

Third Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	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

Monday, April 23, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kaelie Spokes and Sarah Voth

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, in Dawson Trail we have a lot of awesome young people who like to impact the community for good. But I have never had the pleasure of recognizing someone so young as the two Dawson Trail heroes here today.

Kaelie Spokes is an eight-year-old girl. She has been nominated by her teacher for the Seine River School Division Student Citizenship Award. Kaelie has all the beginning traits of a young leader. She is confident and kind. She helps her classroom teacher and is always the first one ready to start an activity. Kaelie is always looking out for the—for other people. She helps welcome any new student, and she treats everyone the right way regardless of their appearance or their ability. This is an example of leadership we can all look to, and her teacher says her young life has already had an impact on everyone around her.

Kaelie is here with her schoolmate, Sarah Voth, who was nominated for grades 5 to 8.

Sarah enjoys volunteering, going on mission trips and was even asked to play on the grade 6 volleyball team even though she was in grade 5. Her teachers say she has quite a smile and is always ready to participate and knows when to ask for help. Sarah looks for ways to help others like giving up her lunch to stay inside with other students who need

extra help. Her school says she would make a great teacher someday. With skills like these, I'm confident Sarah will continue to do wonderful things in any community she is part of. We are lucky to have her in ours.

The Seine River School Division recognizes the importance of affirming young leaders like Kaelie and Sarah. Students are nominated for award, received a certificate, and the winners receive a small cash prize along with a donation toward the charity of their choosing.

Kaelie and Sarah are here today along with their families who provide them with noteworthy support.

Please join me in recognizing the positive community impact of Kaelie Spokes and Sarah Voth.

Susan Chief

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, indigenous women are the backbone of our communities, often with the weight of our collective hurt and trauma falling on the shoulders of our women. It is understood that it is our sacred responsibility to secure our own salvation, healing and liberation.

And so it is within this spirit and with great delight that I honour the incredible service of Bear Clan member Susan Chief. As a member of the Bear Clan, Susan is on the forefront of protecting the most vulnerable in our community. Routinely, no matter what challenges her patrol is facing, Susan demonstrates amazing strength, courage, compassion and leadership.

A fellow Bear Clan member shared with me where Susan came across a 16-year-old girl having suicidal thoughts making her way toward the Arlington Bridge. Susan stayed with the girl, sharing her own experiences as a youth, which ultimately helped to calm the youth until a crisis unit arrived.

On another patrol, an outreach unit came across a young girl, sexually exploited on our streets, Madam Speaker, without boots or socks in the dead of winter. The outreach unit called Susan to see if she could help with the young girl and Susan was able to gain this young girl's trust, helping to her secure her safety for the evening.

These represent only a couple of thousands of interactions Susan has had in offering care, compassion and love to our community. Susan's leadership and strength are an example to everyone and, certainly, she is an inspiration and mentor to other women who volunteer to walk with her.

I have seen first hand Susan's love for our youth and how they all gravitate towards her. This is the power of indigenous women. It is the ability to heal intergenerational hurt and trauma with the power of our love. I acknowledge Susan for her strength, courage and say *miigwech* for the love she shows.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honouring Susan Chief today.

Samantha Morin

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): It's a pleasure for me to pay tribute to Samantha Morin, a grade 12 student at Teulon Collegiate, who's the recipient of the Loran scholarship award.

The Loran scholarships are in their 29th year and are awarded on the basis of character, service to the province—'prominse' of leadership. Samantha is one of just 34 students across Canada awarded this prestigious award worth \$100,000.

It all started when her school nominated her for the award. Soon after, she was called to the regional selections in Winnipeg and subsequently reached the national group, and off to Toronto to vie for the award.

Some of Samantha's achievements include: co-president of her school's student council, yearbook editor, curling team captain and a junior volleyball coach. She has also helped start the school's 'indigenous' culture club and created a volunteer-driven community child-care service at the local arts centre.

Samantha is grateful for the support from her community throughout this process and the opportunity to meet people and connect with them from coast to coast. She plans to study education in the hopes of becoming an elementary school teacher.

Madam Speaker, I like to extend my congratulations to Samantha Morin on being selected for the largest undergraduate merit scholarship in Canada and the only recipient from Manitoba. She exemplifies integrity, courage, grit and personal autonomy and deserving of this award. Samantha is joined by her mother, Patti, and her brother, Everett.

Would the House join me in 'cogradulating' her on this miraculous event? Well done.

Pathways to Education Program

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, since 2009, Community Education Development Association's Pathways to Education program has supported thousands of students in realizing their dream of attending post-secondary. CEDA supports students in grades 8 to 12 in the inner city reach their full academic potential through tutoring, mentorship and leadership skill-building.

* (13:40)

For the past four years, students in cedar—CEDA's peer help group have hosted a student-led conference. This year the theme was a new 'erar', gathering for our future, focusing on life after high school, something that for many students entering CEDA seems impossible. CEDA's model is—of running a student-led conference helps empower both the student organizers as well as the participants, helping them to see that with support and hard work that you can achieve your goals and do whatever in life that you aspire to do.

This year I had the pleasure of being one of four keynote speakers. I shared my experience of growing up in the North End, overcoming barriers, giving back to the community and becoming the MLA who represents the community. Hearing the stories how others have—of how others overcame barriers such as bullying, gang involvement and poverty to achieve academic success allows students to know that they're not alone. There were sharing circles where a space—a safe space was created so that students could share their own sacred stories.

Rose Tobacco-Olson, an alumni of CEDA Pathways and now a full-time employee, came from a background of misfortune but worked hard to reach her goal of graduating high school and is attending university, pursuing a double major in human rights and criminal justice. Rose most recently worked in the Deputy Minister of Education's office. She has helped organize many of the conferences.

Rose is a shining example of the difference that Pathways is making in student life. She's come back and is now helping other students. To quote Rose: Be the person you needed when you were younger, so that you can be the person for someone else.

Please join me in uplifting the students and staff who are here in the gallery today.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas.

Mrs. Smith: I ask for leave to include the names in Hansard.

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

CEDA Pathways to Education students and staff: Cheyenne Hotomani, Stacey Mankman, Garfield Sinclair, Rose Tobacco-Olson

Spruce Products Limited

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Today I rise in the House to recognize and congratulate one of Swan River constituency's major employers, Spruce Products Ltd. The company held their 75th anniversary last summer and many came out to recognize their great accomplishments.

In the 1930s, the company was known as Imperial Cedar and operated in southeast Manitoba and the Hudson Bay area of Saskatchewan. Posts and poles were a big part of what the company did, and—as they supplied all the telegraph poles for the rail line between The Pas and Churchill.

The company was incorporated in 1942 and had significant lumber planing operations in Hudson Bay and the Bartwell areas of Saskatchewan. Spruce Products Ltd. moved their operations to northern Manitoba when the CCF monopolized the forest industry in Saskatchewan. In the early 1950s, they entered the sawmill business at Athapap and Whitefish Lake.

In 1969, Spruce Products built its first mill in Swan River. In the 1995, the Clearwater operation was closed, consolidating SPL's operation to Swan River and growing into the facility we see today.

The 43 million board feet of lumber annually for domestic market recognizes Spruce Products as Manitoba's largest sawmill. In addition, chips and biomass are supplied for Canadian Kraft, wood shavings for horse bedding markets, wood heating pellets and tree-length diameter for small fence posts in Birch River and Roblin.

In July of 2018, Spruce Products will have planted over 20 million trees through their forest-renewal program. These will sequester significant amounts of carbon over their lifespan.

Their proposed capital improvements of an automated lumber-grading system in 2018 and new

lumber-drying technology in 2019 will exceed over \$5 million.

Congratulations, Spruce Products Ltd., on your achievements, and thank you for your significant financial contributions to many local community projects.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

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

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Manitoba the Holodomor awareness committee: Eerka Balan, Valentina Noseworthy and Olesia Stashuk, who are the guests of the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Prota Health Services Clinic Licensing Approval

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Prota Clinic is advertising ultrasounds and echocardiograms for purchase here in the city of Winnipeg. Also, on their website it says patients are required to have a referral from their doctor to be eligible.

Now, we know that this is the thin edge of the wedge when it comes to privatizing parts of health care in Manitoba. However, we do know that the government is very much limited as to what they can privatize.

The fees that are being charged are significant. It's \$500 for an ultrasound, \$650 for an echocardiogram. Now, these are specialized services. They require a referral from a physician. They require the approval of the Minister of Health in Manitoba to be able to provide these services to people who have that referral.

Has the Premier or the Minister of Health approved an application from Prota Clinic to provide ultrasounds or echocardiograms in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, we are investing record amounts in health care in our province, as you know and as members know. And we are making sure that we stay focused

on the challenges of reducing wait times in all of the major categories where we had, unfortunately, under the previous administration, languished at last place for a long time. We are making progress on reducing emergency wait times and that is good news, but there is much more that remains to be done.

And, certainly, all provinces are concerned, and I've expressed that concern with the reductions in partnership by Ottawa in terms of what once was a shared funding arrangement for health care.

And I would encourage the member for Fort Rouge to echo the comments made to me last week by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), in his party, in support of our strong, strong opposition to the federal government relinquishing its former role as a partner in health care.

Where it was left in a state of decay, Madam Speaker, on the other side, health care is now in a state of healing as a consequence of the actions of our Health Minister and this government.

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

Mr. Kinew: So as of January 2018, the Prota Clinic had neither applied for or received—nor received permission to perform ultrasounds or echocardiograms in Manitoba. Now, they should have. It is Manitoba law.

I hear the Minister of Health asking for more information on the topic, so I would table the relevant portion of the law. It's section 121 of The Health Services Insurance Act. It's very clear, Madam Speaker. It says no one can establish, operate or maintain a centre that would provide echocardiograms or ultrasounds without approval from the minister.

Now, the Premier and the minister appear to be unfamiliar with the law, but it is what they are duty bound to uphold.

Now, if the minister has not provided this approval, will the Premier ensure that there are no more ultrasounds or echocardiograms provided by the Prota Clinic?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite makes another strong assertion about illegalities on the part of our Health Minister. He may wish to direct those same accusations, false as they are, to the minister of health and Premier of Alberta, an NDP government, where this service is offered.

He might also, in his accusations, like to frame them so that he includes the NDP government in British Columbia, which also offers these services. And while he's at it, he may as well go after Liberal governments in Quebec and the Maritimes where they also offer this service, Madam Speaker.

His assertions are false. We are addressing the frailties of the health-care system that were unaddressed by the previous administration in the hopes and in the certain belief that we can repair what was seriously broken in the past, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, what I just tabled was a Manitoba law that would apply here in the province of Manitoba, which is why I was asking the Premier and the Manitoba Minister of Health about the issue.

Now, it's very clear in that law—it's also clear in the regulation—that no matter how much the Premier and Minister of Health try to deflect here, that the minister is actually responsible for approving Prota Clinic's activities.

*(13:50)

Now, it's not clear to us whether he's approved it, not even clear that they've applied for approval. Now, it's clear why they should do so: to protect the health of the people of Manitoba so Manitobans can have confidence in all the services delivered here in this province.

Now, will the Premier do his job? Will he enforce the law as it applies to the Prota Clinic?

Mr. Pallister: These services—the member may wish to further embark on additional research, Madam Speaker. He is, in the process of his preamble, throwing several previous NDP Health ministers and two previous NDP premiers under the bus as well, because these services are excluded from coverage in the Canada Health Act. They are not, Madam Speaker, assertions that have any merit. They are false.

And, of course, far be it for me to defend all the previous NDP Health ministers, Madam Speaker, for, in many ways, their lack of progress in achieving what we are after here in healing our health-care system is indefensible, but I will defend Theresa Oswald at this point and say that, no, she did not break the law any more than our current Health Minister is.

We are defending the health-care system that the members opposite put under attack when they were in government, Madam Speaker.

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

**University of Manitoba
Fines During Labour Dispute**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): One of the things I really liked about Theresa Oswald as minister of Health: didn't try to privatize echocardiograms or ultrasounds, as the current government is.

Now, we know from testimony that the Premier wanted a strike at the University—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—of Manitoba, and the Premier got his wish. As we well know, classes were disrupted for thousands of students. We know that that also had a burden on their families as it resulted in delays and, you know, other changes to their lifestyles.

Now, the consequences of the Premier's interference at U of M is very clear. It's also very far reaching: uncertainty, confusion, all of that.

Now we know, and it's been reaffirmed, that the University of Manitoba has to pay \$2.4 million in fines because of the Premier's interference.

Will the Premier ensure that not \$1 of students' tuition is used to pay the fine that he's responsible for?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I would like to go back a second to the earlier comment I made. I was not in any way—in any way, Madam Speaker—defending Theresa Oswald's record as Health minister, and I want to make that clear and on the record.

Where the previous administration failed to address the problems in the health-care system, we are addressing them, and I must, again, compliment our Health Minister for acting on research and expert views that was clearly communicated to previous Health ministers in the NDP government. Where they failed to act, Madam Speaker, we are acting to fix the system in health care in our province, a top priority for Manitobans.

On the issue the member raised momentarily ago, Madam Speaker, I would say this to the member: He is wrong in his assertion. Nothing is

more uncertain, nothing leads to greater confusion than the previous government's record of failing to establish any kind of bargaining of a real nature with its labour providers.

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

Mr. Kinew: Actually, nothing has created more uncertainty than the Premier's Bill 28, which has now resulted in a constitutional law challenge.

But returning to the issue that affected some 27,000 students at the University of Manitoba as there were picket lines on their campus, we know that it's the Premier's interference which led to the strike at the University of Manitoba. The Premier made a secret order that led to the unfair labour practices complaint that was actually found in favour of the faculty association at the University of Manitoba.

The bottom line is that now the University of Manitoba has to pay almost 2 and a half million dollars because of the Pallister government's actions.

Will the Premier ensure that not \$1 of the students' tuition money that's paid each year goes to paying for the fine that he is responsible for?

Mr. Pallister: The assertions are false, Madam Speaker, in both that preamble and the previous one, and, of course, the member knows that.

But the fact remains that in the past, under the previous administration, there was no need for a bargaining table, because to have a bargaining table one, really—to use it—needs to have someone on one side speaking up for taxpayers. That was never the case under the NDP before, and it's apparent from the member's positions and preamble that that wouldn't be the case given the opportunity again.

It is the case now, Madam Speaker, that someone is standing up for Manitoba taxpayers, students, families, seniors and everyone else, and that is this government.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, the Premier does stand up from time to time, but I don't think he's doing so on behalf of Manitoba taxpayers, because he's stuck them with a 2-and-a-half-million-dollar bill, completely unnecessary, because he interfered in the negotiations at the University of Manitoba. Again,

the Premier gave secret orders. Those orders caused the dispute. The dispute led us to a strike. In the end, the verdict of the Labour Board was clear: that there was interference.

So, again, we are seeing the consequences of the Premier's actions, and now there is a 2-and-a-half-million-dollar—almost 2 and a half million dollars. It's actually \$2.4 million that the university will have to pay. However, it seems very unfair that students, who are being asked to pay higher and higher tuition, that that money be collected only to pay off the Premier's fines that he incurred on behalf of the University of Manitoba.

So, instead, will the Premier commit to making sure that not \$1 from students or from the university is used to pay the \$2.4-million fine that he is responsible for?

Mr. Pallister: Perhaps the member's tragic loss of perspective should be illuminated upon, Madam Speaker. The previous administration doubled the debt of our Province over just its final six desperate years and then promised to do more debt-doubling if it got the chance, if it was re-elected. Two years ago last week, Manitobans said enough is enough. And Manitoba students will be paying the price for that kind of NDP mismanagement for a long time.

The member speaks about unfair. There is nothing fair about spending \$1 billion more every year than you're bringing in with some of the country's highest taxes. That's the NDP record. There is really nothing fair with sticking Manitobans of the future with the bill for overspending today, and so that's why we move to balance while the member proposes to move away from it, Madam Speaker.

He is wrong. We are right. We will stand up for all Manitobans and for a stronger future for all Manitobans as well.

Justice Department Overtime Meyers Norris Penny Report

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Documents obtained through the freedom of information act show that the Minister of Justice tendered a contract to review her department's out-of-control overtime rates, Madam Speaker. According to these documents, the Justice Department has the highest rate of employees working overtime. These are likely correctional officers, who are often short-staffed.

The minister hired an—MNP to undertake that review, and they actually submitted their final report on March 31st, Madam Speaker.

So the question is: Will the minister make that report public today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member is actually admitting the fact that, over the last 17 years, the NDP mismanaged the justice system in Manitoba. So we've had to come in and clean up the mess. The first thing that we need to realize is that there is a—that there is challenges within the justice system.

So we recognize those challenges, and we have sought to seek outside help to conduct that review. That's exactly what we're doing. This is about providing safer communities and better access to justice, and that's exactly what we're doing.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, according to the contract's RFP, the minister has not identified any performance metrics or goals related to the actual reduction in overtime rates. This report cost the Minister of Justice \$150,000, yet she has no measurable targets or plan—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —to address the issue. She reviewed the report last week, but has refused to make it public or even announce any initiatives.

Will the minister admit that her department is actually doing nothing to curb the use of overtime?

Mrs. Stefanson: I will say that there are tremendous workers within the Department of Justice that are doing tremendous work towards providing safer communities and more timely access to justice. And they are coming up with reports and reviews; that's one of the reports that we did table some—over a month ago now, the report on the criminal justice system review, and so—where we came up with our strategic plan to make safer communities and more timely access to justice.

* (14:00)

So, we are trying to clean up the mess of the NDP from the last 17 years, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—[interjection] Order.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, unfortunately this is yet another expensive report for the government that would rather throw millions at high-priced consultants rather than—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —invest in front-line services. The minister seems to be more than willing to spend \$150,000 on a consultant, but she won't do the work to actually reduce overtime for workers. Her RFP says overtime is driven by a growing prison population and increasing issues with staff recruitment and in retention.

Instead of throwing money down the drain—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —the minister has to start doing her job; yet again, another issue.

Will she stop paying for the meaningless reviews and start making real changes?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I know members opposite are experts at how to throw money down the drain, but we on this side of the House will continue to do what's in the best interest of Manitobans.

Members opposite racked up record debt levels in the province. Over the last six years, they doubled the debt of this province.

We take a different approach; we take a proactive approach. We will always, in the Department of Justice, look at providing safer communities and more timely access to justice. While members opposite squander the money for Manitobans, we will continue to invest it where it is needed.

Power Smart Program Public Education Program

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Today we learned of yet another cut which was not mentioned or promised by this government, which said there'd be no cuts to front-line services or front-line staff in the last election that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) just referred to.

Today, according to the CBC, Power Smart has now been ordered not to continue its public education program so that all Manitobans can try to reduce their utility bills at the same time this

government is cranking up their costs of home heating and electricity. This from a government that said they'd never interfere with a Crown corporation—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: How is this move anything but blatant interference, ill timed and ill informed, from this government, Madam Speaker? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. It does provide us the opportunity to set the record straight and actually point out who's responsible for the increase in electricity rates in Manitoba. It was the previous NDP government that's at the heart of this, driving up rates for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, Efficiency Manitoba will be just that. It will provide help for Manitobans and reduce Manitoba's power bills.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, here's a radical concept, Madam Speaker. If the government wants to help Manitobans, then maintaining existing successful Power Smart programs might be a good thing to do.

None other than the CEO of Manitoba Hydro has called and sounded the alarm on this issue, and he's not alone. The contractors who provide the program don't know what the government's doing; the staff at Power Smart don't know what the government's doing; it could be that the government doesn't know what the government is doing. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: Will this government please step forward and do something that helps life in Manitoba rather than making it worse?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would just ask for everybody's co-operation. Question period is just starting. I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, to show some respect for the people that are asking the questions and answering so that we can all hear what is being said.

Mr. Cullen: Well, the best thing that happened in Manitoba was two years ago when we got rid of the NDP government.

Members have to understand Power Smart is coming to an end. It's not a project that—a program that's owned by us. It's owned by BC Hydro, Madam Speaker.

We're bringing forward a new program. It's been recommended by the Public Utilities Board. It's been recommended by energy consultants across the province. Other provinces such as Alberta are signed on to efficiency-type programs. This is the way to go. This will reduce Manitoba's power bills.

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

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary.

Crown Corporations Budget Reduction Concerns

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the problem is not Power Smart. The problem is not Efficiency Manitoba. The problem is this government's mangled managing of the transition from one to the other, and yet a more sinister ploy could be at work here.

I would call attention—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —and I will table for the government's reference, page 3 of their own government document, where it says quite clearly they expect 137 million additional dollars from their Crown corporations this year.

Will the minister confirm for Manitobans that they are not looking at further cuts to Power Smart and other programs offered by our Crowns to meet yet another austerity target they didn't mention to anyone two years ago? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, what the member fails to point out is that Efficiency Manitoba was point No. 1 on the NDP's green plan program they announced over six years ago.

Now, when we announced we were proceeding with it, because it had been recommended by experts to the Public Utilities Board for a long time but was never acted upon by the members opposite, the media asked three different NDP ministers, and they got Dave Chomiak saying it was a really bad idea, Eric Robinson saying it was a really good idea and Greg Selinger saying he just wasn't sure.

Now, if you want confusion, Madam Speaker, just listen to these questions, because the members opposite clearly don't know where they're at on efficiency. We do, and Efficiency Manitoba will work better for Manitoba families and cost less. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Government Air Services Privatization Concerns

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Government air services provide essential services: transportation for medical emergencies, water bombers to fight forest fires. And while this may be news to the minister, it isn't to the people of northern Manitoba and rural Manitoba.

This government wants to privatize this essential service.

Has the minister awarded his RFP for privatization to a Manitoba company?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, we've pointed out to this House and to this member on numerous occasions that our government got elected to do things better and do it smarter.

Madam Speaker, we are going out to test the market. We're going to see what kind of response comes back. We want to assure Manitobans it won't be based on ideology. It will be based on what's best for Manitoba taxpayers. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Lindsey: We know the RFP to privatize government air services has been awarded, but the government isn't saying much of anything else. They aren't talking to northerners or rural folks who rely on these essential services every day, and they aren't telling Manitobans how much money they're wasting on this exercise.

So, how much money is the government spending on its RFP to privatize air services?

Mr. Schuler: Well, and, Madam Speaker, further to the way our government's going to endeavour to be smart shoppers, I've pointed out to the member opposite that he should join with other politicians across this country who are also smart shoppers, like, for instance, the NDP government in Alberta. They

recognize that they should also be smart shoppers for their taxpayers. The NDP government in British Columbia has done the same thing. They're also looking to be smart shoppers for their taxpayers.

We're going to make sure and we're going to 'deavour' that Manitoba taxpayers are protected.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

* (14:10)

Mr. Lindsey: Time and money wasted on an expression of interest; time and money wasted on an RFP process. All the while the government has starved Lifelight of training dollars, delayed needed investments.

When a child needs to be transported to a hospital for life-saving cardiac surgery, they need to know that the service will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This government needs to stop squeezing dollars from our essential services.

Will they shelve their plan to privatize Lifelight?

Mr. Schuler: The members opposite have the market cornered when it comes to money wasted. I'd like to point out, when the auditor looked at ESRA, East Side Road Authority, the auditor found out, out of 41 pieces of equipment assessed, more than half indicated equipment was either inoperable or unsafe.

Madam Speaker, our government will assure that whatever we do it is in the best interest of all Manitoba taxpayers, unlike the NDP who bought half of their equipment that didn't even work.

National Pharmacare Program Government Position

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Last week, a national report was released from the standing committee on health care, and it announced that one in four Canadians cannot finish their prescribed medication due to affordability.

Manitoba does not have to go at this alone, because we have a federal government who is wanting to move forward on this issue.

My question for the minister is: What is the Province prepared to do to advocate for a universal pharmacare program?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I've seen that story before, where the federal Liberal government wanted to be a partner in something. I remember the premier saying he wanted to—or, sorry, the Prime Minister—meeting—he wanted to meet with all the premiers across Canada to talk about the Canada health-care transfers and wanted to be a real partner, he said, during the election. Then the election was over and, poof, he was gone. There were no more meetings.

We went to Ottawa; we went to Toronto; we stood on the stop of the—top of the Legislature. We made phone calls; we sent letters. We couldn't get a meeting. Oh, sure, the federal Liberal government, they stand up and sometimes—and they say, we want to be with you; we'll stand beside you; we're with you all the way—until it's time to produce any money, and then they're gone, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in the minister's words, I've also seen this story before. This government cannot seem to work with anybody, any level of government, any Manitoban.

A list of recommendations from the committee on health care were released last week. The first recommendation is that governments—provincial, territorial and federal—work together collaboratively to develop a common voluntary national prescription drug formulary.

Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Health work with the other levels of government to ensure that those needing prescribed medications can afford to take them?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, first of all, we have one of the best pharmacare programs, one of the most comprehensive pharmacare programs in all of Canada, so Manitobans can be assured of that.

When it comes to working with the federal government, I wouldn't want to say, when it came to the health-care debate, that it was a lack of effort. We flew to Toronto and they said, oh, yes, no, we don't want to talk about it. And they said, well, come to Ottawa. You can meet us. And so we went to Ottawa, and they didn't want to talk about it.

And then just before Christmas—it was just before Christmas a little bit more than a year ago—they said, oh, we've got a deal for you. It was like the

Monty Hall of health care. They said, come on down to Ottawa. We're going to have a meeting in the Château Laurier. They brought out the Finance Minister; they brought out the Health Minister. They brought every health minister and finance minister in the country; they walked in and they said, oh, by the way, we want to cut funding by \$2.2 billion. Thanks for coming out. That's the federal Liberal government.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the minister says that we have one Pharmacare program here in Manitoba, and that is inaccurate. We actually have hundreds of pharmacare programs, and the unfortunate thing is those who need the Pharmacare program the most do not have access to it. It's people on low incomes. It's students here in Manitoba. It's seniors on low incomes living here in the province.

Let's not lose an opportunity to provide every Manitoban a Pharmacare plan that would allow for those prescribed medications to be affordable.

Will this government, at the very least, commit to an all-party committee to develop some recommendations from here in Manitoba on how we can move forward?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the Pharmacare program in Manitoba is comprehensive. It's one of the most comprehensive in the country; it's income based; it's there for seniors; it's there for all Manitobans.

I know the member opposite implored us to look at Ontario the last time she was asking about this topic. She said just do what Ontario's doing. So I looked what Ontario is doing and, in fact, the very day she was asking that, Dr. Kulvinder Gill, the president of concerned doctors of Ontario, said, today in Ontario we are in the midst of the worst health-care crisis Ontario has ever seen. It is the result of years of complete and utter neglect and gross mismanagement by the Liberal government.

That is the type of system that the member wants us to go. We're on the right path; we're making it better, Madam Speaker.

New School in Brandon Construction Update

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

For the past 20 years the city of Brandon has seen some incredible growth, and yet for 17 of those years the former NDP administration did absolutely nothing to help the students in my constituency of Brandon East.

Last week I was pleased to join the Premier (Mr. Pallister), the Minister of Education and my colleague, the member from Brandon West, with an exciting announcement that we will be building a new school that will serve the students of my community and at large in Brandon.

Can the Minister of Education please share with this Assembly the facts about this important announcement by our PC government that will deliver quality new learning environments for students and educators, at the best possible price, in Brandon?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I'd like to thank the member for the really great question.

It was a pleasure to join other MLAs and the Premier in Brandon to make more details available on the new K-to-8 school for southeast Brandon, just down the road from Crocus Plains middle school. We're certainly very pleased to move forward with announcing this school and giving some details on its construction, but we're also very pleased as a government to move forward on building more schools all across Manitoba, a total of seven schools which will produce capacity for 4,400 students and over 500 child-care spaces.

Madam Speaker, we're doing what the previous government could never get done. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Methamphetamine Crisis Prevention Initiatives Needed

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): This government commissioned a VIRGO report on the issue of the prevention and treatment of substance abuse. We know the report was delayed, but we do know that the report is now in the hands of the minister.

Can the minister today simply confirm that the VIRGO report acknowledges that methamphetamine is a dangerous drug for users, their families and our communities?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, we did commission the VIRGO report. The department

has received the draft report and is going through the recommendations. We will be releasing it publicly relatively shortly.

Research is important, Madam Speaker. Along that topic, I was pleased on the weekend, together with my wife, to go to the St. Boniface Albrechtsen research centre's 30th anniversary, where we heard from Dr. Pierce and Dr. Foerster and many others about the incredible work that's been done at the St. Boniface research centre over many years. When it comes to cardiovascular research or research into agrifood, they've done tremendous work and I want to take the opportunity, since we're talking about research, to thank all of those who were there on the weekend and congratulate them for the work they do.

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

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, I hope to get an answer to that question, because in repeated questions here and in Estimates, the minister's made it very clear in the last two years he and his government have done absolutely nothing to stop the spread of methamphetamine, which is a very, very dangerous drug.

* (14:20)

It's also very clear there's no new resources in this year's budget to deal with stopping the spread of meth in our communities. People have shared their frustration with the lack of prevention and the lack of treatment options available for the loved ones and the toll this takes in our communities.

Why has the government failed to act on what is truly a community crisis?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, the member puts false information on the record.

There's been new resources put into AFM; they've opened new beds, particularly for women, Madam Speaker, when it comes to treatment. There's been new resources put into the Health Sciences Centre; they've opened new beds. There's been some work done with those who offer treatment in the private sector. They've been offered support.

So there's been a multitude of different areas where there is new support. I was pleased this morning to be able to tour the soon-to-be-opened expanded Grace emergency room. There are also things there to help to deal with the issue of addictions so that those who are coming into the ER

have a safe place to go before they can find different treatments.

So there's many things happening in the system. The member just doesn't want to acknowledge them.

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

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, I'm still waiting to hear this minister say a single word about preventing the spread of methamphetamine in Winnipeg.

The minister has had this report now for some time. He now says he won't release it until the very end of this legislative session. And a budget has come and gone without any new funding for prevention from this minister.

He makes up excuses and pushes back the deadline. But it's real Manitobans who are feeling the pain, and unless the VIRGO report says meth isn't dangerous, which I know it won't, the minister has no excuse for having done nothing to spread—to stop the spread of meth in Manitoba.

Will the minister release the VIRGO report today and commit to proper funding dealing with, not just treatment, but prevention in the first place, today?

Mr. Goertzen: It's interesting, Madam Speaker, when the member was the Attorney General, I asked him on repeated occasions to release a report on the overcrowding of jails in Manitoba, and he refused. In fact, he refused so much he went and hid behind the Ombudsman in Manitoba to say, oh, no, I don't have to release it because they say I don't have to release it. He had absolutely no interest in transparency. Of course, he didn't disclose a lot of other things on his conflict forms that he should have disclosed, but that's a whole different topic.

On this issue, we are certainly going to release the VIRGO report. We've already said that we're going to release the VIRGO report. It'll be well before the end of session. It has a lot to do when Dr. Rush is available to come and speak to it because we want him to speak to it and not hide it, unlike what that member did with his reports, Madam Speaker.

Animal Welfare Protection Staff Reduction Concerns

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The province has lost its standing as the best province in Canada

for animal protection. That's according to the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

The minister says he wants strong protections, but he has cut staff and now intends to outsource animal protection.

Will the minister at the very least commit that the same number of people will be there in the future to support animal welfare, or is he going to continue to cut?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): I appreciate the question from the member.

I can assure members opposite that under 17 years of mismanagement, attacking farmers each and every day, we changed the building codes to modernize and protect, make sure that hog barns were built, chicken barns were built, dairy barns were built. We'll get it right where they got it wrong.

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

Mr. Marcelino: The minister has repealed the Farm Building Code that protected animals and people—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marcelino: —from the risk of fire and other dangers. Then the minister cut staff that protect animal welfare. Now the minister says he intends to outsource animal protection.

Will the minister at the very least commit that the same number of people will be there to support animal welfare, or is this just another exercise in cutting?

Mr. Eichler: We'll make sure we get it right, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall—the—*[interjection]* Order.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Marcelino: This is my eighth question on the very same subject.

Madam Speaker, animal-welfare concerns are up in Winnipeg by over 40 per cent from just two years ago. The minister's response to all the questions is concerning. He cut his staffing and is attempting to outsource services.

Can the minister be clear, at the very least, that in the future will he be maintaining supports to

pursue animal-welfare concerns, or is he really only focused on the bottom line? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): This government will continue to demonstrate its compassion and its responsive approaches to dealing with Manitoba issues at the same time as it demonstrates its understanding of the need to sustain our services moving forward.

Madam Speaker, it saddens me to have to report to the House the passing of a fine Manitoban late last week. Dennis Teitsma was a gentleman, a fine community member, a fine family man and I hope we can all join in offering our support, our prayers, our condolences to the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), to his wife, his children and his family and all the friends of Mr. Teitsma.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's safety—oh, excuse me—the university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition was signed by Renée Kielich, Aaron Amado, Grace Klassen and many other Manitobans.

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

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years old, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17th, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

* (14:30)

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, royal

commission of Aboriginal people—or, on Aboriginal people and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the functions of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

Signed by Bendu Dukuly, Giorgia Skorletos and Zach Turner, many other Manitobans.

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:

(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 US company, has acquired Ucity labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

(4) The creation of this monopoly has resulted in the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Ucity labs, Dynacare has engaged in anti-competitive activities where it has changed the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charged 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 STAT's patients, 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 in the interest of higher profits. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice, which increases cost to the 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 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 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.

Signed by Michele Peters, Carol Queen, Jane Feaver and many others.

University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the

university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition is been signed by Phoenix Combe, Tyson Clarry, Redford Lyle and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and these reasons for this petition are as follows:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and to make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17th, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or an agent appointed by them.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

* (14:40)

Point of Order

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

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, on my point of order, I'd like to table a few items: a letter from today dated today, April 23rd, 2018. I'd like to table transcripts from—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Can the member please indicate the point he's wishing to make and what rule has been breached that he is raising a point of order on?

Mr. Fletcher: Yes. I was hoping to be able to table some documents. As I understand the rules, there is no other opportunity for me to table documents except through a point of order.

Madam Speaker: I would point out to the member that he can table documents when he is speaking to something, so he would have to make a relevant point of order which would be pointing out a breach of a rule and then he is at liberty to table documents. Otherwise, there is no opportunity for him just to table documents out of the blue.

So if the member wishes to raise a point of order which indicates a breach of a rule or a practice of the

House, he may do that, but there is no way for him to just table the documents.

Mr. Fletcher: Yes, okay, on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a matter of privilege.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, on this matter of privilege, I'd like to include a number of documents to be tabled. I have the three copies here and they include July 9th, 1984, Quebec of appeal decision. It's a variety of briefing notes. A court decision dated June 6th, 2008, with the Northwest Territories—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

If the member wishes to raise a matter of privilege, he has to indicate whether there is a prima facie case of a breach of privilege, and he cannot use privilege just to table documents. So the member needs to be clear. He has to specify what the matter of privilege is.

Mr. Fletcher: Sure.

Madam Speaker. I have immediately found out that—and I'd like to table these documents—that there is actually no opportunity in the rules or anywhere else to table documents, but I'd like to make—so I'd like to table these documents to ensure that my privilege to table documents can be allowed in the future, and I—my ask is that the Rules Committee examine future opportunities to change the rules to allow for the tabling of documents when there is not an opportunity to speak to a bill, especially when there's going to be votes all evening and no opportunity to speak on anything whatsoever.

Madam Speaker: I would point out to the member that a complaint about the rules is not a prima facie case of privilege and I don't think I need to go into reviewing all of that again. I have mentioned this to the speaker many times. If he has some concerns about how the House is conducting business, or if he wants to speak to the House leaders about rules, he can do that. That is not a matter of privilege and the member should know that because we have had that discussion a number of times, so the member does not have a matter of privilege.

GRIEVANCES

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'm standing up today on a grievance because a few weeks back I stood to speak to Bill 15, the film video classification

act, and both the Conservatives and the NDP, after they stalled for an hour, voted against me, the only Liberal member speaking to the bill.

So I'm using this opportunity, my grievance, Madam Speaker, to speak to bills 3, 10 and 15 because this government is choosing to push all these bills through.

Madam Speaker, we'll start with Bill 3, The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. First and foremost, we need to realize that Manitoba as a province needs trade. We are very dependent on it for our lifestyle. We manufacture some of the best buses in the world here in Winnipeg, we have an aerospace industry that is thriving in Manitoba and we have a hog industry that creates thousands of jobs here in our province.

Madam Speaker, these industries and so many more are dependent on trade. Now, given a lot of this is international trade, it is important that we recognize that trade from within Canada should be a top priority. Essentially, bill 13 is creating administrative amendments to The Labour Mobility Act as well as The Regulated Health Professions Act to reflect how all governments—provincial, territorial and federal—have agreed to a new domestic trade agreement, something our Liberal caucus is very encouraging of.

Back in 2014, all governments began a negotiation to strengthen and modernize the Agreement on Internal Trade. It was through these negotiations that the new Canadian Free Trade Agreement was created. It's important to remember that trade deals can't all have winners and that we need to consider the overall impact of these agreements.

I would suggest that when creating and negotiating any agreement of this capacity that governments provide some outreach, a courtesy to Manitobans to have their voices heard. It also would have been nice to have the opportunity to debate potential negotiations and bargaining here in these Chambers.

Madam Speaker, I would suggest that we need to look at how we consider trade agreements being signed and in the future aspire to have them negotiated so that they are in the best interests of all Manitobans. I say this because in comparison to other provinces, this government did not do their due diligence. Manitoba has zero procurement exceptions, yet Saskatchewan has SaskPower,

New Brunswick has power corporations, Quebec has Hydro-Québec and Alberta has Utilities Commission, Energy Regulator and Electric System Operator, just to name a few.

I can't help but wonder what, if any, negotiations were attempted by this provincial government. From what we have observed through the bill itself is this new agreement enhances and modernizes trade rules that assist with the transport of goods and services, investments and labour mobility. It also eliminates technical barriers to trade, greatly expands procurement coverage and promotes regulatory co-operation within Canada.

Our caucus will be supporting this bill to the committee stage, but we do believe that this government could have done better.

Madam Speaker, I am now moving on to Bill 10, the boards, committees and councils and commissions streamlining act. This bag—this bill at this point is just a mixed bag. On one hand, I'm all for cutting red tape and bureaucracy by getting rid of unnecessary duplication; our system works as efficient as possible for many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, some of the consolidations make sense. The best example of this is having a single committee have decision-making powers for The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act and the reserves act. This is a good consolidation because it gives the committee a more holistic view of Manitoba's environment and ecological system.

However, Madam Speaker, I'm concerned by some of the questions this bill raises. We need to be cautious because this can have huge implications on how Manitobans advise their government. When I spoke with my colleague from River Heights, he had mentioned that there is a problem in Bill 10 in the way that the act changes the board of CancerCare Manitoba. We also noticed that the present act requires that the co-operation—corporation, sorry, consists of: the minister; the chairperson of the advisory medical board appointed under section 6; one person appointed by the board of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority; one person appointed by the board of the St. Boniface general hospital; one point—one person appointed by the board of governors of the University of Manitoba; 10 persons, each from a separate geographic area of Manitoba, appointed by the minister and seven persons appointed by the corporation subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council.

* (14:50)

We continued with the—how the board is structured to ensure that there is strong geographic representation from all over Manitoba. Under the changes proposed in Bill 10, clauses (a), (c) and (d) will be gone, and clause (f) will be changed to have six persons appointed by the minister. We're concerned that the board will no longer have the wide geographic representation it needs.

What we have found in our health-care public meetings in various parts of Manitoba is that CancerCare Manitoba has very high approval ratings from across the province. Specifically, we've heard that CancerCare Manitoba has the best specialist network in Manitoba. We're concerned that the lack of broad geographic representation will result in a board which may not pay adequate attention to all areas of Manitoba, and that there will be decreased quality of care for Manitobans.

These are some of the most important issues in our province, and it would be a huge setback if we eliminate the bodies that represent them. These committees have a strong symbolic value, Madam Speaker, because they derive from what Manitobans think are the most pressing and substantial issues. Removing these committees creates an obstacle for Manitobans to advise their government.

Another thing to consider, Madam Speaker, is that these committees provide advice from experience in the field. If we lose these committees, we risk the government making decisions that are out of touch with the realities of the social issues.

The last point I want to raise on this bill is—and it's perhaps the most concerning one—is that the amendments to the detailing of The Executive Government Organization Act. The Lieutenant Governor, on the advice of the Cabinet, may establish an advisory committee for a specific purpose, and they remain active for two years. In effect, Madam Speaker, this grants the Cabinet a gatekeeper function. The Cabinet will only let Manitobans give advice when they want to let them.

Just to wrap up this bill, in the spirit of democracy I think that it's best if we give them the opportunity to give their thoughts—Manitobans—we give them the opportunity to share their thoughts and their opinions. That is why we are choosing to move for this bill to go to committee stage, but I would encourage all Manitobans, especially those involved

in the committees, to come and share with us your thoughts and your concerns on the bill.

We need to make sure that saving money by reducing or getting rid of committees does not affect how Manitobans can effectively advise their government.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate I'm being forced to discuss three bills in just a matter of 10 minutes, so my last two minutes here I want to speak on Bill 15, the film and video classification act, the one that both the Conservatives and the NDP stood up and unanimously voted to not have one of the Liberal party members speak to this bill. It was very unfortunate; it's upsetting.

We know that the arts improve our creativity skill set. It brings us joy. It relieves stress. It provides opportunity to showcase talent. It builds people's self-confidence. It assists academically and it's used as a way to communicate and express emotion.

We also know how important art is in child development, how it's great for motor skills, language development, decision making, visual learning, inventiveness and cultural awareness, just to name a few. Talking about the arts here in Manitoba is always a good thing, and anything that enhances Manitobans' arts and creativity should be encouraged, as it builds our heritage; it creates opportunities and plays a critical role in our province.

Sure, Madam Speaker, our caucus is a very big fan of the arts, and I'm glad the minister that brought this bill forward, I just wish that he would have given us all the opportunity to speak to it. Bill 15, the film and video classification act itself appears—keyword being appears—to allow for more freedoms for film festivals.

The purpose of the act states that (a) films, which include other forms of entertainment involving pre-recorded moving visual images, are classified; (b) the classifications and information concerning the general nature and content of films within the various classifications are made available to public; and (c) persons who distribute films that are exhibited in theatres and adult films are licensed.

This appears to promote our rights, and it encourages our talented artists here in Manitoba to pursue their goals in the arts. We have some reservations about outsourcing this to BC, but we

will be supporting this bill to committee stage to hear and learn more about what Manitobans have to say.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Could you please call Committee of Supply, with the understanding that the sections of the Committee will rise at 3:55 in order to facilitate voting on second reading of specified bills, which must begin at 4 o'clock, in accordance with rule 2(15).

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Estimates this afternoon until 3:55, at which time the House will resume to facilitate voting on second reading of specified bills at 4 p.m.

The House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FINANCE

* (15:00)

Madam Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance, including Crown Services.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. Also, I would like to inform the committee that this section will rise today at 3:55 p.m. in order for the House to return into session to complete its business with the specified bills as set out in rule 2(15).

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I don't have any questions, Madam Chair, but I have a few answers to questions that were provided last week. *[interjection]* I see that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) is just getting going, but still waiting for his first question for these proceedings.

In any case, I'm joined today by these officials at the table: first, Jim Hrichishen, the Deputy Minister of Finance and associate clerk of Executive Council as well; and we also have at the table

Paul Beauregard, the Secretary to the Treasury Board; Bruce Gray, who is the assistant deputy minister of Fiscal Management and Capital Planning for Treasury Board; and Inga Rannard, who is the senior financial officer in the Comptroller's Division. So these are the officials I have with me.

When the member for Concordia was at these proceedings with us last week, he had asked a question about technical officers, and I was in the middle of providing that response when the gavel swung, and so I will complete that answer today.

And in my office of Finance, first of all, just as we were concluding last time, I had indicated that Adam Pawlak is my executive assistant, and Duncan Hamilton is my special assistant in the office of Finance. In addition to that, other technical officers that you will find in this area include, in the deputy minister's office—so for Crown Services that includes the executive assistant Braeden Jones and the special assistant David Safruk. In addition to this, in management and research, there is Angela Wilde.

In Priorities and Planning Committee of Cabinet there are a number of assistants there, including: Hannah Anderson; Dennis Burnside; Caterina Ferlaino; Phil Goodman; Nicole—and I always struggle with her last name, so my apologies to Nicole—Gruythuyzen, I believe; Mychelle Houde; in priorities and planning, Jacqueline Maxted; Brad Robertson; Karen Roblin as well; and Jonathan Scarth, the principal secretary; as well as Adam Topp.

And at the Public Utilities Board, Robert Gabor.

Madam Chairperson: Are you finished?
[interjection]

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wanted to start today on the Enabling Appropriations book and specifically starting with the Internal Service Adjustments. There is an amount there that, according to the book, covers a number of items including government transformation, Internal Service Adjustments, et cetera, and includes contingency costs relating to cannabis.

Can the minister break out what the number is for the contingency costs relating to cannabis?

*(15:10)

Mr. Friesen: Thank the member for the question about cannabis and appropriation 26.2 that I was referring to from the Estimates expenditure.

The member knows we have taken the view, from the outset, that when it comes to the legalization of cannabis in Canada the government of Manitoba sees the principal duty it has first to its citizens is one of safety, both to support those Manitobans who will choose to use these products and for those who will choose not to. It has been the lens through which we have seen the challenge.

Now, we have been clear with the federal government. We have said from the outset that there needs to be more time to allow provinces and territories to transition to these things. Manitoba has worked diligently since the very beginning to do the necessary work, but we have as recently as a few months ago, even at the federal and provincial-territorial Finance ministers meeting, continued to say to the federal government it is not too late to extend this period. You have groups continuing to express dismay at the speed with which legalization is coming to Canadian jurisdictions. These include the police chiefs association of Canada, provinces, other safety groups. We understand, you know, that it took years in Canada to develop coherent messages that Canadians would receive and could receive, and have emphasized again and again, when it came to liquor and what appropriate consumption of liquor meant and what the relative danger was, by consumption, of intoxication. We don't have such a ramp now that would provide us with appropriate time to be able to develop and hone these messages and deliver them where they'll be effective.

So we know that there'll be tremendous challenge in all jurisdictions whether that implementation date ends up being July the 1st or July the 15th. We'd like to see the federal government continue to consider the idea of backing up that implementation date. Nevertheless, we know there'll tremendous cost to Manitoba as a result of legalization. That cost will come in the area of roadside policing. It will be in the area of education, certainly health care. There are mental health dimensions that are very, very large for the legalization of cannabis. There are justice and corrections issues that will undoubtedly arise and intensify. All of these will add a cost for the Province. I believe it's—the provinces are agreed on many things, one of which is the fact that the provinces will be the majority payer of the costs of implementation of these new rules.

So we've been clear. The process is rushed, but we continue to stand up for Manitoba interests, and

we have announced that it is our intention to be joining the federal framework and we're working towards that goal and what that means.

We have said the focus is not on revenue. The focus must be on safety. All provinces and territories agree with the federal government that if the intention is to keep this out of the hands of youth and to increasingly take cannabis retailing away from the black market, then it would not be in our interests to excessively tax these products, and so that's why Manitoba's approach as well will be one that provides for moderate taxation.

If the member is wondering, then, why there is not a revenue line presented in the government's revenue estimates, it's because there is no—there's no basis on which the government could make a claim about the estimate of revenue. One thing is for certain: we know that, especially in the short term, costs will far out—exceed any revenue amounts that are gained by Treasury.

And so we continue to say we are mindful of the costs that we will incur. We are mindful of the pressures that this will create on the Province's resources, and we are mindful that those costs will be disproportionate at the beginning because we have to stand up a retail framework. This takes time. Manitoba has worked hard and taken the view that it has this duty to citizens that it won't—that this process cannot be legalized and expect revenue windfalls.

The member makes reference to 26.1, Internal Service Adjustments, and he notices there that there is a reference to cannabis. This area of the budget is—it's common. It is a feature of budgets that governments hold amounts in Internal Service Adjustments to be applied if necessary in areas of pressure, so non-voted areas within departments or otherwise. This allows government to have that flexibility to respond within the framework of the government.

The member will also notice this amount is printed up from the last year to this year, and we believe that, of all years, it is appropriate to do so now because there will be cost incurred not only in respect of the legalization of cannabis, but because of other processes going on. We know that this is the year in which a carbon tax will be implemented in Manitoba. We know that there are other challenges right now in government departments. Some of those are referenced in 26.2. And so we believe it's appropriate now for that amount to reflect.

Now, the minister—the member needs to understand that this is a precautionary measure, and at the end of this fiscal year, if it is found to be the case that government is not in need of these monies, then they are simply zeroed out. But this gives us the ability to respond in real time to real potential costs that government will incur.

I also take notice, though—

Madam Chairperson: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: So, I asked the minister for a number. This is the Estimates process, the Estimates session for the Department of Finance. He is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). He's not the minister of rhetoric. I'm really baffled that he can't give me a number.

Now, the member wants to call these potential costs for cannabis tremendous costs and talks about there being no basis for estimates of revenue.

Well, it was obviously possible for the minister to come up with an estimate of those costs. I'm asking for him to break those out for me. He mentioned roadside checks; he mentioned health care; he mentioned justice. I think we'd all like to know exactly how they arrived at this number, how they determined how much each of those would cost, and is he then confirming that there is no revenue built into this number, that this is, in fact, simply a reflection of the potential costs with no reflection at all of any potential revenues on this line?

And, I mean, I think anybody who has looked at this—I mean, to say that there's no basis for estimates of revenues is ridiculous. There are a number of jurisdictions in North America that have gone down this road. It's very—I think there's a lot of room there to make exceptions for the Manitoba experience and particularly how it's going to be rolled out in the Canadian context.

* (15:20)

But there are basis for having some estimates of revenue. The minister may not want to acknowledge those. He may not want to, you know, acknowledge that there will be revenues and that's fine. He doesn't need to. What he does need to do, though, in the Estimates of the Department of Finance, is tell the public what the items in 26.2, how they break out. We see, you know, a single number here which, as the minister said, was considerably higher than last year. I think it's up over 300 per cent or thereabouts—

it might be a little less than 300 per cent—sorry—over 300 per cent higher. This is a substantial set of costs.

So I guess what I'm asking is that if he could break out how exactly this Internal Service Adjustments, how much of this is for the delivery or the transition to cannabis or for other items, and in that estimate of the items that are for cannabis, how much have they estimated will go to roadside testing? How much will go towards health care and mental health? How much will go to Justice? And how did they arrive at these figures? What study did they use? What metrics did they use? What evidence did they use? How did they come to these numbers?

You know, whether this money is parked or not, it's part of the government's budget, and if the minister can't even tell me how these numbers break out, then maybe he is the minister of rhetoric.

Madam Chairperson: I would like to caution the member about referring to portfolio names, and I will now acknowledge the minister, the honourable minister.

Mr. Friesen: The member understands that appropriation 26.2 is not a new appropriation. This is a budgeting approach whereby government indicates that it needs the ability to respond in year to things that emerge.

Now I can tell that member that the process that builds the budget from the ground up is more rigorous probably now, even after two years of PC government, than in any of the last 17 years. We know that because the capacity we saw had been—deteriorated under the NDP. We saw whole areas like program review without staffing within the Treasury Board Secretariat.

So, clearly, that member needs to understand that if his interest in this question is to ask whether there is sufficient scrutiny on the expenditures of government, well, I don't think that we can say we've arrived, but we are doing more each day to create alignment between central government, between Treasury Board and departments, between those departments and special operating agencies, between Treasury Board and the Crown corporations and the other reporting entities. That member knows we consolidate over 180 separate entities for the purpose of reporting in Manitoba, and we know what the effect is of not getting that done well. It is a variance from budget to forecast to actual that causes a decay of confidence in the government's ability to actually budget for its costs.

Now he's talking about an internal service adjustment area, which is a feature of budgets. They were a feature under NDP budgets; they are a feature under this PC government. This is budgetary. This is about the nuts and bolts, and so he's saying, well, identify what the unknowns are.

Well, the fact is that we cannot identify the unknowns because they are unknown, so these are not known unknowns; they are unknown unknowns.

So, to the member, I would say the very reason that we cannot break down a list for him would be the same reason that a previous NDP party would not have broken down this list for members of this Assembly.

Now he sees there, clearly, there are subcategories. There are various workforce initiatives under way within government. We've talked a lot about the government transformation that is under way. We've talked about this move to reduce the number of senior civil servants in the government. I can tell that member that we are on track to complete that whole process of, I believe, reducing the number of senior civil servants by 120—*[interjection]*—112—very good, so by 112 positions.

In addition to that, we have said that there is a whole transformation work going on within government. He saw about two months ago that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and I hosted a news conference to talk about a transformation of the civil service which is taking place whereby we are trying to cast out a bold vision of what a civil service would look like in a modern era whereby we change not only the culture and the environment in which civil servants do their work, but the very work there—that they do.

This will involve change, and that change will come with cost. By printing the internal service adjustment as we have, we are allowing government to respond to the real costs that will arise. He notices as well references to salary and employee benefit adjustments, which are routine in government departments. Those are addressed through the same internal service adjustment, not provided through departmental appropriations. If we knew where that expenditure would be taking place, it would have been printed in a 'departmental' appropriation. This is essential appropriation, giving flexibility to government to be able to make that investment and meet that expense when it is incurred.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister calls them unknown unknowns. Well, he certainly had an idea what those unknowns were just two minutes ago when he answered his question and he said there's more money being put into—potentially for roadside checks for health care, for mental health and for justice. And yet now he's reluctant to tell the committee what those amounts—how he arrived at those amounts, how he arrived at the larger amount.

Now, that's fine. That's fine. The minister doesn't have to tell me. I, frankly, didn't expect him to. He doesn't need to tell me exactly how the sausage is made. But what he does need to tell Manitobans is how much out of that \$131 million has been budgeted for that piece of the Internal Service Adjustments.

There's a number of things that are listed here under those Enabling Appropriations, under 26.2, that indicate where this money might be going towards. These are not unknown unknowns. These aren't mystery items in the budget. And, in fact, I would imagine there are some people that are probably sitting right next to the minister right now who would have a very good idea where those items would be booked. And maybe he wants to—rather than answer the question in a political way, maybe just give us some hard facts, some hard numbers, to ask those very smart people that are sitting beside him, if he needs to, to tell us where this money has been allocated or potentially allocated to, how much of this—it's very simple. It's a very simple question: How much of this \$131 million budgeted for budget '18-19 under Estimates of Expenditure, 26.2, will be related towards the contingency costs related to cannabis? How much has the minister budgeted?

Mr. Friesen: Now, I would remind the member that there would have been no discussion I can ever remember having at one time been the critic for Finance in which I could ask Finance officials to say, break down your internal service adjustment and tell me exactly what went into that number and by portion, because the idea behind an internal service adjustment for the principles of these discussions is that the government, if it had known the department or area in which the expense was to be incurred, it would have assigned that portion of cost to that other appropriation in department. Now, in this case government holds an amount back. That practice of holding an amount central that can be allocated as conditions arise and as new challenges emerge, that

is the basis in which government then makes that payment.

* (15:30)

Now, I can tell that member I'm aware of the fact that you only have to look back about six years, perhaps not even that long, to see health-care increases year over year by the NDP in excess of 7 per cent per year, 8 per cent per year, 9 per cent per year. Now, I believe, in some of those years the government, the Department of Health, would've come back to the Treasury Board and said, what do we do now, because we just blew the budget. And it wasn't because they were getting the best health care in Canada. We understand that in Manitoba under the NDP the amount of cost per person for health care is one of the highest in Canada, I believe the third highest if not the second highest in all of Canada. So, first of all, you must acknowledge that there is this—a disproportionate amount between the amount spent per person and the actual results achieved. But, even so, when Health overspent, they went back to Treasury Board, and Treasury Board would've had two essential choices: either vote new authority for Health, which would've meant coming back to the House for formal proceedings; or find the money in a way. Now maybe there was some ability back then to squeeze other departments, but essentially what happened often was ISA.

Now, this government takes a different approach. Understand that under the previous government where over a eight-year period revenues were growing to government at about a rate of 2.6 per cent and expenditures were growing at 3.4 per cent, clearly, that was a recipe for more deficit and more debt. We take a different view and we say that new approaches are needed, a focus on results and evidence 'dase'—based decision making, a culture of accountability with each department, each minister and working in a tighter environment because we know these are more challenging times where GDP—it doesn't matter if you are BC, Ontario, Alberta or Manitoba, GDP will grow by a slower rate. As a matter of fact, the International Monetary Fund warned only last week that this is the time for provinces to get ready for leaner times, they said, because it is a leaner environment, they say, no matter who you are, and it is exactly because of that kind of evidence by experts that Manitoba says now's the time to get our finances back in order.

Now, that member knows that the question he's not asking is how is it going, because one year ago

we budgeted for an \$840-million loss on a summary line. That member knows that we are on track to underspend that planned budget by savings without harming front lines in a way that gets to \$726-million deficit, an improvement of a more than \$100 million. He also knows that budget to budget that deficit is down by more than \$320 million, and he knows that the big difference between their approaches and ours is that we are hitting our targets and getting that better value for all Manitobans. Where bond rating agencies scolded and cajoled them and threatened to downgrade and then did, they said about this budget: exceeds expectations, increasingly credible.

Mr. Wiebe: This is bizarre that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) can't give this committee a number, a number in his own budget, a number that is on line 26.2 that has jumped by 300 per cent, by \$100 million. The minister talks about he can't remember a time when as critic he would've gotten a breakdown. Well, can he tell me a time that he has seen a \$100-million increase in a line in the budget, which, as he said himself, has no oversight by Treasury Board whatsoever. In other words, this \$100 million is now free for the minister to spend in any way that he sees fit. He can just decide in whatever way he wants, without telling this committee, without telling the public; he can just spend \$100 million of the taxpayers' money without telling them in advance where that money is going to, without going to Treasury Board, without having any kind of checks or balances on that amount of money. If he wants to spend it on one item or two items or all of the items that he mentioned earlier, then he can do that, but he has no accountability before the fact in that at all. And yet he can't give us a simple number. Is it \$100 million?

I'm willing to believe that I'm missing the mark here. Maybe it's not all \$100 million. Maybe there are other items there. Maybe it's only 70 million. Maybe it's 60. Maybe it's 90. Give us a number. This is the process that we're in. I'm asking about a specific line in the budget papers. I'm not making this up. I'm not coming up with this off the top of my head. This is the minister's own book. And if he can't answer it, then maybe we can just ask for leave to have one of the other very smart people at the table answer it for him. I'd be happy to do that.

There's—you know, the minister talks about increases of 7 per cent in a spending line, 8 per cent. I'm talking about 300 per cent. I'm talking about an unprecedented amount of money that this—has never been seen in this province before for an item that—it's

true; we don't understand what the costs are going to be. But it appears that the minister doesn't know either. He has no idea what those costs are going to be, and yet he's willing to book \$100 million of Manitobans' money, not have any accountability for that money, have no accountability to Treasury Board, no accountability to this committee, no accountability to the House, no accountability to the public. It's ridiculous.

I'm asking for a number, Madam Chair—a number. You know, the minister talks about challenging times ahead, and yet he has \$100 million to squirrel away for his own purposes. Answer the question, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I thank the member for the question, and beyond his feigned indignation, that member knows the record of his own government because he was there. And he knows what bond rating agencies said about his own government year after year, because, really, the question he's asking is a question about accountability. He's asking a question about getting results. He said it in his own preamble, that somehow his fear is that there will not be accountability to Manitobans because of the budgetary approaches this government is taking.

So, if the member's true concern in these proceedings is about accountability, I tell him he should take tremendous solace because we are building exactly what he says he is asking for: a culture of accountability where the focus is put on getting results for all Manitobans and then transparently, over time, consistently demonstrating how that better result was achieved.

Now, the NDP clearly ran out of gas. You saw it, the fatigue, the infighting, the rebellion of the Cabinet against the leader and the focus on anything except better results on the front line and fiscal responsibility. It's why Moody's said, in 2014, a loss of fiscal discipline leading to a continued and sustained increase in debt and debt service ratio beyond projections puts downward pressure on the rating. It's why, after that, they said execution risk surrounding Manitoba's plan under the NDP to achieve a balanced budget. It's why Standard & Poor's said that the NDP clearly—Manitoba's debt burden was too high, they said. And they said they had not succeeded in making their targets.

DBRS had said about the NDP it was one of the slowest recovery plans among Canadian provinces even though the depth of the recession was relatively mild. This is a government that created a false

construct in which they said we don't have to pay into the Fiscal Stabilization Account because it's a recovery period. And then after—at the end of the recovery period, they arbitrarily extended the recovery period so they wouldn't have to make payments so they could continue to say that they were still in recovery.

We know that, for the previous government to—in 13 years prior to 2016-2017, expenditures every year were over budget. We know that total spending—overspending was \$1.7 billion, and that excludes the 2011 flood—\$140 million overspent, on average, each and every year. And yet the member sits there and raises his voice and pretends to be outraged that he sees a perceived lack of accountability. That member should be encouraged because never before has a government said so much or done so much to indicate it cares about accountability.

* (15:40)

I refer that member to page 25 of the section of the budget entitled the—entitled the fiscal—I always forget the name, if it's the stabilization—it's the fiscal responsibility strategy. And on that page it shows that that member should take comfort in the fact that this government is ahead of schedule—from budget and budget papers, I should say—ahead of schedule. We've actually reprinted—what a form of accountability, to actually reprint the path toward balance to indicate the additional savings that have been harvested in order to focus on getting this province to a point of stability. No wonder that the bond-rating agencies said, now—Moody's said about 2018 budget, narrows the deficit forecast, is credit positive. Scotiabank said, demonstrating fiscal responsibility that arrests the trend of overspending, and others have said the same.

If the member wants accountability, it is there. If he wants results, we are getting results. He knows that the past under the NDP did not get results.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, let the record show, Madam Chair, that the minister made no attempt at all to answer the question, no attempt whatsoever to give us a number.

And so I take that as an admission by the minister that he has \$131 million of Manitobans' money at his disposal for any item that he sees fit under the internal service adjustment line and won't tell them where that money potentially could be going towards, and I find that troubling. I find that the opposite of accountability in every sense of the

word. And the fact that the minister won't even fake it here for the committee or say, you know, I admit, I don't know it all, I'm going to get back to you—won't even do that. And that's worrisome, that's very worrisome and I think that the record will show that.

Moving on, Madam Chair. line 26.4, Capital Assets—Internal Service Adjustments. Again, that's substantial increase from previous years. Can the minister tell me, what is transformational capital and can he break out this number? Maybe he wouldn't break out the other number, but can he break out this number? And how much is his department estimating for this transitional transformational capital or for infrastructure asset capital investment requirements or various internal adjustments and other initiatives? Can the minister give us a breakout of what those initiatives are?

Mr. Friesen: So thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to answer the question.

So the Part B—Capital Investment that the member asks about in 26.4, internal—under Capital Investment, under Internal Service Adjustments is exactly the type of thing that I described earlier when we talked about the need for government to do things differently.

And our government, of course, inherited an almost \$900-million deficit because of a failure by the previous government to reconcile expenditures against revenues, year after year after year. As a matter of fact, even for the few years in their 17 years when they showed a balance in the summary line, it was largely because of the fact that increases of profit at Crown corporations masked the overspending habits of the previous government.

So he notices in that line that there is a specific amount set aside for contingencies for transformational capital. It talks about general or infrastructure asset capital investment requirements for various initiatives. Now I can promise that member that in the coming days and weeks and even months, he will continue to hear more and more about how, in Budget 2018, we are undertaking very significant measures that will provide better value to Manitobans.

Today, you know, in question period, there were questions about—posed by members I can recall about things like aviation services, and we talked about the fact that it's up to government to take an unideological approach to actually measure opportunities to see if they provide value. If a

government is blinded by its ideology, as the last one became over time, it fails to seize opportunities to ask important questions about innovation, about transformation, about the use of analytics, about the focus on outcomes, about the use of appropriate technologies to increase our capacity and provide value. If government leaves these things unexplored, it will do things conventionally and the same each time.

Now, don't get me wrong; government can undertake to do that research, and it could be that government finds that evidence will show that the way it's providing a service or the way it's standing up—a service or the way it's providing a resource is the way it should be done. We look at cross-jurisdictional comparisons. We look at the cost of the service, provision in this jurisdiction. We look globally to see what's being done and those things can provide opportunities to do things better. It is exactly that type of opportunity that is articulated here.

Let me give the member an example. I think about this government's transition at various points in the past to new platforms for software, and I think about the challenge now faced not just by the government of Manitoba but by all provinces and territories moving to a new standard on Windows 10. And Windows 10 platform is not simply a matter of flipping a switch and moving from one version to another. My officials—I'm responsible for the area of government called BTT, Business Transformation and Technology—they inform me that Windows 10 is coming at government with tremendous cost. Now it comes at us now because of years of neglect, of not understanding the challenge heading our way, much like we've talked about the maintenance deferrals over time leading to higher bills on things like roofs and boilers and electrical systems. Even now, year after years of not upgrading software, there will be tremendous cost to government.

This is one area of transformation where ISA can say, all right, what is the cost of moving to this new platform? What will it be? But more than just the cost, what is the opportunity now for government to say what new platforms need to be supported? What can we do better? Is this an opportunity to rationalize the number of systems? Is it an opportunity to contemplate better partnerships, department to department? And I'm happy to expand on that answer and talk to the member about the fact that we could incur some cost to save some

significant cost and still provide better services to all Manitobans.

* (15:50)

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister's going to have to try that one again, because that's an unacceptable answer and it's—it nowhere near touches, again, the \$100 million that this minister has parked under Capital Assets, which he is now saying is to upgrade to Windows 10—\$100 hundred million to upgrade the government systems to Windows 10.

And, you know, without any kind of breakout, it just becomes increasingly clear that this government is, you know, has these line items. I mean, we haven't—I see our time is getting short today. We haven't touched on the Green Fund. We haven't touched on other items in this appropriation.

It's unbelievable to me that the minister can increase the budgeted items by 282—from his own book—282 per cent, from \$74 million to \$283 million in year, at a time that he calls—he says we are entering a time of more challenging times, you know, says that we need more accountability in 'govermences' that, you know, times are so tough for this government. And yet he parks, you know, 200—over \$200 million in a fund that he doesn't need to come to Treasury Board with. He doesn't need to come to this committee. He doesn't need to table anything in the House. He doesn't need to come to the people of Manitoba and say, oh, well, this is where we think the money is going. He just makes up a number, apparently, because he won't tell us how much he's budgeting for this.

So, if he's going to say that Windows—upgrading to Windows 10, is going to cost the government \$200 million, then I'd ask him to do that. If he's—he wants to say that it's going to cost, you know, \$200 million to deal with cannabis, and, oh, there may be something on the revenue side; it may be more than zero—I think I heard the minister say. Well, then, he needs to do that. He needs to tell us where is this money going to. Where has he budgeted it for? And, if it's not budgeted for anything, then why would this minister take Manitobans' money, not spend it on the front-line services that they in fact said they wanted to protect in the last election, not spend it on hiring more nurses, more doctors, investing in health care, investing in education—all things that are being hurt by this government?

The minister doesn't want to spend the money—Manitobans' money—on that. He wants to park it, \$200 million of Manitobans' money. This may not seem like a big number to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), I can imagine. Being the Minister of Finance, there's probably be big numbers going across your desk every day. But, when \$200 million comes across anyone's desk at a time when emergency rooms are being closed, doctors and nurses are working overtime, there's layoffs, there's a hit to education, the list goes on and on.

My friend from Point Douglas is here standing up for working people and poor people.

Where is this money going to and why can't the minister answer a simple question at the Estimates of the Department of Finance of which he is the minister? Why can't he answer that simple question?

Mr. Friesen: So the member is wrong. I gave him an example, one example within that 26.4 appropriation, being Windows 10. That is only one of many areas to be addressed.

I find it interesting that the member talks about the money that can't be invested in front-line services when I remind him that the debt-service charge for the Province of Manitoba is up by more than \$170 million in the space of three fiscal years because of NDP over-expenditure. That, sir, is the amount that cannot go into investments for new teachers and schools and hospitals. The very thing he points to that he wants most to invest in are the things he robbed this province of, because now in the higher-interest rate environment we cannot make that investment. So the member should know the very unsubstantiated arguments that he makes.

Now, I'm happy to talk with the member more about the investments under this area that we cannot afford not to make because they are so essential to Manitobans. I'm happy to talk to him about issues of cybersecurity, happy to talk to him about Windows 10 that is coming in at all jurisdictions. *[interjection]*

That member laughs, but we're talking about costs to government across the world. Whether you're—and to private sector organizations—whether you're CIBC, Scotiabank—

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 3:55 p.m., committee will now rise in order for the House to

return into session to complete its business with the specified bills as set out in rule 2(15).

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Executive Council.

I would like to inform all members that, in accordance with rule 2(15), this afternoon the Committee of Supply will rise at 3:55 in order for the House to resume business for the completion of specified bills.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you kindly, Mr. Chair. Wondering if the Premier has any plans to privatize Manitoba Hydro.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): No.

Mr. Kinew: Does the Premier have any plans to privatize any parts of Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Pallister: No, but if the member has suggestions, I'm happy to hear from him.

Mr. Kinew: There's been a lot of talk about pharmacare in the media, increasingly so over the weekend. I know the—my federal cousins at the most recent convention said there should be universal pharmacare and the federal government should take a leading role in funding it across all jurisdictions. More recently, I think the federal Liberal Party, I don't know if they carbon copied or xeroxed or they just kind of, like, took a screenshot of the NDP's federal plan, and they also said they want to do a national pharmacare program. There's been a—I believe it was Ontario's former minister of Health has been appointed at the federal level to carry out consultations, come back with recommendations in a year.

Mixed signals from the government in Ottawa: some seem to be supportive of a national pharmacare plan; some seem to say it should be universal; others say, no, there shouldn't be a national pharmacare plan, the federal government should just focus on filling in gaps within existing programs.

So, notwithstanding all the variations in the federal government's proposal, I'm wondering what

the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) take is. You know, does the Premier support a universal, national, public pharmacare program?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we have the best Pharmacare program out there, but that doesn't mean to say there couldn't be improvements, so I'm always open to improvements in our Pharmacare program or any other program. That being said, we've got to be honest about the consequential costs, and that's where the federal government hasn't been very communicative, nor has the NDP, frankly, in their advocacy for this. They haven't talked about what it would cost.

I think there could be some real savings in terms of bulk buying. I hear that, and I'm certainly a believer that that makes good sense. If we can pull together and do a better job than the silos separately do of making purchases, that would be definitely a benefit. So I'm very open to that. And I'm not at all resistant to the idea of greater provincial co-operation in delivering health-care programs, whether it's in that file or others.

I would, though, say that it is rather ironic we have two NDP governments right now, in BC and Alberta, throwing stones at each other on a project to get resources to market, which, were it to go ahead, would produce enough revenue to pay for a national pharmacare program times four. The same people that are claiming they're ready to defend the environment are the same people who want a national pharmacare program. They just don't want to talk about how they're going to pay for it. So they're opposed to the transmission of resources to market in a way that is clearly safer than the present method that's being used by rail, principally, or by offshore freighter, and—on the one hand, and on the other hand, well, they want all the social programs to be free. Well, somebody has to pay for that, and if we can't get our resources to market, that obviously would just mean higher taxes for everybody as an alternative.

So I think we've got to have the discussion about national pharmacare programs or anything else in the context of who's going to pay for it and how much it's going to cost.

Mr. Kinew: So the federal government announced this consultation that they're going to be carrying out over the next year—I guess it would be a little bit under a year now because they announced this a couple months ago on federal budget day.

The piece that they announced in terms of the consultation, I think it'll be headed by Eric Hoskins who—he's a physician by trade but used to be the Minister of Health under the Wynne government, and I don't know if it's commentary on what he thinks, you know, the Ontario Liberals' prospects are in the upcoming election, but he left that post to participate in this federal committee. He's going to chair it. It's my understanding that they'll be carrying out, you know, different forms of consultations. I don't know if there's public consultations, but presumably they are going to reach out to provincial governments as well as to, you know, different stakeholder groups and experts and all of that sort of thing.

So I'm wondering, with, you know, in terms of the Province's role, how does the Premier intend to participate in this federal advisory council on pharmacare? Does the Premier plan to participate? Is there a submission being developed? What sort of positions would be outlined in that?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we'll participate with enthusiasm in any discussions around health care. We'd like to have a discussion around the funding of health care. That's something the federal government's dodged. This federal government has not had a meeting in its time in office with any provincial representatives, whether it's Health ministers or premiers on the simple discussion, though, of funding of health care and shared funding of health care, which is the No. 1 priority for, I think, the majority of Canadians. It is a significant topic we have not addressed.

So now the federal government—same federal government—won't have a meeting with the premiers or the Health ministers to discuss health-care funding, wants to have a national dialogue about pharmacare, nationally organized.

Look, like the Royal Commission on Health Services issued a report a few weeks ago and it talks about—it's called Pharmacare Now: Prescription Medicine Coverage for All Canadians, House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, and it calls for a single-payer pharmacare system. Great; good recap of the problems, the 88 per cent of Canadians covered, but there are 12 per cent who aren't. Two per cent of Canadians have no pharmacare coverage; 10 per cent have inadequate coverage; 102 public drug insurance programs, 113,000 private plans, tons of bureaucracy—that's a problem. Coverage is inequitable. The percentage of

prescription drug costs varies between jurisdictions when you're the high.

Formularies—different when you're the high on that as well, but the coverage varies depending on where you live and where you work. We have the third highest drug costs in the developed world after only the United States and Switzerland. Costs are high because there's little centralized purchasing. There are 13,000 approved prescription drugs in Canada, but Ottawa said the provinces have joint purchasing agreements for only 100 brand-name drugs—that's out of 13,000.

So are we saving money with the system we have? Answer—obviously no. A national pharmacare program could save \$4.2 billion a year according to the parliamentary budget officer. If we had joint buying, if we have stricter regulation on drug prices, if we have more aggressive use of generics and strict formulary.

But then there's the problem of the issue I raised before. Even if predicted savings are achieved and there's a notion in this that pharmaceutical companies would be really happy to give us 25 per cent pay cuts, price cuts, private insurance companies will surrender this market entirely without a fight, those notions are delusional, so what you've got is a report that comes out of Ottawa prepared by politicians that is, frankly, somewhat naive.

Last year, Canadians spent \$34 billion on prescription drugs; just under half of that was covered by provincial governments.

So, \$12.1 billion in prescription drug costs covered by private insurers; \$7.4 billion paid out-of-pocket, and provincial governments covered about 12 and half million. Federal government—12 and a half billion, and the federal government—\$700 million.

* (15:10)

So, right now, provinces are paying the cost, not the feds—very, very, very small degree. Now, the feds have this big proposal generated by the NDP, but now as the Liberal federal government campaigns to the left, they're trying to embrace that and knock off the federal NDP platform, and Mr. Singh is losing a principal plank because Mr. Trudeau wants that turf.

But let's be upfront—so, let's talk about this. If we're serious about this, it needs a lot more than just dull repetition of arguments about the problems with the present system. It needs us to have a firm

proposal put together on how these costs are going to be shared between Ottawa and the provinces. If we can't have that dialogue, then we're not having a dialogue at all.

We need to also talk about how we're going to replace all the hundreds—thousands of existing plans. How's that going to happen? We need to talk about the national formulary and how that would work. We need to talk about where all this tax money is coming from, and we need to understand that as well.

So, Dr. Eric Hoskins—the member alludes to him as a former health minister—has a lot of challenges ahead of him, but he needs to make sure that when his report is issued, it isn't just all about rainbows and wonderful solutions to problems. It has to be about practicalities like who is going to pay for this system and how is it going to work. That's what I'm looking forward to, and we'll be sure to be part of that process.

Mr. Kinew: So I think that the economies of scale, they definitely would materialize if all provinces joined in, so there appears to be some interest on the part of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to get involved. Again, I think if the federal government campaigns—or if the party that's currently in government campaigns on this, then they should come forward with a plan to pay for it. Should be the federal government taking the lead on that.

I am curious, though—like, the Premier mentions private insurance won't give up without a fight. So I'm wondering if you could talk a bit about, you know, what do you—or—let me correct the record there, Mr. Chair: What does the Premier foresee as being some of the challenges? In what ways could a national pharmacare program work with or work around some of the concerns that insurance companies have? I know the Premier has, you know, experience in the insurance industry, though I believe it's maybe more with, you know, other forms of insurance. Not sure how much of that was with health insurance per se, but he does have some insight into the industry.

So I'm wondering if he could spell out a bit what some of the challenges are going to be in bringing forward a national public plan. What some of the arrangements that could be struck, that could potentially work around some of those concerns, and again, predicated on—I think—a shared interest in improving access to prescription drugs for people, what does the Premier foresee as being as being

some of the private insurance companies' issues that they would like to fight on?

Mr. Pallister: Well, there's a ton of them. I think there's no doubt the insurance industry is—has a profit margin as every private sector company does, or they wouldn't be in operation, and they wouldn't be employing tens of thousands—hundreds of thousands of people across the country. That's an issue.

It's an issue for us here in Manitoba too because we have very good programs, but we have private insurance firms in our province, located in our province—national and global firms that offer such programs. So obviously Dr. Hoskins has got to consider the providers of these services that are there now in his dialogue, his discussion, his research, right?

But the second aspect, of course, is one the insurance industry itself has undertaken in part, which is to try to get at the problem of complexity and confusion about coverages. That—there's no way I could say to the member that every private sector plan is the same. They aren't, because, of course, they have to offer different plans because different consumers have different needs.

But the fact is that there are so many different plans out there. This is going to have to be an issue to address. Should the transfer go from private institutional delivery to public institutional delivery, the dialogue has to be there around how do we offer options to consumers which are very different and varied.

A national pharmacare plan could try to be a one-size-fits-all, but that's not the way that plans that are offered to Canadians are designed today. They're not all the same. Different families have different needs; they recognize that, and they make different choices in the workplace even within group insurance programs on different options that are offered by many companies for electives, for benefits in their benefits packages—which I have some experience with—and so a national—would a national pharmacare program offer options for people? That's another part of this, how those options dovetail with private programs, some of which now exist to top up benefits that are offered through—under the governorship of the Canada Health Act.

That—those issues of design are very real, and so when I say fight, I'm talking about a design fight more than anything else. I think there's going to have to be real consideration given to what's the best way

to make sure that Canadians are covered, but in a way that suits their needs as well.

Mr. Kinew: So kind of reading between the lines here, but I'm wondering, then, does the Premier (Mr. Pallister) favour a national pharmacare approach that wouldn't push the existing incumbents out of the way, but the existing private insurers who are there, they be allowed to continue to operate and then whatever plan is coming down the pipe would just address the gaps. I think that was sort of the language that Bill Morneau had used, but then I think there's others from many parties who've proposed maybe something broader, national pharmacare program delivered in concert or potentially even replacing the private insurers.

I'm wondering if the Premier can—if he was designing the program, which approach would he take? Would he see a national plan brought into place that just addresses some of the gaps in coverage today or something maybe more ambitious that seeks to, I guess, you know, address the bigger picture question?

Mr. Pallister: No, I'm not going to the final design stage, and I wouldn't want it to be misrepresented that I'm suggesting there should be some kind of two-tier structure is not what I'm talking about. But I am talking about making sure that in the dialogue we get beyond sort of all the problems we list about the present system and we get to the point of talking about how we're going to address those and in what way are we going to pay for the system to make it sustainable.

We have inherited a structural deficit—which the member's aware of, wasn't part of creating it, but it was there when we came in—in large part due to the fact that the government—past government was spending beyond its capacity, and so we pushed debt forward which now we have to service. That's \$1 billion this year for the first time in the history of Manitoba. That's not a sustainable situation, but it's one we inherited and we're addressing it as best we can.

Balancing the needs of tomorrow's health-care system with today is important and that should be recognized. I mean the—just—a parliamentary budget officer released a report just days ago which outlined the challenges being faced by provincial governments which are trying to address the system of sustainability and saying that it's very, very vulnerable and the provincial governments are in a vulnerable position going forward because of a

number of things: equalization payments flat or dropping; transfer support on health care not sustainable because it is—has been reduced. These are real challenges, slow growth in the economy and—more challenges. Now we've got rising interest rates as a challenge, as well, and debt-service costs are a key part of the consequential effect that we have to face in budgeting, less money available for current programs.

What I'm trying to communicate to the member is in any discussion about any aspect of health care, whether it's a national pharmacare program or anything else we've got to consider sustainability. Somebody's going to pay for it.

I like the provincial NDP platform they just came out with in Ontario because it's the NDP being the NDP. I mean, at least they're saying that, yes, there's going to be higher taxes and, yes, we're going to run deficits. We're going to run deficits rising in the next two years to \$5 billion. Yes, they're going to raise taxes; yes, they're going to raise the deficit. Okay, at least they're being honest about it. What the consequence will be for Ontario's NDP if they win government in a few weeks' time, if we have a national pharmacare program should be considered, I think. And so that's what I'm suggesting, that we have to have an honest dialogue about how we're going to pay for this stuff. It's going to be Canadians one way or the other.

*(15:20)

I don't like and I don't think anybody here likes the fact that we have some Canadians who aren't covered at all under a pharmacare program. I don't like that, but I don't accept the fact that we should just talk around the issue and not talk about who's going to pay for it and how much they're going to pay. So let's have that discussion because I think Canadians are certainly very, very concerned about the lack of clarity from the federal—present federal government around things like addressing their deficits, you know? They've—that's come out in polling comments as recently as a few hours ago, that the lack of clarity about how they're going to move to balance at the federal level is a real concern. It was a concern for Jack Layton and Tom Mulcair in the past. It's a concern for, I think, many Canadians, and they were right to comment on their concerns about the need to sustain your financial management so you could sustain your social and financial future.

So, if we're having a dialogue about this, and I welcome that, let's have a dialogue about how much

it's going to cost while we're talking about the design challenges because every design has a consequential cost, and somebody's going to pay for it. I don't think it's just—I don't think it's fair to just stop the discussion around, well, we'll just borrow enough to make it work because then it's just young people in the future that are going to pay for our overspending today, and that's hardly fair.

So young people are on the way, and they're going to need to be sustained in the future, and we're all concerned about that, some of us more immediately than others, but we're all concerned about that. And I think this is an important aspect of this discussion that we have to focus on as well.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, very interested in upcoming young people, probably in the next few weeks, so we'll keep our colleagues in the loop on all of that, I'm sure. Maybe any day now, who knows?

So I know no one around the table can note my absence, but if I'm not here one of these days randomly, that's probably what's going on there.

On the provincial level—

An Honourable Member: Part-time opposition leader.

Mr. Kinew: It's been full time, actually, full time and then some. I think, you know, I took a long weekend in February there as well as the week between Christmas and New Year's, and other than that, it's definitely been full time as opposition leader, though I would note that I think Sandy Riley became unofficial leader of the opposition for a week or two, though, not too long ago, and I was—I didn't get the heads-up first, but I didn't mind following along to some of those news—some of that news, I should say.

On the issue of drug coverage, though, like, I'm curious about this federal conversation and then as it relates to the provincial health, you know, program, you know, writ large. So we have seen a number of changes and cuts. I believe there was a top-line cut to the Pharmacare program in Manitoba and, specifically, there was also the ending of the special drug program.

So these changes, you know, they are, you know, the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) prerogative. He's decided on them. However, there's this other process taking place, the federal process that we've just been discussing for the last little while. It seems as though, while there's probably some differences of opinion

on how exactly this conversation at the federal level is going to be concluded, that where things are headed, there probably likely will be a new federal program on pharmacare. It seems that, you know, potentially, there's going to be this new initiative.

So I guess the concern that I have, Mr. Chair, is that where it seems that there's an opportunity to work with the federal government to enhance coverage that currently the provincial government is scaling back on some of the offers for Pharmacare and the special drugs program. So I'm wondering if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) will commit to not making any more cuts to Pharmacare coverage or to programs like the special drugs program while this broader conversation on pharmacare is going on over the next year or so.

Mr. Pallister: Not accepting any of the preamble of the member, I'll just share with him some of the comments from the parliamentary budget officer in respect of his analysis of Manitoba. The conclusion, however, I'll begin with, which is this: according to this federal budget watchdog, he says the Province's fiscal outlook is unsustainable, and reiterates what many others have said about our long-term fiscal future, that if health spending is left unchecked, it will compound the Province's debt to unsustainable levels. That's the report.

It also found that proposed changes to the federal formulas basically will hurt Manitoba, equalization in particular. As we move forward, and as we make, ironically, economic progress happen in our province, we are in a sense punished for our success, and the equalization program is an illustration of that in a—that's a form of punishment in a way.

The amount of equalization that we're going to get in the future is predicted to go down. The quote from the parliamentary budget officer, Mostafa Askari, says: "We put out this report to get people to think about the issues; many of them are long-term issues, but typically, politicians don't like to think very long-term."

I would beg to differ with Mr. Mostafa Askari on that. I do like to think long-term. I am thinking long-term. Our government is thinking long-term. And the member, I don't believe, is or has yet not demonstrated that he is. This is a very important area for Canadians. Health care is No. 1, and to make it sustainable, we have to look at reforms. We have to look at making the changes, many of which were recommended to the previous NDP government

and not acted on. So we have good productivity. We have a younger population. We have a growing population. But that means that we're less likely to be rewarded by federal transfers in the future than perhaps older provinces, aging provinces, will be. And, meanwhile, we've inherited a high-deficit situation and we've inherited a high-tax situation. Now, we're attempting with this budget to address both those things. We've set a record for year-over-year reduction in our provincial deficit, while at the same time, announcing tax reductions that are more significant, 20 per cent more significant on the basic personal exemption than the previous NDP government implemented in four full terms, in our first term.

So, lower taxes; yes, we're addressing that challenge. Lower deficits; yes, we're addressing that challenge. But the third leg of the stool is, of course, our services, and our services have consistently been ranked last or second last in many categories under the previous administration without significant reforms to address that problem.

So this is why, I guess, I'm emphasizing to the member, to this committee, that if we don't deal with this issue and if we don't start dealing with this issue now, then over time it will become bigger and bigger and bigger, and it—and dealing with it will not get easier, it will get harder and harder and harder. And that's what happens when you get on the wrong side of compound interest. And we are on the wrong side of compound interest now to the tune of over \$1 billion for the first time in Manitoba history, and that's just the debt service costs; that doesn't get into the growing needs for health-care services.

So, really, the message for any person who wants to get into public life should be to consider the long term, not just the short term, and certainly that is what we're doing as a government. We are considering the consequences of the decisions we make not just on today where it would be, of course, very easy, and has been easy in the past, for governments to announce generous increases in programs while at the same time paying for it by putting the bill on the high chair and letting the baby pay for it later. This is not how we work, and it's not how we're going to work. If you want a health-care system today, consider how important it'll be for you tomorrow and certainly consider, please, how important it would be for your children and grandchildren to have that system available to them as well.

So we're going to have a discussion about national pharmacare program; that's great. We should also make sure we have a discussion about the sustainability of our health-care system; that will be at least as important.

Mr. Kinew: I am thinking about this issue in a long-term fashion, and I think the long-term interests for Manitobans and for Canadians is really to move towards a universal pharmacare program, the reason being, in the long term, the true driver of the cost of health care over and above the price of drugs or, you know, the amount of doctors and nurses we have working in the system, the real driver of cost is the underlying well-being and wellness of people in our society. And so, if we have a sicker population, then that is going to drive health-care costs much more aggressively than in other scenarios.

* (15:30)

If we have a situation where we can make interventions in keeping people healthy at home, healthy in the community, then that will probably be the best way to bend the cost curve in the health-care system. And so that looks like, you know, working with people when they're young so that they can stay healthy through diet and exercise. It also should be there throughout life right into our senior years, so that people can stay engaged with the community around them and keep their mental faculties sharp, but also be able to live a fulfilling life and a healthy life.

But it also means making investments in things like Pharmacare coverage, and it does mean making investments in other areas like mental health and addictions and combatting problems that people are having there.

But that's why some of the—many of the cuts and changes that the provincial government has made under this Premier (Mr. Pallister) are really short-sighted and fail to take into account the long-term implications. So, for instance, the province cut coverage for diabetic strips.

In a situation like that, we know what happens if people are not able to effectively manage diabetes. Potentially, there could be amputations. There could eventually be hospitalizations, and on and on down the list. The price of the testing strips is relatively minute compared to the tens of thousands of dollars that it costs for amputations, and the thousands of dollars it would cost per day for hospitalizations.

And yet, you know, the Premier has made the call to cut a service like that because it might look good on a spreadsheet today, but in the long-term, it will drive up costs in the health-care system.

Similarly with the special drugs program. We know that there was a, sort of, like a honeymoon period granted to those with cystic fibrosis affected by this, but no similar accommodation was made for people with diabetes and with other chronic conditions.

So, if those folks have to be hospitalized, or if they experience adverse impacts as a result of those decisions, we know that that is going to have a cascading effect, not just this year but for many years down the road, and it is going to negatively impact health care in our province.

Similarly, or I guess, conversely, I should say to be more accurate, if we make investments in Pharmacare, if this national dialogue that the Premier indicates he's willing to participate in actually produces a better pharmacare system, well, there may be a short to medium-term—I'd give Wes a heads-up there, looks like—okay, never mind.

Sorry, I was distracted there, the window was blowing open, Mr. Chair, and it looked like somebody sitting in front of it was about to bear the brunt of that.

But anyways, Pharmacare happens. Short-term, medium-term implementation is a challenge, but in the long-term, it will produce dividends.

So, with those things in mind, you know, one of the other changes that the Premier made was they passed an order-in-council in March that basically affected people's deductibles for those who are on the provincial plan. So I'm wondering why, in a context where there is a national move towards enhancing pharmacare coverage, Manitoba's moving in the opposite direction.

Why did the Premier feel it was necessary to raise the Pharmacare deductible for those people under the provincial plan?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member used short-sighted, so I have to tell him what short-sighted is. Short-sighted is running deficits each year that get higher and higher to the point where they approach \$1 billion, while—on the one hand, while on the other hand, raising taxes disproportionately more than every other jurisdiction in Canada.

These two things, combined with a third factor, reduced outcomes for Manitoba health care—people in need of Manitoba health-care services. The great trifecta of the NDP government. Massive borrowing, I repeat, massive tax hikes, negatively having health impacts on disproportionately middle and lower income people, because when you've got less money, you don't eat as well, you worry more and you get health-related problems. Those stats are out there if the member wants to review them.

So you want to talk about short-sighted, you talk about that. You talk about running billion-dollar deficits while you're 10th in health care, commissioning reports you don't have the courage to act on and getting the worst results in Canada. That's short-sighted.

What we're doing is investing in active-living programs. What we're doing is spending more than \$10 million this year on capital projects specifically around things like Holy Family Personal Care Home, Flin Flon ER redevelopment, Brandon hospital bed expansion, diagnostic imaging, Ste. Rose du Lac primary health care centre, Women's Hospital, Dauphin emergency department redevelopment. The capital investments the previous government saw fit not to make, we're making.

In terms of active lifestyle investment, we're doing that as well. School nutrition programs, nourishment programs, Healthy Child programs, healthy food in schools programs, farm-to-school healthy choices fundraisers, Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, Child Care Nutrition Strategy, some of these, a continuation of previous programs, but refined to work better. Food Matters Manitoba, portable food in remote Manitoba, healthy schools grant, Manitoba Fitness Council—we're investing.

The point is, though, we're also cognizant of reality the member fails to ignore—continues to ignore, and that reality is that we have to move towards sustainability in our health-care system. We can't just keep taking a billion dollars every year, more than we're bringing in with high taxes from Manitobans, and hand the bill to kids later, or us when we're older and more vulnerable.

Now, that is—was the practice of the previous government. It is not our practice.

So the member highlights areas where money has been taken and redirected to other programs, and he is fond of doing so, calls that short-sighted. What he's missing, though, is the fact that we

need to move, as the parliamentary budget officer has heartily recommended, in the direction of sustainability.

Now I know that this runs counter to the desperation of the Ontario NDP and Liberal parties who are now promising the moon. They are going to be Santa Claus and solve every problem by running deficits in the billions of dollars—higher and higher deficits because they really feel that's their way to get popular. They're running at each other and they're using money taken from future generations that will make the health-care system in Ontario less sustainable.

We are not going to do that. We're moving in the direction of sustainability because that is the right thing to do for Manitobans. We're also lowering taxes because that's the right way to assist those in lower and middle-income categories to have healthier opportunities, to make healthier choices in their lives.

The previous government raised the PST—broadened it. This disproportionately hurt lower and middle-income families. It hurt them; it made them have to work harder; it made them have difficult—more difficult decisions for healthy lifestyles; it made them need to work longer hours, in many cases, so they had less time for balance with their children and their families.

These are expensive decisions for families that the previous government made. They made them knowing full-well that they would negatively impact on the health and well-being of Manitobans, but they made them anyway.

Unfortunately, by making them, they also failed in the process of raising those taxes, to improve the level of services for Manitobans. So in spending more, they got less.

We're endeavouring to make the kinds of 'allocatory' decisions so that allocations are made to preventative programs the member wants to advocate for which are already being pursued with enthusiasm. Capital investments in repairs—in maintenance—that were unfortunately put off to the future by the previous government are being invested in. And we're making sure that we do our very best within the constraints that we have been given, while paying a billion dollars to happy money lenders somewhere else, to make sure that our health system is maintained and strengthened, not only for today but for the future as well.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister) about abortion and want to know where the Premier is in respect of providing Mifegymiso, or the abortion pill to all Manitoba women.

So, currently, as the Premier knows, his government is only fully paying for the abortion pill at locations that currently offer surgical abortions which, as I've indicated in the House, has missed the mark on a variety of different ways. And one of them is that the beauty of Mifegymiso is that it is accessible to women no matter where they go, and it is a procedure—it is a pill that can be taken in the privacy of their home after they've made that choice to do so.

And so this government, we know is not fully providing for the abortion pill, despite—we know that BC, New Brunswick, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia are all fully supporting the abortion pill for their women in their province.

So I would like to know where the Premier is at in respect of fully supporting the abortion pill for Manitoba women.

* (15:40)

Mr. Pallister: I'd encourage the member, if she wants further detail, she can proceed across the hall and talk to the Health Minister directly on the issue, and I'll let him do his job.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, I mean, I have asked the Minister of Health multiple times. I think I've asked a question in question period probably maybe eight or nine times in respect of Mifegymiso, and there's been confusion in respect of who has that file: is it the Health Minister; is it the Minister of Status of Women?

So, because, as we all know, in this table sitting here, that it is the Premier that makes the decisions, I'm asking the Premier. And this is Executive Council, and so I'm directing my questions to the leader of this government who provides that direction.

What is the Premier doing in respect of fully paying for the abortion pill for Manitoba women?

Mr. Pallister: I've directed the member and I hope that she would care enough to get answers that she could direct her question to either of the ministers she's alluded to.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, obviously, it should be quite apparent to everyone sitting at the table, including the Premier, that I am very interested in getting answers. But, unfortunately, no one on that side, or your side of the House, is willing to answer any of these questions. I have, as I just indicated not more than a minute ago, have asked in the House and actually in last year's Estimates process what this government is doing in respect of fully paying for and supporting the abortion pill.

And what is the date today? The date is April 23rd, 2018, and I have yet to get an answer. And so, while the Premier would like for me to go back—again, I'm—I see that he wants me to go back to the Minister of Health and ask those same questions that I've repeatedly asked, but the problem is I don't get the answers there either. So—I also don't get the answers when I ask the Minister for Status of Women.

And so, as the Premier is fully, fully aware—more than any of us here at this table—the beauty of Executive Council is that it is global in nature. And therefore that is why I am asking what the Premier of Manitoba is going to be doing in respect of Mifegymiso, and more particular, how the Premier of Manitoba is going to stand up for the right of Manitoba women and girls that so—if they so choose to seek an abortion, that they have access to Mifegymiso.

I will remind the Premier—I'm sure I don't need to because he's an expert in everything—but I will remind the Premier that Mifegymiso is considered a game changer in reproductive health. It is considered the gold standard in reproductive health in accessing abortion. And so Manitoba is certainly behind the other provinces that I just listed in respect of standing up for women and girls' rights to access abortion.

And so what is the Premier doing with that?

Mr. Pallister: If the member is interested—I've already answered her question and directed her as best I can—if she's interested in standing up for the rights of girls and women, she might like to urge her leader to release the analysis that was commissioned by her party into investigating harassment within her own caucus so that we can have a look at the report, act together to reduce incidents of harassment going forward.

If there's nothing to show, then that's fine. Good news for everyone, I suppose, if there are

no incidents anymore, in the NDP caucus, of harassment. But, if there is an investigation that's been done, which it was purported there was—and I will read into the record when I get them the references made to the importance of this investigation by the NDP. If this investigation's been done and if she is truly interested in defending the rights of women and girls—although I've seen no evidence that any of the work she was paid to do over a half decade was ever done. I have waited anxiously for any evidence. I would like her to produce any research, any data, any studies, anything as a result of the over half a decade of collecting a salary on this topic. If she has any work that she would like to share for the benefit of women and girls, indigenous or not, I'd be very anxious to look at it.

Since the member gives me credit, undeserved, for knowing everything, I should correct her on that and suggest to her very strongly that I would benefit from any work she has done; I would appreciate her sharing any work she has done. I would be anxious to read and review any data, any work that she has done. I look forward to that report. If she's sincere in wanting to protect the rights of women and girls, those two issues, she should address: (1) Provide me with some evidence so I can benefit from her years of labour; and, secondly, urge her party to release their study so that we can work together to reduce incidence of harassment in our workplace here and work together effectively together on that topic.

Ms. Fontaine: So I imagine that the Premier (Mr. Pallister), when he's talking about ending harassment and bullying, I would imagine that the Premier's, then, talking about himself, that every time I ask a question, the Premier thinks it's appropriate and fitting to question my long-standing 20 years of work fighting for indigenous women and girls. But, I guess in his mind, that's not bullying, and that's perfectly acceptable.

I would ask—I would tell the Premier that he need not worry about what we're doing in our findings and in our research in respect of what occurred. That will be released. He doesn't have to lose sleep over that. And, secondly, if the Premier, which is now—we're going into year 3, doesn't know what I've done in the last 20 years, that's not a reflection on me in my work; that's simply a reflection on that he is utterly divorced from what goes on in this province in respect of indigenous women and girls. So I would encourage him to

actually go around and meet with indigenous women and girls, and I'm sure that they'll tell him.

So, back to my original question, though. I'm curious, if the Premier actually takes responsibility for women's health, health care, which would include the right for women and girls to choose abortion in this province. Does he take responsibility for covering that?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, sorry the member takes such offence at me asking for data, research or any studies that she may have done in respect of what she was paid to do for the previous six years. I'm simply asking her for that, the benefit of her tremendous work she claims to have done. Really, that's all I'm asking for. That she would be so defensive about it is surprising when she has the opportunity to simply let me have the information and let me benefit from her tremendous and focused efforts. That would be helpful.

I do also remember her unwillingness, when given the opportunity to stand up for women in our Chamber where they were being bullied in the Chamber, and she denied that that was happening. I remember that. And I think many others do as well. So, in claiming this 20-year record, it's somewhat tarnished by the reality of behaviour that I've seen recently, also by behaviour I saw during my time as the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada critic where committees were convening, House of Commons committees were convening in this province. Women were trying to testify and the member led a shout down to shame those women so they wouldn't be able to speak at a House of Commons committee. I remember that, and I remember her behaviour that day as well. Perhaps she doesn't want me to remember that, but I do. And I remember women coming forward with tales of their personal situation, poignant stories, of how they were abused, how they suffered at the hands of people they should not have had to suffer from, and I remember the member taking the side of the chiefs organization at that time and attempting to lead a shout down so that women wouldn't be able to testify, so that they were actually intimidated into silence. I remember that very, very well.

And I remember also that when the opportunity came to stand with women around the struggle they have to achieve matrimonial property rights, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) was silent; when she was in a role where she could have promoted those rights for indigenous women, she

did not. She didn't speak to those rights at all. And those are rights which have caused women to lose their lives, indigenous women to have lost their lives when they were abused by partners, when—I encourage the member, if she hasn't, to read the report from the Senate, called *A Hard Bed to Lie In*, with poignant first-hand testimony from women who came forward, who were courageous enough to speak, who talked about the abuses they suffered on-reserve, in some cases off, about the situations they faced when they were personally physically attacked, when they were threatened, sometimes by people in positions of leadership in their communities as well.

*(15:50)

The member speaks about this 20-year record, but it includes silence around these important issues. And, unfortunately, the member in saying I shouldn't lose sleep over it, doesn't recognize the fact that I have and that I'll continue to, when it comes to issues of harassment. I hold them to be very serious issues, and I think they need to be addressed.

I'm sorry, I genuinely am, that the member feels I'm harassing her in raising these issues, but these are issues that need to be discussed openly and they should be discussed together. We have all opportunities to stand up against harassment. If the member feels I'm bullying her by raising issues of harassment and my concern for them and her absence of demonstrated concern for them, I am sorry she feels that way. She should not feel that way because the last thing I would want to do is make the member feel endangered in any way—in any way. She needs to understand that I'm raising issues of evidence I would like to see, and I'm asking her to be accountable for her lack of action in respect of her opportunities to stand up against harassment. She has too often demonstrated that she puts partisanship ahead of those issues. I am asking her to set that aside. We can all benefit.

Her friends that have done this investigation, I think, genuinely give us an opportunity through their work to see how we can work together to reduce harassment and create a safer workplace here. If we can agree to do that together and set aside the partisanship the member so clearly wants to stand for, that would be a better thing for everyone who's working here now and a better thing for everyone who's going to be working here in years to come as well. I encourage the member in her efforts. I know that she genuinely cares, but I'd like her to

demonstrate it with data, research, actions, not just talk about it.

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to know whether or not, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) believes in freedom of the press, because it would appear that a lot of his actions of late suggest that he does not. We are well aware that he's threatening legal action against a newspaper of record here in Manitoba, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and that continues to cast a chill, potentially, over the reporting that this newspaper outlet does.

Beyond that, he's also brought forward Bill 8, which would remove the requirement that notice be given to Manitobans through their local newspapers. He's kind of walked it back halfway because I think a former Tory leadership contestant and others have raised concerns about this. But, in saying that they would pass but not proclaim aspects of this bill, it really just postpones that moment of reckoning, and with the stroke of a pen the Premier could enact those same provisions which would potentially damage community newspapers but, more importantly perhaps, damage the right of Manitobans to know what their government is up to. Similar parts of Bill 19, I think, also raise a lot of concern.

So it's my view that having the freedom of the press is one of the more important human rights in that it ensures that there's a lever to hold the powerful to account, that a free press is important in government accountability but also in ensuring accountability of many in our society.

So I'd ask the Premier whether or not he believes in freedom of the press, and if he can justify the actions that he's taken as of late, including filing a lawsuit or threatening a lawsuit against a paper of record in our province.

Mr. Pallister: The member said in the Legislative Assembly—and he only said it in there because he knows it's slanderous—that he had information that the government of Costa Rica had stated that I did not pay my taxes. He does not have such information because that statement is not true. The source was identified as a bookseller, a young lawyer who had listed building permits on his website, not a government source. The member stated three times in the Legislative Assembly that I haven't paid my taxes and that is false. I will always defend my integrity against false statements, whether they're made by the member or anyone else.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 3:55, this section of the Committee of Supply will now rise in order for the House to resume business for the completion of specified bills.

HEALTH, SENIORS AND ACTIVE LIVING

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of Supply come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume the consideration for the Estimates of the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living.

At this time, we will invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

I guess I'll get the minister to introduce his staff as they're getting ready for the Estimates.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Mr. Chairperson, Karen Herd, Deputy Minister, joins us this afternoon, along with Dan Skwarchuk, our CEO of all things finance.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, thank you, Minister.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Of course, we've got a shortened afternoon, so I'll start off by asking the minister if he has any other answers to undertakings that he can put on the record this afternoon.

* (15:00)

Mr. Goertzen: The member had asked regarding the nursing vacancies in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority emergency departments. So the current vacancy rates for the EDs, excluding the Children's Hospital emergency room—the WRHA emergency program indicates that the percentage—these percentages, which I'm about to read, are within the normal variation of emergency department staff. That's for context. However, they are, at Concordia, 13.81 per cent; at the Grace, 5.7 per cent; at HSC, 6.7 per cent; at St. Boniface general hospital, 7.2 per cent; at the Seven Oaks General Hospital, 19 per cent; and at the Vic, 5 per cent.

Mr. Swan: All right. Are there any other undertakings that were answered?

All right, well, we are going to look north today. And I can tell the minister I had an excellent meeting

with my colleague from Flin Flon just about a week and a half ago where 175 people turned out to tell us their concerns, so I'm actually going to hand things over to the member for Flin Flon to ask some questions of particular interest to his community generally, but the North as well.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Certainly, thank the member for Minto for attending that meeting. It was no great hardship for the member to get there. It's—I guess we'll start the tone off here properly. It was unfortunate that the minister chose not to attend because there was actually some very good information there, people expressing concerns and offering suggestions.

So, having said all that, could the minister tell me what the budget for the northern regional health authority was in 2015-2016?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I thank the member for the question.

Certainly, we might differ on the reason that there was the scheduling conflict, as it were, on Friday. You know, first of all, I know that there's been some discussion about disappointment that officials weren't at a meeting in his Flin Flon. And I commend the member for having a community meeting. I think we've all, as MLAs, had community meetings. It's a great way to get information, to get ideas, and so I have no negative things to say to the member for the having of the meeting. He's doing what he was elected to do as an MLA, and that's good.

But, if he's looking to have certain officials at these meetings, there has to be perhaps a working of the schedule with that. I know that officials had meetings in Winnipeg on that day. In the evening that he's speaking about, I was with Pharmacists Manitoba who were having their annual meeting, and they had invited me to be there sometime before I learned of the member's meeting.

And so as much as we might banter back and forth in the House about what he considers to be a junket or not, those are just the realities in terms of the schedule.

So I wouldn't want him to believe that there was any particular change because of—or reason that I wasn't there—because I wouldn't have wanted to be in the lovely community of Flin Flon. It really is a lovely committee—community.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, thanks for that lovely statement.

Back to my question.

Can the minister tell me what the budget for the northern regional health authority was for 2015-2016?

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, Minister, did you hear the last question?

Mr. Goertzen: I think that I did, but you know, it never hurts to have something repeated.

Mr. Lindsey: I can keep repeating it. If the minister has a problem hearing it, it's unfortunate.

Can the minister tell me what the budget for the northern regional health authority was for the year 2015-2016?

Mr. Goertzen: I apologize to the member. We're dealing with multiple sets of Estimates books and times, but we're trying to get the member his answer for him.

So in 2016—for the year ending March 2016, the RHA total expenses were—northern RHA total expenses were \$237,568,000.

Mr. Lindsey: Thank the minister.

That was the total expense. What was the actual budgeted amount?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm advised that the funding that was provided by Manitoba Health to the northern regional health authority in 2016 was \$213,245,000.

* (15:10)

Mr. Lindsey: That was the total amount that was provided to the Northern Health Region. Is that the total amount that was budgeted for that period, or is that number something less than? And did the Northern Health Region get funding from somewhere else for some of their expenses?

Mr. Goertzen: So the department provides the funding letter to each of the regional health authorities in terms of what they're providing for funding for that year. The individual regional health authorities then have their own budget that they work through. They also have some forms of revenue, so 'ancillary' revenues, they get—some of them get revenues from the government of Canada, they'll have recoveries from programs, non-insured income, and so, for 2016, the department provided the northern regional health authority \$213,245,000. There were additional revenues that would have come in from those programs that weren't from

Manitoba Health, which brought them to their total expenditure of \$237,780,000–768,000.

Mr. Lindsey: Okay. So Manitoba Health provided \$213 million, their total expense was \$237 million. My question is: What was the projected budget for that year? So, in fact, were they overspent on their budget or underspent on their budget for that year?

Mr. Goertzen: In that year, I understand that they had a slight surplus of \$200,000—slightly north of \$200,000.

Mr. Lindsey: So just to be clear, they were underspent on their budget by \$200,000 in that year?

Mr. Goertzen: So the audited financial statements governed by GAP and generally accepted accounting principles show that they were, in 2016, as of March 31st, when the—those statements were audited, they were underspent by \$200,537, which, on the total spend, would be a fraction of a fraction of a percentage point.

Mr. Lindsey: I appreciate that. So let's move on to the 2016-2017 budgetary years, and what was the budget for the Northern Health Region for that period of time, and again, were they overspent, underspent? So, the same basic information as you gave me for the previous year, could you supply for the next year?

Mr. Goertzen: Sure. So for budget—year-end 2017, March 31st, the department—taxpayers—provided the northern regional health authority \$217,593,000, so an increase over the year previous of just over \$4 million.

Mr. Lindsey: So again, the minister's supplied the number that has been provided to the Northern Health Region. But what was the budgeted amount that the Northern Health Region had budgeted for—for that year, and did they spend more than that or less than that?

Mr. Goertzen: Well I think, you know—the way the process works, the regional health authorities get a funding letter that tells them what their expenditure is for—or what their support is for that year, and they develop a budget around that with the expectation that they'll be within the budget. So in 2016, that expectation was met for the northern regional health authority, and for 2017, they were over budget by \$3.4 million.

Mr. Lindsey: Could the minister explain what expenses caused them to be over by \$3.4 million?

Mr. Goertzen: We can undertake to provide some more detail. We have to pull up the northern regional health authority's annual report. They provide the feedback on their own budget. Of course, we do the auditing of it—or there's an auditing process done which we have access to, but we'd have to go to the northern regional health authority's report.

Just for context, I think a 3.4- or so million-dollar overexpenditure—significant in real dollars for sure, but amounts to about 1.1 per cent of the total spend.

Mr. Lindsey: So can the minister tell me what the budget or what their letter is for this budget year? How much money are they projected to spend?

Mr. Goertzen: It's up to the RHAs. As I mentioned to the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) last week, haven't gone out yet. They're still being finalized.

* (15:20)

Mr. Lindsey: So sometime last year the Northern Health Region advised people that they were expected to cut \$6 million from their spending. Is that correct, that that's what the government had told the Northern Health Region?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I think there may have been an ask to find efficiencies, for sure, within every regional health authority in Manitoba. The member will know that the overall amount of money that's going to regional health authorities has gone up every year since we've been in government. It's going up again this year, so I would take some issue with the definition of the word cut, because an increase isn't a cut, unless he has a different definition of the word than I do.

But, certainly, we do ask the regional health authorities to find efficiencies, to look at their programs, to find if there's ways that they can find different allocations to be efficient within them so those funds can be expended in different ways. But I disagree with the member opposite that an increase of funding is a cut.

Mr. Lindsey: So did the government direct the Northern Health Region last year to find six or possibly seven million dollars' worth of efficiencies?

Mr. Goertzen: I understand from officials that's incorrect, what the member is putting on the record.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, I'm merely asking that question because that's what the CEO of the Northern Health Region has told me in meetings that I have with her

on a regular basis, is that the government had told them initially \$6 million less to be spent, and then somewhere throughout the year, it was increased to there needed to be \$7 million less spent.

In fact, early on in the process, there were several public memos put out by the Northern Health Region where they were looking at how to reduce costs, and whether the minister characterizes that as a cut or a search for efficiencies, things like water coolers on some floors were removed, buying publications was ceased.

So was in fact the Northern Health Region under orders from the government to spend six or seven million dollars less in the last year?

Mr. Goertzen: No.

Mr. Lindsey: That's interesting. So the minister is telling me that what the CEO of the Northern Health Region has said is incorrect.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, this isn't a court of law, but if it was a court of law, this would be a discussion of hearsay. I don't know what the discussions were between him and the CEO of the northern regional health authority, and while the member's an honourable member, I don't want to pretend that something was said. I don't know what their discussion was and if there was misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

What I do know is pointed out by my officials, which informed the last answer, is that the total expenditures for the northern regional health authority in 2016 was \$237 million and in 2017 it was \$247 million, an increase of \$10 million. So if the member feels that a \$10 million increase is a cut, then I'm lined up for that cut wherever he's offering one. But a \$10-million increase, to Manitobans and to taxpayers, wouldn't be considered a cut.

Mr. Lindsey: So the minister is saying that there was no order to cut but there was a request to find efficiencies within the system. So the total spend went up \$10 million between 2016 and 2017.

Can the minister say where all else the Northern Health Region gets some of its funding? For example, are there things that the federal government pays or are supposed to pay that perhaps they have not been paying that they should be?

Mr. Goertzen: There is a line item under the northern regional health authority under revenue entitled Government of Canada. In 2016, it was

\$563,000. In 2017, it was \$474,000. So there was a significant cut by the federal government.

Mr. Lindsey: So, just to back up a little bit, the Flin Flon—the Reminder, the local newspaper, did report on concerns about where and how the cuts come in is undetermined, but the word of the budgetary trim, first referenced in an internal Northern Health Region staff memo last month, has generated concern among the public. So just to be clear, that that's the information that has been publicly available, that the minister has never disputed in the past, that they were basically told there had to be a budgetary trim. So I just want to make sure that the minister understands that that comes from a memo that was put out by the Northern Health Region, which the local press got.

So would the minister care to comment on that?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'll take objection to the fact the member says that I've never objected to it. I've objected it—to it in the House here in question period many times. That member and other members have raised the notion of cuts, and I've repeatedly indicated there is more money being invested by our government in health care than ever under the NDP, I believe close to half a billion dollars more this year than ever before. I've given him the statistics that there was a \$10-million increase according to the budgetary documents in the northern regional health authority from \$237 million to \$247 million.

You know, if—we should all be so lucky to live in a time of such cuts, millions of dollars all over the place, and half a billion when it comes to Health as a whole. So I know the member has a narrative, and this is no reflection on the Flin Flon Reminder—not only is it a wonderful newspaper, it's probably the best named newspaper in all of western Canada; it's a great name for a newspaper—but—[interjection]—probably won't get me a good editorial, no. But, nonetheless, I still love the Flin Flon Reminder. I remember as an intern doing the clippings every week, we would fight to see who got to do the clippings for the Flin Flon Reminder that particular week.

But, you know, maybe the member himself can take some responsibility for this. He's an MLA. I don't know what information he's providing back to his community. I'm sure that in the town hall that he held last week he would have told the fine folks there that there was a \$10-million increase in funding to the northern regional health authority. I'm sure he would have told the fine folks there that there was

a half-a-billion-dollar increase to Health. I have no doubt he'll produce the video of that. And, if he didn't do that, then I imagine I know where the local newspapers are getting some of their misinformation.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, just to be perfectly clear with the minister, the information I just quoted from the Flin Flon Reminder did not come from me, it came from internal memos issued by the Northern Health Region. So I just want to clear up that misconception with the minister. And, to be clear, there was no videos of the meeting that was held in Flin Flon, which, if the minister had been there, he'd know that.

So I just want to—so the federal government supplies some funding, and the minister's saying that they've cut that funding. Does the Saskatchewan government supply any funding specific to the Flin Flon General Hospital or the clinic in Flin Flon? And if the minister could tell me what those numbers might be.

*(15:30)

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'm disappointed the member didn't videotape the Flin Flon health forum. I think he might have seen some interesting revelations. Though I can probably understand why he didn't. Though, if he didn't actually remind individuals there that there had been an increase of funding to every regional health authority, to the northern regional health authority, a record level of spending in health care far in excess of what was ever done under the NDP, he might be enjoying going there and saying, well, there's cuts, when there's not.

But, again, I think that most Manitobans would see a \$10-million increase not as a cut and would see a \$500 million—almost a half a billion dollar increase as an increase. But, without the evidence of a video, I'll only be left to assume the member wasn't providing that information to people in Flin Flon, and therefore they were left with a picture that wasn't fully drawn.

Regardless, that doesn't dismiss the fact that I'm sure there were some legitimate concerns raised at a public forum. And, just contextually, it would be helpful that that information was out there.

When it comes to the memo from the regional health authority, I believe that every regional health authority last year was requested to find 1.5 per cent of efficiencies. That doesn't mean that their budget was going down. It is looking for ways, within their budget, to do things better, to do things more effectively, maybe programs that aren't meeting what

the needs that they used to 'need'—used to be, and to look to those. I mean, that is what efficiency is. I mean, I know that this member feels you just—you take a budget and you add a percentage, and then that's next year's budget, so—and then whatever that percentage is is what it is.

And that's part of the problem that's happened in health care in Manitoba is there's never been this inward-looking exercise to say, what can we do more effectively? It's just been, you know, let's go to government and ask for 5, 6, 7, 10, 12 per cent more, and then off we go.

There has to be this looking internally to look for efficiencies. Doesn't mean your budget's going to go down. That didn't happen last year; it didn't happen the year before. Budget's been going up. But if you don't look for inefficiencies internally, you're going to be left with a system that continues to fund things that maybe aren't meeting the needs that they're supposed to or are not aligned well with other provinces.

So, yes, every other RHA as well was asked to look for 1.5 per cent efficiencies. You know, show us that you're looking at programs and how they're being used and can they be done better so that money can be reinvested in other ways, and sure enough, there was an increase in funding in every regional health authority.

But the member, for political reasons or other reasons, decides to go out to try to spin the narrative that there's been a reduction in funding when that isn't true except when it comes to the federal government. If you look line over line, there has been a reduction there, and I'm sure the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will be quickly holding a town ford—town hall in Flin Flon to reveal the fact that the federal government has reduced funding, and he'll be pounding the desk, demanding that it be restored, or maybe he won't, but maybe he'll surprise me.

So, sure, there was an efficiency target that's—that was set because, you know, we're talking about—it's—you know—it's always surprises me. These are billion-dollar, as a whole, as a system, operations. It was a \$6.2-billion operation. Northern regional health authority itself is, you know, getting close to a quarter of a billion dollars. To not look for a 1 per cent efficiency in a system that is \$6.2 billion, I think, is poor management.

Mr. Lindsey: The minister has characterized what's taken place as a 6- or 7-million-dollar in-year efficiency find. So they didn't cut the budget, but they found 6 or 7 million dollars in the course of the year to not spend, and, okay, the minister's saying that the budget went up for the coming year. So would the budget have gone up by an extra \$7 million if those internal efficiencies hadn't been found?

Mr. Goertzen: I don't purport to do a lot of math in my head, but I don't think that 1 and a half per cent on the northern RHA's budget is \$6 million.

Mr. Lindsey: So what would that number be?

Mr. Goertzen: The 1 and a half per cent on the budgetary year the member's asking for, I understand, would be \$2.5 million.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I wanted to ask the minister if you had the chance to read the Northern Health Region Northern Health Summit final report that was conducted in October in—of 2017, and this gathering was held in Thompson. Just wonder if you had a chance to have a read at this final report.

Mr. Goertzen: There were officials, I understand, who attended the summit, and I was provided a summary of the summit.

Ms. Lathlin: I'd be more than happy to share my copy here. It—rather than just a summary, it goes—it's pretty detailed of the very important issues that were discussed. For example, the theme of the Northern Health Summit was in regards to diabetes. We had several of our folks who live with diabetes and nurses that—tribal health nurses, as well, in regards to barriers they face in order to help our patients in northern Manitoba, and a lot of the gaps that were discussed were in regards to food insecurity, income, poverty, transportation just to get in and out of communities to access health-care services when it comes to addressing diabetes.

So I wanted to ask our minister, I know there's—in terms of jurisdictional issues as well, but I just wanted to find out investments that could be possibly looked into for northern Manitoba, especially regarding to closing those gaps for our patients to access and education in regards to diabetes. I was just wondering if there's any plans or investments in the future to help more with our First Nations and dealing with this because it's a no-brainer. It's—information is out there that northern Manitoba, and particularly Manitoba is the highest province in Canada that suffers from type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

* (15:40)

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the member for the question.

I mean, she's right. You know, we hear it, obviously, in Manitoba, and we hear it when we talk to our federal colleagues as well, that diabetes is particularly prevalent in Manitoba and the prevalence is even greater in the North. It's one of the reasons why, when I was speaking to the former Health minister, Minister Philpott, and a little bit to the current Health Minister in October, I sort of floated the idea of a diabetes summit in Manitoba not unlike the opiate summit that was held a couple years ago because I think it—that was helpful in having experts come together and talk about specific solutions around diabetes and to learn from other jurisdictions. I've not sort of heard back if that's something that is being considered, but I certainly think that it would be helpful.

In terms of this year, we continue, of course, to provide funding for those who are dealing with diabetes in the North and look to a variety of different programs to try to reduce the prevalence of it over time through prevention. As I mentioned to the member's colleague before, we have not provided the funding letter yet to the northern health authority, so not in a position to speak specifically about what might be contained within those funding letters, but certainly we recognize the challenge exists, and together with the federal government, but also preventative programs, you know, we'd look to see some advancement in those issues over the years.

Ms. Lathlin: I want to ask specifically about The Pas health clinic. I do have a petition going around within my community, and immediately, almost immediately, without even myself finishing the sentences, the purpose of the petition, our folks are signing it because they truly believe that we all deserve access to health care within our own community.

For example, right now, what we're dealing with is a walk-in clinic that is only open during the mornings, and the dates change every week and every month. And I've been told, too, that I'm going to be losing my own family doctor. So my family, five of us, are no longer going to have a family doctor and services that we all need. And also, too, that clinic would have been able to house more doctors, maybe more of a way to retain our doctors as well and access to specialists.

To me, that building, that area that could have been used for us to access health care, could have reduced the number of times that I hear that we have to fly to Winnipeg or to Brandon or to anywhere, really, just to access health care. And it—I remember you and I had this conversation here in the Chamber, and I wish I could find it on Hansard, but we kind of agreed that if that clinic was built, it would've reduced the number of our patients being flown in and out of Winnipeg, or bused, or money used for hotels and whatnot.

The point of my question is, we really do need this clinic that could access—help access health care, even our citizens from Flin Flon as well. So what I want to ask, as a representative from my community: Will this building be not lost and there's still an opportunity to invest in northern Manitoba's health care by investing in building this clinic that our northern region desperately needs.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for the question.

I recognize and—I think she mentioned to me previously about the loss of her family doctor. My family's gone through that a couple of times now, living in the community of Steinbach, maybe more than a couple of times, if I go back a few more years.

I think I've—there's a variety of different reasons, I guess, that doctors leave. I lost our family doctor because they went into full-time emergency room work, which is, you know, not a bad thing—good for them, but then you're left looking for a doctor. Lost another doctor because they had a family member who got sick and they needed to take care of them. And so, you know, there's a lot of different reasons why sometimes the person goes in between doctors, not just limited to the North, although I know that in the North it can be a particular issue. But certainly, I sympathize with her having had that experience.

On The Pas clinic, you know, there's no question that this is something that's been talked about for quite a while. It certainly goes back many years, including under the former government. I know the former government didn't see it as a priority at that time to build the clinic.

You know, while there isn't an immediate plan at this point, I do think we need to continue to look at the different challenges that are happening within the North. And when it comes to health care, Shared Health Services will do a better look—a better job at looking at that on a holistic way throughout the province and might have some advice for that as

well. But I understand the member's frustration with any project that doesn't happen as quickly as they would like. The Pas clinic being a big one that languished for many years under the former government, and now we'll sort of see what advice comes from Shared Health.

I know in my own community, we had an emergency room that over—was overflowing and the build process on that was nine years, I think, and it had to actually be rebuilt twice because the former government built it—the—without any ability for people who are sick or disabled to actually get into the hospital. The ramp was too steep, and there was 13 stairs people had to climb up. So bad was it, that you—they put a button at the bottom of the stairs that literally said call for help if you can't get in the hospital.

So people would push the button and medical staff would come out of the hospital and help the elderly and those who have mobility challenges get in the hospital. And that was a nine-year process. So I recognize that things don't go as quickly as—sometimes as any of us would like, but I think that that's a discussion that can be ongoing with Shared Health Manitoba.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Let me start with a little bit of clarification on—for the MLA for Kewatinook. For somebody who is transported from—for medical reasons from St. Theresa Point to Winnipeg, the money for that flight comes ultimately either the provincial or the federal government.

Which one and who is—what's the process and who is responsible for paying the immediate costs?

* (15:50)

Mr. Goertzen: I'm glad that the member has raised this question because it's a very important one and one where I might be able to solicit his assistance.

So, if an individual is moved from a reserve community because a doctor or somebody at a nursing station has deemed that they need to have medical assistance elsewhere than on—in their home community on reserve, the federal government would be obligated to pay for that treatment.

However, there are times, if an individual is transferred to, for example, Thompson, and are deemed to have needed to go to Thompson, they would not always get reimbursed by—or the Province would not get reimbursed by the federal government, and that has left Manitoba with about a \$39-million

bill and growing, an outstanding bill and growing, from the federal government.

Now, I've written the former Health minister federally. I've written the current Health Minister federally. I've now, you know, engaged with federal officials on a variety of levels about this outstanding \$39 million and asked them to, pay your bill, and at this point they have refused to pay the bill that's owed to Manitoba, which I think doesn't speak well, first of all, of the government and the honour of the Crown, but it also may have an impact on the delivery of health care.

So, if the member would join me, because I know he has many federal connections and people respect him within his party federally, as they should—I respect the member as well—if he could also pen a letter and copy me in terms of the demand to stand up for Manitoba for that \$39 million, that may go a long way and maybe dispel some of the myths that exist, or we hope that they're myths that exist, that he's not willing to stand up to the federal government when it comes to health care.

Mr. Gerrard: I will certainly pass that answer on to the MLA for Kewatinook and will certainly look at what the situation is. I think it will be important to have a view from the federal government on that \$39 million so that we can have a careful look at it. Sometimes I don't get that impartial perspective from the minister, so we'll need to do that due diligence.

The second question has to do with if somebody in St. Theresa Point has a health issue and it's appropriate, under what conditions can that person go to the Ombudsman in terms of health issues because of the Ombudsman having some role in terms of health-related issues?

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 3:55, the committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (16:00)

IN SESSION

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Madam Speaker: Resuming orders of the day, the time being 4 p.m., I am now interrupting debate to put the remaining second reading questions, without further debate or amendment, on the following

specified bills: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25 and 26.

The House will not adjourn until all the applicable questions have been put.

Bill 3—The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended)

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 3, The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I ask for a recorded vote, please.

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

* (17:00)

The one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing that the division bells be turned off and the House proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 3, The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended).

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Kinew, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 37, Nays 13.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 4—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Member Changing Parties)

Madam Speaker: We will now move to Bill 4. I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 4, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Member Changing Parties).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on division.

Madam Speaker: On division.

Bill 5—The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to Bill 5, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 6—The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 6, The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 7—The Sustainable Watersheds Act (Various Acts Amended)

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 7, The Sustainable Watersheds Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 9—The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers Respecting Governance and Accountability)

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 9, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers Respecting Governance and Accountability).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 10—The Boards, Committees, Councils and Commissions Streamlining Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed)

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 10, The Boards, Committees, Councils and Commissions Streamlining Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, please.

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

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 10.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Kinew, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 36, Nays 13.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 11—The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended)

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 11, The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Bill 14—The Traffic and Transportation
Modernization Act**

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 14, The Traffic and Transportation Modernization Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Bill 15—The Film and Video
Classification and Distribution Act**

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 15, The Film and Video Classification and Distribution Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Bill 17—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment
and Highway Traffic Amendment Act**

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 17, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

* (18:10)

**Bill 19—The Planning Amendment Act
(Improving Efficiency in Planning)**

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 19, The Planning Amendment Act (Improving Efficiency in Planning).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

Order, please.

Prior to proceeding with the vote, I would ask if we could have everybody's co-operation that when the pages are calling out names that we are silent as a room. It—these young ladies are trying their best, but it does get a little bit unnerving when there's some chatter in the room. So, if we could have everybody's co-operation, please.

* (19:10)

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 19, The Planning Amendment Act (Improving Efficiency in Planning).

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 35, Nays 15.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

**Bill 20—The Employment Standards Code
Amendment Act (2)**

Madam Speaker: I will now put the question on second reading of Bill 20, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (2).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

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

Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 20, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (2).

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 35, Nays 15.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 22—The Queen's Counsel Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 22.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, please.

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

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 22.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 35, Nays 15.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 23—The Commodity Futures Amendment and Securities Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 23.

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

Bill 25—The Non-Smokers Health Protection and Vapour Products Amendment Act (Prohibiting Cannabis Consumption in Outdoor Public Places)

Madam Speaker: I shall now call the question on second reading of Bill 25.

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

Bill 26—The Impaired Driving Offences Act (Various Acts Amended)

Madam Speaker: I shall now call the question on second reading of Bill 26, The Impaired Driving Offences Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 23, 2018

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Members' Statements		Animal Welfare Protection	
Kaelie Spokes and Sarah Voth		T. Marcelino	1667
Lagassé	1657	Eichler	1668
Susan Chief		Pallister	1668
Fontaine	1657	Petitions	
Samantha Morin		University of Winnipeg–Campus Safety	
Eichler	1658	Kinew	1668
Pathways to Education Program		Tina Fontaine–Public Inquiry	
B. Smith	1658	B. Smith	1669
Spruce Products Limited		Medical Laboratory Services	
Wowchuk	1659	Gerrard	1669
Oral Questions		University of Winnipeg–Campus Safety	
Prota Health Services Clinic		Swan	1670
Kinew	1659	Wiebe	1670
Pallister	1659	Tina Fontaine–Public Inquiry	
University of Manitoba		Fontaine	1671
Kinew	1661	Matter of Privilege	
Pallister	1661	Fletcher	1672
Justice Department Overtime		Grievances	
Fontaine	1662	Lamoureux	1672
Stefanson	1662		
Power Smart Program			
Altemeyer	1663		
Cullen	1663		
Crown Corporations			
Altemeyer	1664		
Pallister	1664		
Government Air Services			
Lindsey	1664		
Schuler	1664		
National Pharmacare Program			
Lamoureux	1665		
Goertzen	1665		
New School in Brandon			
Isleifson	1666		
Wishart	1666		
Methamphetamine Crisis			
Swan	1666		
Goertzen	1666		

ORDERS OF THE DAY			
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS			
		Committee of Supply	
		(Concurrent Sections)	
		Finance	
		Friesen	1674
		Wiebe	1675
		Executive Council	
		Kinew	1682
		Pallister	1682
		Fontaine	1690
		Health, Seniors and Active Living	
		Goertzen	1693
		Swan	1693
		Lindsey	1693
		Lathlin	1697
		Gerrard	1699

Debate on Second Readings

Bill 3–The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended)	1700	Bill 14–The Traffic and Transportation Modernization Act	1702
Bill 4–The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Member Changing Parties)	1700	Bill 15–The Film and Video Classification and Distribution Act	1702
Bill 5–The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act	1700	Bill 17–The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act	1702
Bill 6–The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Amendment Act	1701	Bill 19–The Planning Amendment Act (Improving Efficiency in Planning)	1702
Bill 7–The Sustainable Watersheds Act (Various Acts Amended)	1701	Bill 20–The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (2)	1702
Bill 9–The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers Respecting Governance and Accountability)	1701	Bill 22–The Queen's Counsel Act	1703
Bill 10–The Boards, Committees, Councils and Commissions Streamlining Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed)	1701	Bill 23–The Commodity Futures Amendment and Securities Amendment Act	1703
Bill 11–The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended)	1701	Bill 25–The Non-Smokers Health Protection and Vapour Products Amendment Act (Prohibiting Cannabis Consumption in Outdoor Public Places)	1704
		Bill 26–The Impaired Driving Offences Act (Various Acts Amended)	1704

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>