge, who's not here to defend himself.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I don't believe this is a point of order. The things that are referenced have been stated publicly by the member for Fort Rouge, and so there's no attack, just a citation of things that have been stated publicly, a quotation of things that have been stated publicly. An attack is a different thing altogether.

Madam Speaker, I do not believe that this is a legitimate point of order.

* (16:50)

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that I think, to some degree, there is a point of order to this. I think we do need to be cautious in the language that we are using here, and I know we've had, you know, a lot of discussions over the last couple of years about, you know, personal attacks in advertising, and it goes both ways. This isn't just one sided. This has been happening, and it's been happening for a long time.

So I'm going to urge everybody to, again, be very careful. Even making veiled comments I don't think is probably going to serve us well, and so I would urge some caution with members in how we are talking about each other in this place. So I would ask people to keep that in mind as we are moving forward with further debate.

* * *

Mr. Lagassé: My apologies, Madam Speaker. My intent was not to offend anyone.

Okay. So the track record of the NDP, when it came to the education services in this province, speaks for itself. They deferred critical repairs to schools and hoped you would not notice, and, if you

happen to be clever enough to notice, they would try to fool you into believing it not true. They would do this by promising other things to distract from the facts.

That is why, once again, I'm happy to talk about what we're doing in the—with the education in this province for Manitobans and how Budget 2018 addresses the concerns of Manitobans.

Budget 2018 puts Manitoba's economy on the road to recovery and provides a solid plan for making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada.

We're investing in priorities that support strong—a strong education system across Manitoba, including investing \$2.8 billion in Education and Training, the highest amount spent on education in Manitoba history, an increasing—an increase of \$13.7 million from Budget 2017, including a record investment of \$1.32 billion on kindergarten to grade 12 education and enhancement to financial supports for post-secondary students.

Confirming the construction of new schools using an enhanced conventional public schools' finance board approach, to name a few: Waverley West—grade 9 to 12; Seven Oaks—kindergarten, grade 5; Waterford—kindergarten, grade 8; and Southeast Brandon—kindergarten to grade 8—to save \$18 million over conventional costs to allow an additional school to be built—Waverley West—kindergarten to grade 8.

Making significant changes to student aid to adopt a fixed contribution model and focus on students who need it most, and increasing investments into the Manitoba Bursary Program by \$2.7 million, including \$1 million for low-income indigenous students and \$1.7 million to expand eligibility to students studying in private religious institutions in Manitoba; maximizing federal investments in labour market and workforce development for a total of \$75.86 million, in 2018 and 2019, an increase of \$8.9 million from Budget 2017.

That will support an expansion of eligibility for employee and training programs to better meet the training needs of Manitoba businesses and workers—keeping expenditure growth lower than revenue growth for three straight budgets, the first time this has happened in 15 years.

And let me repeat that: Keeping expenditure growth lower than revenue growth for three straight budgets, the first time this has happened in 15 years.

Using 3.5 million in revenues from skilled workers applying to the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program for Business to offset new grants for immigrants and refugees at Welcome Place.

The next line goes on to say: When they have tortured and scared you for 20-odd years, I must stop for a second here. I would not go as far as to say the opposition NDP party has been torturing people, but I will say it's been torture for some while they were in power for almost 17 years.

And I will go as far as to say they most likely have left us—left us with enough of a sting to last far past 20 years.

The next line says: They expect you to pick a career—which was difficult for some, as the NDP track record left us last when compared to other Canadian provinces.

The song carries on: "When you can't really function, you're so full of fear." I know that I can safely say that a lot of Manitobans were fearful at the direction the NDP were taking this province. So much so that they decided that they had to go in the last election. Unfortunately, the NDP are still trying to scare them in question period every day with falsehoods they continue to put on the record.

Madam Speaker, they were not only afraid for themselves but also for their extended families and in some cases their grandkids and their great-grandkids who are not even born.

In Budget 2018, our PC government is invested in families. We are doing so by maintaining employment and an income assistant funding with increased funding for health services and assistance for people with disabilities; support inclusion with an additional \$4.8 million for the Inclusion Support Program; increased Community Living disABILITY Services funding by \$13.6 million to provide a range of services directed at maximizing the independence and productivity of adults with an intellectual disability, adults with a mental disability or disorder in conflict with the law, transitional youth and adults affected by FASD; and increasing affordable housing supports by \$8.9 million.

The line goes on to talk about keeping dope, religion, sex and TV / And you think you're so clever and classes are free / But you're still peasants as far as I can see. I feel this perfectly describes how the previous leader of the NDP felt in his desperate attempt to hold on to power. I can also see this in the new leader of the NDP, which was reflected in the—

in his past and—sorry, I will stop there, I will take that off the record. But rather, I'm not certain if the new leader of the NDP is even with the NDP, because according to his franking pieces he seems to leave that conveniently out.

The next line may have been what was said behind closed doors before the elections between the past leader and the new one: There's room at the top they're telling you still.

Clearly, this is not true, as the member—or, the new leader has pushed the former leader out with a smile, which brings us to the next line: But as you must learn how to smile as you kill / If you want to be like all folks on the hill.

Reminds me of how divided the NDP were before the election and still seem to be.

I will wrap this up here by saying Budget 2018 does follow through with our commitment to Manitobans to keep our promises and to reflect the priorities of Manitobans. I just want to take this chance to mirror the comments of the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski): Best budget ever.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to put these words on the record.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I can tell you that Manitobans don't see this as the best budget ever. They see this budget as filled with broken promises, as, you know, people—they say 30,000 people are going to take off the tax roll with \$16 more to their taxes. Really? I don't know how, you know, delusional they are when they're writing their budget.

Like, I come from the North End. I—constituents are coming to me and saying, like, how are we supported through this budget? When are we ever going to get a break? This government does not care about vulnerable people and people that are marginalized. They have no housing strategy, they have no daycare, they're cutting tuition.

How are people supposed to lift themselves up out of poverty if this government continues to push people down?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 19 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 15, 2018

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