

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Man.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	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
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 4, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 35—The Crown Lands Amendment Act
(Improved Management of Community Pastures
and Agricultural Crown Lands)**

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): I move, seconded by the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires), that Bill 35, The Crown Lands Amendment Act (Improved Management of Community Pastures and Agricultural Crown Lands), be now presented for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: Currently, fees or rent for leases and permits for agricultural Crown lands may be determined by a public tender. This bill enables regulations that provide for public auction to also be used. This bill enables Cabinet to designate certain lands as community pastures to regulate their use. The purpose of the community pastures is support haying and grazing on rangelands in a manner that conserves the land's ecological integrity and biodiversity. Once designated, community pastures must be managed in accordance with this purpose.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Bill 36—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Impaired Driving Offences)**

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 36, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Impaired Driving Offences), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: This bill would amend The Highway Traffic Act to make necessary changes to prevent a gap in Manitoba's drug-impaired driving legislation. It will solve a gap in The Highway Traffic Act driver's licence suspension sanctions that will occur

when part 2 of The Impaired Driving Offences Act replaces the existing Highway Traffic Act driver's licence suspension for refusal of a police demand to participate in a physical co-ordination test or drug recognition evaluation. The bill will also correct some inaccurate cross-references to the Criminal Code.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Rules of the House
First Report**

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Vice-Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the First Report on the Standing Committee of Rules of the House.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Rules of the House presents—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Rules of the House presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on October 3, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under consideration

Amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mrs. DRIEDGER (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. HELWER*
- *Ms. FONTAINE*
- *Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Mr. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MICKLEFIELD*
- *Mr. PIWNIUK (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. SWAN*
- *Hon. Mr. WHARTON*

Officials Speaking on Record

- Ms. Patricia Chaychuk, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
- Mr. Rick Yarish, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Amendments to Rules Considered and Reported

At the October 3, 2018 meeting your committee agreed to report the following amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

THAT the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be amended as follows:

THAT the definition of "the Leader of the Official Opposition" in sub-rule 1(3) be replaced with the following:

- (g) "**the Leader of the Official Opposition**" means the Member recognized by the Speaker as occupying the position of Leader of the Official Opposition, pursuant to section 52.16 of The Legislative Assembly Act;

THAT sub-rule 2(1) be amended by deleting the 6th paragraph and by replacing it with the following:

On the last Thursday sitting prior to the Remembrance Day Week, the House will not adjourn until the questions have been put and Royal Assent granted for the following items:

- (a) the Designated Bills;
- (b) the Business of Supply set out in sub-rule 76(1) including The Loan Act and The Appropriation Act; and
- (c) The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act.

Any remaining steps for these items not dealt with 60 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour will have all remaining questions put to a vote following the provisions outlined in sub-rules (21), (23) and (23.1).

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 2(23)

Actions to Complete the Business of Supply

2(23.1) If the required actions for the Business of Supply taking place in the Committee of Supply, Committee of the Whole or in the House have not been completed by the last Thursday sitting prior to the Remembrance Day Week, the following provisions are to apply:

- (a) if Routine Proceedings has not concluded 90 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour, the Speaker must terminate Routine Proceedings and proceed to Orders of the Day;
- (b) if not already in Committee of Supply or Committee of the Whole 60 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour, the House must resolve into Committee of Supply or Committee of the Whole;
- (c) Sixty minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour the Chairperson or the Speaker will interrupt debate and put the questions on all remaining items with no further debate or amendment;
- (d) Matters of Privilege and Points of Order will be held until all votes are completed;
- (e) despite sub-rule 14(4), divisions on these items cannot be deferred.

THAT sub-rule 2(10) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Second Reading moved for Specified Bills

2(10) On the same sitting day identified in sub-rule (9), and after Bills have been designated by the Opposition parties, the House is to not see the clock until the Second Reading motions have been moved for all Specified Bills.

- (a) For each Specified Bill that has not yet been called for debate by this day, debate shall proceed as follows:
 - i. the Minister may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes;
 - ii. a question period of up to 15 minutes may occur according to the provisions of sub-rule 137(5);
 - iii. Critics and each Independent Member may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes; and
 - iv. the debate shall then be concluded for that day, pending Second Reading Completion Day as per 2(11).
- (b) For each Specified Bill that has been called for debate previously, debate shall proceed as follows:
 - i. any Members identified in 2(10)(a) who have not yet spoken in the debate shall be afforded the opportunity to speak;

- ii. if the question period has not yet occurred, it shall take place as described in paragraph (a)(ii); and
- iii. if the question period was previously interrupted, it shall continue as described in paragraph (a)(ii), and;
- iv. the debate shall then be concluded for that day, pending Second Reading Completion Day as per 2(11).

THAT sub-rule 2(15) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Actions to complete Second Reading, Report Stage and Concurrence and Third Reading of Specified Bills

2(15) If the actions referred to in sub-rules (11), (13) and (14) have not been completed by the noted date, the following provisions are to apply:

- (a) the House will not adjourn on that day until the Speaker has put all the applicable questions on all Specified Bills;
- (b) if Routine Proceedings has not concluded 90 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour, the Speaker must terminate Routine Proceedings and proceed to Orders of the Day;
- (c) Sixty minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour the Speaker will interrupt debate and put all questions on the remaining Bills with no further debate or amendment, except for the debate provisions allowed under 2(10) and 2(14);
- (d) Matters of Privilege and Points of Order will be deferred until all votes are completed;
- (e) despite sub-rule 14(4), divisions on these Specified Bills cannot be deferred;
- (f) if a deadline day falls on a Friday sitting during the debate on the Budget Motion, the provisions of sub-rules (b) and (c) shall proceed as follows:
 - i. The Speaker must terminate Routine Proceedings immediately upon conclusion of Oral Questions.
 - ii. Thirty minutes after the conclusion of Oral Questions the Speaker will interrupt debate and put all questions on the remaining Bills with no further debate or amendment, except for the debate provisions allowed under 2(10) and 2(14).

THAT sub-rule 2(17) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Designated Bills

Second Reading Completion Day for Designated Bills

2(17) Within two sitting days of the session resuming, the question for Second Reading of Designated Bills must be put. Emergency recall sittings are exempt from this provision.

- (a) For each Designated Bill that has not yet been called for debate by this day, debate shall proceed as follows before the question is put:
 - i. the Minister may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes;
 - ii. a question period of up to 15 minutes may occur according to the provisions of sub-rule 137(5); and
 - iii. Critics and each Independent Member may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes.
- (b) For each Designated Bill that has been called for debate previously, debate shall proceed as follows before the question is put:
 - i. any Members identified in 2(17)(a) who have not yet spoken in the debate shall be afforded the opportunity to speak;
 - ii. if the question period has not yet occurred, it shall take place as described in paragraph (a)(ii); and
 - iii. if the question period was previously interrupted, it shall continue as described in paragraph (a)(ii).

THAT sub-rule 2(21) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Actions to complete Second Reading, Report Stage and Concurrence and Third Reading of Designated Bills

2(21) If the actions referred to in sub-rules (17), (19) and (20) have not been completed by the noted date, the following provisions are to apply:

- (a) the House will not adjourn on that day until the Speaker has put all the applicable questions on all Designated Bills;
- (b) if Routine Proceedings has not concluded 90 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour, the Speaker must terminate Routine Proceedings and proceed to Orders of the Day;

- (c) Sixty minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour the Speaker will interrupt debate and put all questions on the remaining Bills with no further debate or amendment, except for the debate provisions allowed under 2(17) and 2(20);
- (d) Matters of Privilege and Points of Order will be deferred until all votes are completed;
- (e) Despite sub-rule 14(4), divisions on these Specified Bills cannot be deferred.

THAT sub-rule 23(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Private Members' Business

23(4) Subject to sub-rule 4(3), Private Members' Business shall be considered as follows when the House sits on Tuesdays and Thursdays:

Tuesday:

10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (Private Members' Hour)

Private Bills

Public Bills

Motions

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (Private Members' Hour)

Private Members' Resolutions

Motions

Thursday:

10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (Private Members' Hour)

Public Bills

Private Bills

Motions

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (Private Members' Hour)

Private Members' Resolutions

Motions

Deferred votes from previous Tuesday Private Members' Business at 11:55 a.m.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 23(4):

Sequence of Private Members' Bills

23(4.1) Private Members' Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills shall be called in the following sequence as listed on the Order Paper:

- (a) Report Stage;
- (b) Debate on Report Stage;
- (c) Concurrence and Third Readings;
- (d) Debate on Concurrence and Third Readings;
- (e) Second Readings;
- (f) Debate on Second Readings.

When a Private Member's Public Bill or Private Bill is called for debate and is not disposed of within that

hour, it shall be placed on the bottom of the list of Bills of that type on the Order Paper.

House Leaders Authorized to announce Private Members' Bills for debate

23(4.2) House Leaders of Recognized Parties have the authority to announce Private Members' Bills sponsored by Members of their own Caucuses for debate in the first Hour of Private Members' Business. The House Leaders are further authorized to call more than one Private Members' Bill for debate during that hour, and may allocate blocks of time for consideration of each Bill within the first Hour of Private Members' Business.

(a) On Tuesday mornings the Government House Leader or designate shall announce Private Members' Bills for debate.

(b) On Thursday mornings the Official Opposition House Leader or designate, or the House Leaders or designates of other Recognized Opposition Parties, shall announce Private Members' Bills for debate.

(c) If there is more than one Recognized Opposition Party:

- i. The House Leaders or designates of all Recognized Opposition Parties must submit to the Speaker a written agreement on dividing time on Thursday mornings.
- ii. In the event of an impasse the Speaker shall make a determination as to this division of time.

THAT Sub-rule 23(7) be repealed.

THAT Rule 24 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Selected Bills

24(1) Each Recognized Party may select up to three Private Members' Bills per session to proceed to a Second Reading debate and vote.

Bills to proceed to a Second Reading vote

24(2) Each Independent Member may select one Private Members' Bill per session to proceed to a Second Reading debate and vote, and despite Rule 69(1), an Independent Member will not require a seconder to move each Reading motion for their selected Private Members' Bill.

Written notice

24(3) Written notice of each selected Bill, indicating the sitting day and time when the debate and vote will occur, must be provided to the Speaker by the Government House Leader (or designate) and the

Independent Member no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled end of the Fall Sittings.

Scheduling Independent Members' Selected Bills

24(4) *As part of the written notice required in 24(3), an Independent Member and the Government House Leader or designate must agree on a date and time for the debate and vote on the selected Bill, and notify the Speaker in writing of the details.*

- (a) *In the event of an impasse, the Speaker shall make a determination as to the scheduling of these debates.*
- (b) *The Government House Leader or designate will announce Independent Members' Private Members' Bills for debate on Tuesdays.*

THAT Sub-rule 34(7) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Disposal of questions

34(7) *On the sixth of the six days, at 30 minutes before the usual adjournment hour, unless debate has previously been concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the main motion, and any amendments thereto. The House shall not adjourn until all the required actions have taken place.*

THAT Sub-rule 34(10) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Termination of debate

34(10) *On the eighth sitting day after the main motion has been moved, at 30 minutes before the usual adjournment hour, unless debate has previously been concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the main motion, and any amendments thereto. The Speaker shall not hear Points of Order or Matters of Privilege until all questions relating to this debate have been disposed of. The House shall not adjourn until all the required actions have taken place.*

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 36(2):

Rulings subject to challenge

36(3) *The Speaker shall determine if a prima facie case of privilege has been established and provide the House with a rationale for this decision. Rulings of the Chair dealing with Matters of Privilege may be challenged by:*

- (a) *a House Leader from a Recognized Party; or*

(b) any Member with the support of three other Members.

THAT Sub-rule 47(3) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Disposal of questions

47(3) *On the sixth of the six days, at 30 minutes before the usual adjournment hour, unless debate has previously been concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the main motion, and any amendments thereto. The House shall not adjourn until all the required actions have taken place.*

THAT Sub-rule 47(6) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Termination of debate

47(6) *On the eighth sitting day after the main motion has been moved, at 30 minutes before the usual adjournment hour, unless debate has previously been concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the main motion, and any amendments thereto. The Speaker shall not hear Points of Order or Matters of Privilege until all questions relating to this debate have been disposed of. The House shall not adjourn until all the required actions have taken place.*

THAT Sub-rule 83(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Standing Committees

83(1) *At the beginning of the first session of each Legislature, or anytime the composition of the House membership changes, the House Leaders or designates of all Recognized Parties must meet to consider the representation of Members – based on the number of seats each Recognized Party holds in the House – to serve on the following Standing Committees of the House:*

*Agriculture and Food
Crown Corporations
Human Resources
Intergovernmental Affairs
Justice
Legislative Affairs
Private Bills
Public Accounts
Rules of the House
Social and Economic Development
Statutory Regulations and Orders*

- (a) *If the House Leaders or designates determine that a change in Standing Committee membership composition is required, they must report the new composition in writing to the Speaker.*
- (b) *In the event of an impasse, the Speaker shall determine Standing Committee membership composition and report that in writing to all Members.*
- (c) *The new Standing Committee membership composition is effective upon receipt by the Speaker of a letter from the House Leaders, or in the case of sub rule 83(1)(b), once the Speaker reports to all Members.*
- (d) *At the next sitting of the House the Speaker must table the letter documenting the new Standing Committee membership composition.*

Agreements

Your Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on October 3, 2018:

- *THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba come into force on November 20, 2018.*
- *THAT the Clerk may re-number the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and make other minor corrections that in no way alter the intended meaning of these amendments.*
- *THAT the Clerk prepare revised rule books incorporating all amendments, additions and deletions.*
- *THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba are permanent.*
- *THAT the document entitled: "Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Rule Change Proposals—October 2018", be included at the end of the Hansard transcript of this meeting.*

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Johnston), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I am pleased to table the

following report: The Path to Reconciliation Act: Annual Progress Report for 2018.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable minister for Indigenous and Northern Relations—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Honouring and Awareness Day

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I would like all members to join me in recognizing October 4th as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Honouring and Awareness Day. Manitoba is the first region in Canada to officially recognize this day.

Indigenous women and girls in Manitoba and Canada are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence. Although indigenous women make up 4 per cent of Canada's female population, 16 per cent of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012 were indigenous.

Statistics Canada reports that from 2001 to 2014, homicide rates for indigenous women were six times higher than homicides involving non-indigenous women. According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, in 2010 Manitoba had the third highest number of cases of missing and murdered indigenous women in all of Canada. These statistics are staggering.

Today, I would like to acknowledge and honour the women, girls and the future generations have been stolen by this violence. I would also like to acknowledge and honour the indigenous women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence. And, finally, I want to acknowledge and honour the families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. What you have gone through is truly devastating.

It's important that we remember the legacies of all these women. I urge all Manitobans to take the time to do this today, to honour these women and their families by reading their stories and by saying their names out loud. I also encourage Manitobans to attend a vigil hosted in your community. If there isn't one, perhaps next year you could help organize it.

Our government is proud to support various community and family-led vigils and events. We know that the process of healing must be community driven, and we know that we have a role to play in addressing this injustice.

Finally, I want to say thank you to the families for your hard work advocating on behalf of your loved ones. Your courage and your persistence resulted in the launch of the national inquiry in 2016.

This week, the commissioners are in Winnipeg to discuss family and child welfare within the community. I hope that the recommendations that result from these discussions will be of value to family members, survivors and all the communities involved.

Once again, I commend survivors and their family members for your bravery and your tenacity. Thank you for your hard work and unwavering commitment. Although we may never see their face, hear their voice or touch their hand, their memory is our keepsake and their spirit will live on forever.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask for a brief moment of silence, to remember those who have been taken from us far too soon. Thank you.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Today, across Canada, and as the only province with a legislatively recognized day, we honour missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, alongside their loving families.

This morning the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), the first-ever elected MMIWG family member across Canada, and myself, hosted over 300 MMIWG families and community members with ceremony—only one of many events organized by MMIWG and supporters today.

I acknowledge all the MMIWG families and supporters who worked as a collective, organizing these events. The member for Point Douglas and myself are so proud to be a part of such a powerful collective of indigenous women and express our deep love to each and every one of them.

Today, Madam Speaker, I reflect on what is often noted as the official number of MMIWG: 1,181.

To be clear, while the RCMP's national dataset remains the most comprehensive to date, it is by no means accurate. The RCMP's data only captures the years between 1980 and 2012.

We know that some of the most earliest MMIWG on police record are found along BC's Highway of Tears beginning in the early 1950s. And we also know that almost every other month indigenous women or girls go missing or are murdered across Canada.

* (13:40)

So what is the actual number, Madam Speaker? Nobody knows for sure. Perhaps as much as 2,000, but with certainty I can affirm that it is way more than 1,200.

We also know Manitoba has some of the highest numbers of MMIWG across the country and that, unfortunately, continues to grow. And to tragically illustrate this point, only a couple of days ago the body of Mary Yellowback from Manto Sipi Cree Nation and a beloved mother of six children, Madam Speaker, was found in a recycling bin after coming to the city to access health care.

It is heartbreaking to watch families year after year after year struggle with so much pain and trauma.

To that end, I want to say miigwech to members who participated in today's ceremony, and point out that for a second year in a row neither the Premier (Mr. Pallister) nor his ministers responsible even bothered to attend any of our MMIWG events here in the Leg.

Finally, we offer our profound love and support to all MMIWG across the country and know that we continue to stand with them in solidarity.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I rise today to speak to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Honouring and Awareness Day, a day—a recognized day brought forward by my sister, the member for St. Johns.

Kitchi megwetch de-duk-ni min-nayn-dan ka-ki-do-di-min. *Translation unavailable.*

I want to thank all of those who came to the memorial event today in the Rotunda as well as those who organized the event.

I would also like to thank the minister for her event in her office. I got to speak to Anita Campbell of the MMF here, and I am really grateful for that. She stated that they are going to—into schools in their region to start talking to our kids, start talking to our girls, creating awareness that this danger exists. It is

a small step, but will reap many benefits. Talking openly about this crisis is one small solution, but it will reap many benefits.

I live in fear. It doesn't matter that I have achieved the standards of a success as defined by the Western worldview. I am cautious about where I park, where I walk, how I talk. I have to be extra guarded every single time I am out and about. I teach my children to do the same, especially my sons, as well.

What horrifies me is that my 18-year-old used the public transit system here recently; someone literally kept up with her and tried smelling her hair. She quickly dodged him and moved away and got into a safer spot. But what if this was one of my broken little sisters? They don't know love. They continuously look for it and monsters take advantage of that.

Today across Canada families and communities are coming together to remember those they have lost and to raise awareness to the disproportionate amount of violence indigenous women face. Racism, discrimination and colonialism underpin the violence indigenous women of all identities experience.

We need continue the conversation and not allow them to silence us when we talk about violence towards indigenous women. We need to teach our children better ways and to stop this trauma from carrying forward.

Manito Sipi is in my riding and they're facing two violent incidences against our women. One is highly publicized and I ask for a moment of silence that—for Mary. The other one is—I'm going to respect them and keep my silence until they are ready to speak.

Megwetch, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, seeking leave?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Yes, Madam Speaker, I wonder if I could have consent to respond to the ministerial statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Fletcher: I remember when the member from St. John's brought forward this bill to committee and the passion, the emotion and the strong connection that the member of St. John's and other presenters had, and I simply want to acknowledge that violence

in all its forms is bad. It's very important that the disproportionate amount of violence that seems to be—or is—incurred by people of Aboriginal descent or Aboriginal in present is something that we need to deal with.

And I simply want—everything that needs to be said has been said, but I'd like to say a special acknowledgement to the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for bringing this bill forward, increasing awareness and educating all of us. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Wayne Deschouwer

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I rise to say farewell to a good friend, a teammate, an adversary on the sports field and coach and family man, Wayne Deschouwer, who passed this week tragically at the age of 63.

His involvement in sports spans nearly five decades as a player, as a coach, as a manager, as an administrator. He was a more-than-adequate senior hockey player and ball player. He moved, at the age of 21, to the town of Gladstone, where he was instrumental in the establishment of a senior team, senior hockey team. And as player manager, he actively participated with that team for almost 20 years.

In addition to his role with the senior club, he was also the president of the local arena, coached the local midget AA club to a provincial championship. And since moving to Winnipeg, he's been associated with the Charleswood Hawks of the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League as, first, their general manager and, presently, he was serving as president. And he assembled a great group of volunteers. As you know, Madam Speaker, he focused himself on the overall development of the team, and they experienced an unprecedented level of success in the arena.

He's a humble guy, a reserved individual, but his meticulous organizational skills, his commitment to structure, provided a solid foundation for every organization he was part of. The Charleswood Hawks, for example, have captured the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League crown for the past four years and nine years of the last 11 years. Wayne's

leadership has contributed to that team, and he's considered by many to be one of the premier hockey executives in the province.

In addition to that, he was also the president of the Tiger Hills senior hockey league and saw it grow over the last 16 years from five teams to now 16. He was also in fastball and baseball. He served as the umpire-in-chief for Softball Manitoba, also the president of the Smitty's softball association. He was inducted in the Manitoba Softball Hall of Fame several times as part of various teams and served as—was awarded the Hockey Manitoba Volunteer of the Year Award in 2011 and '12.

He's an accomplished man, Madam Speaker. We're going to all miss him very dearly. He always gave more than he took.

Goodbye, old friend.

Habitat for Humanity Morden-Winkler Homes

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I had the distinct honour of taking part in a special Habitat for Humanity sod-turning ceremony on May the 18th in the city of Winkler.

Habitat first expressed interest in starting a new chapter back in October 2017. Led by Christina and Duane Falk, a series of meetings ensued with community groups, city officials and a business—and the business community, leading to both Morden and Winkler each announcing a home for local families.

* (13:50)

As we know, Habitat matches homes with qualifying families who've purchased their home at market value, no down payment and monthly payments based on their income. As they pay back their mortgage, the funds return to the chapter to be reinvested for new homes for new families.

We all know the pride, security and stability that comes from having a home that is really yours. This has been the legacy of habitat for humanities.

Members may not be aware that when Habitat first came to Canada in 1985, it was Winkler where the first Habitat home was built. And since those beginnings, this global non-profit group has grown to 56 chapters nationally, over 2,200 homes built in Canada.

It is truly satisfying to see this initiative re-established in the Morden-Winkler constituency

after many years. It's remarkable to see how fast this has all come together.

The project would not be possible without community partners, like Triple E who generously stepped to plate by donating properties to Habitat.

Madam Speaker, today we're joined in the gallery by two Habitat for Humanity staffers, Michelle Pereira and Vernelle Mirosh from the Habitat for Humanity's Winnipeg office. Welcome to the Legislature. Thank you for your wonderful work and on behalf of all members in the House, thank you for all the ways in which you're making a difference.

Manitoba's Methamphetamine Crisis

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): What does meth look like? It looks like all of us. Our province's meth crisis is permeating every corner of our society; 2018 hasn't even come to an end, and Winnipeg's fire paramedic services have already documented more crystal meth-related cases than in 2017. Last year, one third of homicides were meth-related, while crime rates have spiked by 60 per cent. Parks where children play are now riddled with needles. Meth-related hospital visits have soared by 1,200 per cent, and this government seems to be doing nothing.

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

While people are dying in our communities, and the amount of people addicted to meth continues to rise, this government is doing nothing. Most of all, hope is needed. Surviving with—without meth is impossible for the person struggling. They will often commit suicide or go back to using. Long-term supports and investments in early intervention and prevention are needed, and needed now.

Activists and advocates have been calling for these lines of action for a long time but this Pallister government has refused to respond with appropriate urgency. I implore them to stop neglecting the

problem, and give people hope that their suffering will end.

Corporal Graeme Kingdon

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): On the morning of August 30th, Canadians woke to the horrifying news that an RCMP officer had been wounded when—while responding to a call in western Manitoba.

For residents in the Onanole area, the drama started the evening before and continued through the night.

Corporal Graeme Kingdon and his partner from the Yellowhead RCMP detachment responded to a 911 call of a break and enter in progress at a rural residence near the community, just south of Riding Mountain National Park around 9:30 p.m.

As the two officers exited their vehicle they were fired upon, with Corporal Kingdon being hit by the gunfire. The suspects fled the scene and his partner did not return fire, instead choosing to get immediate help for his injured partner. Corporal Kingdon was taken to the Minnedosa hospital and then transferred to the Health Sciences Centre by STARS air ambulance.

After an extensive manhunt, three suspects were detained early the next morning in the Onanole area, and a fourth was arrested in Neepawa later in the day.

I am pleased to report to the House that Corporal Kingdon, a graduate of the class of 1993 at the Minnedosa Collegiate, is recovering with the support of his wife Nakella, family members and the entire community. Corporal Kingdon comes from a family that serves. His sister Jill is also an RCMP member, while his father Ron is retired from the force.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of all members of the Manitoba Legislature, I want to wish Corporal Kingdon all the best during his recovery, and thank him and all members of police forces across Canada for putting their lives on the line every day in the name of public safety.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Further members' statements?

Thank You to St. Boniface Community

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Merci Saint-Boniface, je t'aime.

Translation

Thank you, St. Boniface, I love you.

English

To the people of St. Boniface who honoured us with your support, I owe you everything. Saint-Boniface, je vous dois tout.

Translation

St. Boniface, I owe you everything.

English

St. Boniface is an extraordinary community with deep roots, deep history and an incredible future. It is humbling beyond words to be allowed to represent you. My swearing-in took place on a special day, July 27th. Though my father was not alive to see it, it was my parents' wedding anniversary and the 82nd anniversary of the date my grandfather, J.S. "Bud" Lamont was elected to this Chamber as Liberal MLA for Iberville in 1936.

Bud was elected in the middle of the Depression, a time of turmoil. But times of turmoil and trouble are always and also times of hope. He was also elected at a time when people were questioning democracy. In his maiden speech of this Chamber, where he insulted not just the government of which he was a part, but every other political party, he said that democracy has the strength to solve its own problems.

I am concerned today that people are losing faith—faith in institutions, including government and media, and that our democracies are under threat because economic growth has been so uneven. And millions of Canadians and hundreds of thousands of Manitobans haven't seen a real raise in decades. What is required is reinvestment and renewal and a commitment to progressive government and an economy for all and not just a few.

Ten years ago, there was a global financial crisis, and we're still living in its shadow. We need to invest and work our way out of debt. A year ago, I was running for leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party. We set out with an ambitious goal to change politics in Manitoba so that we can change government in 2020. What is happening in politics right now around the globe, in many ways, is not normal, and we don't have to settle for it. And change for the better is possible.

To the people of St. Boniface, you've shown that change is possible. L'année dernière, on a fixé un objectif ambitieux de changer la politique et de

changer le gouvernement au Manitoba en 2020. Saint-Boniface, vous avez fait preuve que le changement est possible.

Translation

Last year, we set an ambitious goal: to change politics and to change government in Manitoba in 2020. St. Boniface, you have shown that change is possible.

English

I will do everything I can to defend and promote you in Manitoba—in the Manitoba Legislature to constructively challenge the agenda of the Pallister government and to prove there is an alternative to the new normal we've all—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

ORAL QUESTIONS

**Manitoba's Climate Plan
Removal of Carbon Pricing**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So for an entire election campaign, for three straight throne speeches the Premier tried to convince Manitobans that he cared about the environment. Now we see his true colours. Instead of standing up for the environment, he's standing next to Doug Ford.

This is what happens, Madam Speaker, when you have a Premier who believes that governing is a one-man show. When you-know-who has a temper tantrum, all of a sudden the entire government has to do a one-eighty. Everything the backbenchers have been dutifully trying to sell to their constituents for the past two years, it's now out the window. What's left? Uncertainty—uncertainty for the average family who has to drive to school, to work, to the hockey rink, uncertainty for business in our province, but perhaps most importantly in the long run, uncertainty for future generations who will have to pay the price because the Premier would not stand up for the environment.

Why is the Premier disrespecting the environment and taking a page out of Doug Ford's playbook?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member will have to decide whether he's voting for Manitobans, Madam Speaker, or voting for Ottawa on a carbon tax. Next Thursday he'll make that decision. If he votes for a carbon tax, he's voting

against the best interest of Manitobans; he's voting against the challenges that people in the North have to face every day; he's going to be voting against his own members.

If he votes with us, Madam Speaker, he's voting for Manitobans and a move to certainty and away from uncertainty. The only thing certain about the 17 years of NDP rule was that they had no carbon strategy whatsoever, no green plan, never acted on—the Auditor General said so. The only other certainty was that they'd raise taxes at every opportunity, and the member is simply restating that strategy and doubling down on dumb. That's it.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

* (14:00)

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, the Premier's flip-flop is remarkable; reminds me of a pickerel on a dock, as they say, flip, flop, flip. And now we see his true colours. And just May 30th, in this very House, the Premier, and I quote: We're talking about people all across the spectrum, not just the right-wing columnists, but many, many others who care deeply about the environment, about our future, about our economy as well, and wanted a balanced plan, and we decided to embark on a plan based on that listening. End quote.

Turns out the Premier would eventually fold like a chair in a church basement, Madam Speaker. Not sure if he's scared of Justin Trudeau, not sure if he's scared of the right-wing columnists, but it is clear that the Premier was unwilling to stand up for the environment. He decided to reject what he himself says regular families support and, instead, he started to wave the flag waved by Doug Ford in Ontario. The Premier's turned himself into a pretzel on this issue.

I would just like to know: Is the Premier really, really, really sure this time, or is he going to come back to this House in six months with a new plan once Jason Kenney—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I guess there's nothing but consistency from the member in respect of throwing NDPers under the bus. He just threw

Rachel Notley under the bus, as he did with Greg Selinger, as he did with the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) the other day.

So he's pretty sure that he's not associated with the old NDP, so it's probably irrelevant to him to read the Auditor General's report because it wasn't him, Madam Speaker, who didn't have a green plan for 17 years; it was those other guys. He's the new guy now, and now he's got an idea, but not one he's articulated clearly.

Is he for the carbon tax, at what level, and who's going to pay for it? Or is he against it, and is he willing to stand with us on behalf of the people of Manitoba and get some certainty here and not give in to the threat from the Trudeau government that they're going to double it and give Manitobans nothing back?

That's his choice. He needs to make it, and he needs to make it by next Thursday.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier has completely abdicated his responsibility to protect the environment. There's a scientific consensus that global warming is real and that it's man-made. It's a threat that all of our kids face. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: There's an economic consensus, at least—that even includes Conservatives, at least those not running for re-election, that carbon pricing is an important tool for fighting global warming. But instead of that, and going along with the consensus, the Premier has pulled a remarkable flip-flop. He wants to make pollution free instead of making polluters pay.

Madam Speaker, this Premier is giving a subsidy to every large polluter in the province. This is a subsidy that our kids and our grandkids will have to pay for generations to come.

All year we've been asking for the Premier to come back with a better plan—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —but perhaps we should've been more specific.

Can the Premier come back to this House with a real carbon pricing plan that will serve generations to come in this province by protecting the environment?

Mr. Pallister: Well, as government for 17 years there was one consistency with the NDP: they loved putting their hands in the pockets of Manitobans. Now they're out of power so they want Ottawa to put their hands in the pockets of Manitobans. That's their choice; it's not ours. It's not ours, Madam Speaker. And the NDP needs to make that choice. They have to decide if they want a carbon tax, then vote for it; if they don't, then vote against it.

We're going to vote against it because, Madam Speaker, we want to keep Ottawa's hands out of the pockets of the Manitoba people, struggling families, half of whom have less than \$100 of discretionary income at the end of the month, don't need the NDP or the Liberals in Ottawa to pile on them and throw another bill on their table.

The difference between us and them is we respect the decision-makers, and the decision-makers should be the people who work hard to make the money and save the money, not the NDP, who just want credit for taking money from somebody else who worked hard for it.

Manitoba's Climate Plan Removal of Carbon Pricing

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, yesterday was a very sad day—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yesterday was a very sad day, Madam Speaker, for our province and for our planet. After promising serious climate action for two years to a wide variety of stakeholders, the truth about this government's intentions finally came out.

Now, I had the honour of being on a panel last night with a number of those stakeholders. I won't speak for them. They include the Chamber of Commerce and the Trucking Association and many others. Suffice to say no one had anything good to say about the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) decision yesterday.

The MLA—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you, again, Madam Speaker. I will conclude with this question.

The MLA for Riel broke her word again by bailing on that same panel discussion. After lying for

two years and breaking her word, could she please have the decency to apologize to all of the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —stakeholders involved?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The member in his comments just used some words that are not allowed in this House, and I would ask the member for Wolseley to please withdraw those words, to withdraw that language.

Mr. Altemeyer: Withdrawn.

Madam Speaker: Thank the member for that.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'm not surprised nor am I disappointed in this member's unparliamentary language. This is in keeping with what he does when he has an opportunity to stand up.

Last night he also said some very interesting things on that panel, and I'd like to table a report—CBC—that he had said—he said carbon tax is not going to get us the reductions that we need but it will generate the revenue.

There, in a nutshell, is the NDP entire strategy on climate change. They don't care how high that carbon tax is; they just want to generate revenue so that they could have their hands on Manitobans' money. Manitobans know how that strategy worked out for them—in the last time. They're not going to be fooled again, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, if the honourable member for Riel had bothered to show up to the panel she could have said her piece then.

Madam Speaker, what this government clearly does not understand—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —is the sheer urgency of climate change. No less than the UN Secretary-General has issued a statement to the world that serious action on climate reductions has to happen within the next two years, and yet, yesterday, this government put a huge dagger in the heart of anyone who was hoping to see serious action: \$67 million was available to our

province to pay for real action, real action that's been promised by this government for that time, and they have not delivered a single time.

Why has this government—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: For 17 years that member had the opportunity to impress upon his government to take meaningful action on climate change, and not only do all of Manitobans know that he failed in that duty, the Auditor General also points out that they failed in that duty.

The only thing that's been consistent from this NDP opposition is that they want to tax Manitobans. They'll take a \$25 price on carbon. Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) said he'd take a \$50 price on carbon. The member for Wolseley said he'd take a \$350 US price on carbon. They just want an escalating price on carbon, and that is the only plan they have for Manitobans is to tax them more.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, I continue with my—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —initial theme, Madam Speaker: it is a very sad day in this province when the provincial government is going back on its word and completely abdicating its responsibility to address climate change.

It doesn't even necessarily mean that this government couldn't have done the obvious. There is a power sale between Manitoba and Saskatchewan just waiting to happen, and before yesterday our province had the moral high ground to legitimately ask the federal government to bring some of the money from Doug Ford's Ontario to here to help make that power sale happen, and now we have no legal grounds or moral grounds to stand on.

How could the MLA for Fort Whyte abandon his commitment to current and future generations by bailing and failing on climate change?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, speaking on bailing on climate change, that was their 17-year strategy. They failed to clean up contaminated sites in this province. They failed to clean up orphaned mines in

this province. They failed to do any meaningful—have any meaningful mitigation.

* (14:10)

And today, what is he saying? For—the member for Wolseley is saying that Ottawa has to muster up the courage to carry through and impose their carbon tax on every single province, including Manitoba, and that is his policy.

So he wants to talk about a sad day in Manitoba; it is a very sad day in Manitoba when a member of the opposition says that Ottawa needs to impose a higher tax on Manitobans, that's a sad day.

Highway and Roads Budget Delays and Cost Overruns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'll just point out quickly that in three answers the environment minister didn't say anything about protecting the environment.

The Premier is cutting jobs, he's—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —already cut—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kinew: Must have touched a nerve there, eh, Madam Speaker?

Now, the Premier—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Thanks.

The Premier is cutting jobs. He's already cut over 1,100 front-line workers since 2016. An internal memo, which I'll table, dated September 20th shows the impact of the Premier's cuts. It reads: Our region has been experiencing continued workload demands along with ever diminishing staff allocations and resources. Diminished resources have resulted in missed steps and processes during the design and construction phases of our capital program delivery causing construction delays and cost overruns. End quote. Cost overages, I would correct myself there.

This is a consequence of the Premier's cuts: staff worked to the limits, missed steps, projects delayed, projects over the budget, all because of the Premier's cuts.

Will the Premier take responsibility, beginning by tabling—

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

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, first of all, Madam Speaker, here's what the Auditor General said about the NDP's record on green, which I know the member isn't responsible for because, of course, he's not responsible for anything that happened before in his life or the life of the NDP government.

But that being said, Madam Speaker, the Auditor General said specifically that the NDP knew that their environment—they were aware that the plan that they had put before Manitobans in 2008 would not work by the fall of 2009. This is the greenhouse emissions plan that they—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —anchored their record on for green. They were aware by the fall of 2009, Madam Speaker.

So did they react? Did they care about the environment? Did they take steps? No, no and no. They waited until 2015, Madam Speaker—six years—to update their plan, and they put it on the back of a napkin. And it would have required every diesel- and gas-operated vehicle in the province to get off the roads to work. That's how little the NDP ever cared about the green plan for our province.

We've got a green plan and we're working on it, and it doesn't involve a carbon tax. If they want one, vote for it—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Kinew: So the question was about the cuts to highways and how short-sighted they are, Madam Speaker.

Not only is the Premier putting people out of work in our province, but it's very short-sighted in that his cuts are causing projects to get more expensive. It's causing the quality to go down.

The internal memo that I just tabled and that I would point the Premier toward says that. They've—missed steps. Projects have been delayed and projects ended up costing more and more money because of the cuts that this Premier is making to infrastructure in our province. We know that he cut \$150 million. The impact is that there's been 2,000 fewer jobs in our province as a result. The human face of it was just outside of the

Leg. yesterday when there was some 100 electricians, out of work, on the front lawn demanding to have more job opportunities for Manitobans in our province.

Will the Premier respond to the question at hand and answer a question about capital budgets? Will he table a list of which road project have missed steps, have been delayed and have gone over—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the member's ideological bent's obvious. It's been obvious to Manitobans for years that the NDP wants everyone, every worker to pay a union due in order to participate in building something for the people of Manitoba. That's wrong, has to change. It's illegal in all of Europe, most of the United States now and it's no longer going to be the practice here either.

What's fair about having a neighbour who's unionized get subsidized by a neighbour who isn't? Nothing fair about that. People working on construction jobs deserve to be paid fairly and fully, and they will be, Madam Speaker. But they're not going to be forced to pay union dues. They're not going to be forced—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: And taxpayers are not going to be forced to pay 20, 30 and 40 per cent more for construction projects because of NDP ideology. Not in this province, not anymore.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier's getting ahead of himself with that really long sentence construction there. What he ought to end with is the simple statement at the beginning of that phrase he used—Manitobans have a right to work. Everybody in this province who wants a job should be able to get one, and that's becoming less and less likely because of the cuts that this Premier is making.

Not only are there 2,000 less jobs in this province because of the \$150-million cut to the infrastructure budget that this Premier has made, we also see from the internal government document that I tabled today that, as a result, the projects are being—lower and lower quality delivered on them, that they're being delayed and that costs are going overboard. The result is that these cuts ought to be properly seen as short-sighted.

So I'd ask the Premier, again, to stop dodging and answer the question directly: Which road projects have missed steps, which ones have been delayed and which ones have seen cost overruns because of the cuts that he is making to infrastructure and jobs in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, let's talk about projects delayed, Madam Speaker.

We're currently in the process of building seven schools in just the first two years of government. The NDP built fewer than one a year in the whole time. So I guess delays in constructing schools would be a legacy of the NDP.

How about Freedom Road? Never got around to it, Madam Speaker. We're going to get it completed. How about flood protection for all the people living in the Lake Manitoba basin? Never got around to it over there. We're doing what they failed to do. They failed continuously to get these jobs done. We're getting them done.

We have a commitment to make sure that we invest strategically, not for political purposes as the NDP used to do, for logical reasons that pay back the people of Manitoba by getting the infrastructure projects they deserve: new schools, new drainage programs and flood protection, new ways to get access. That's how we build a stronger province, Madam Speaker, not by ignoring the problem or politicizing it, as the member is doing now.

Methamphetamine Crisis Mental Health and Addiction Services

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Back in 2016 our NDP caucus sounded the alarm about a looming drug crisis here in Manitoba. Parents were telling us, Madam Speaker, public safety officers were telling us, but now our worst fears have been realized: there's a 1,200 per cent increase in meth-related hospital visits and meth-related crime is way up.

Health-care workers aren't equipped to deal with this crisis, and the association of 'registrated'—registered nurses wrote to the minister on Tuesday advising, and I quote: They cannot wait any longer; they need action now.

Why does the Premier not care about this issue?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The member for St. Johns is wrong. The government cares very deeply about this issue. It's why we have been working co-operatively. I know that even just this

morning, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) and I were talking about conversations he just had with police chiefs just today. Yesterday, this has just occupied an awful lot of our time—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen:—so the government is fully aware. We all know that this is a challenge that every single jurisdiction in Canada is facing. We're working well with police, with health officials, with other jurisdictions to get a handle on the situation.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Clearly, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or his minister isn't taking this seriously if he's only spoken to the chief of police today.

Manitoba received the VIRGO report on mental health and addiction in March, but didn't release it until May, Madam Speaker, and for good reason. The Pallister government is making cuts to addiction services, cutting its funding to the only long-term treatment centre for teens with addictions, forcing youth addiction centres to close their doors.

Manitoba Health annual report shows that \$1.5 million was cut from mental health and addictions, primarily because the government cut its funding for youth treatment.

Why doesn't this Premier care about this meth crisis?

Mr. Friesen: The member, again, is wrong.

We are making significant investments in mental health and addictions, including six new mental health beds at Health Sciences Centre. We have expanded capacity for women's treatment with 12 additional beds.

* (14:20)

I do note in the VIRGO report that she references, that the author of that report made clear that when it came to the NDP, for years and years in Manitoba these challenges were left unaddressed, and at one point it even says 10 years behind everyone else.

We are addressing the challenges that that government left unaddressed.

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

Addiction Services Safe Consumption Site Request

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The former minister of Health didn't want to look at the evidence nor did he want to listen to the experts. In fact, he interfered with the VIRGO report and forced them to take out the recommendation calling for a safe consumption site.

Rick Lees, the director of Main Street Project, was clear when he stated, and I quote: I don't believe that safe consumption should be politicized. I think it's a health issue.

So why is the Premier not listening to experts or listening to families or front-line workers?

Will he open a safe consumption site in Winnipeg today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, the member has asked three questions, and yet not one time does she even reference the fact that this government has taken action where they did not in opening the brand new Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics—opening three, two more to come directly.

I note for her that Dr. Erin Knight at Health Sciences Centre had this to say about that: that these RAAM clinics quickly connect patients with addictions for assessment, connection to services and treatment from harm reduction to medication-assisted treatment to abstinence—everything based on the patient's goals—helping the system, taking the pressure off emergency departments.

This is real action; our government is taking it.

Manitoba's Climate Plan Removal of Carbon Pricing

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, the government delivered an about-face yesterday on the Pallister carbon tax. Two and a half years into their mandate—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

I would indicate to the member that the only time the name of the Premier can be used is as Pallister government. And as a new member, I would just ask him to just be careful with putting the name of the Premier attached to anything other than that; and in this case, that would not be acceptable language.

Mr. Lamont: Two and a half years into their mandate, Madam Speaker: on poverty reduction the government has no plan; on jobs and economic growth, no plan; on housing, no plan; on education, no plan; on health, a patchwork of several plans mostly developed under the NDP; on Hydro, no plan; on mental health and addictions, a plan that ignored suicide and methamphetamines, both of which are at crisis levels in this province.

The Climate and Green Plan may have been flawed. It may have been incoherent. It may have had no measureable goals and no real chance of success. But it was a plan, Madam Speaker; a plan that cost Manitobans \$60,000 in return flights to Ottawa for its author alone.

Does the Premier have any idea how much time and public money have been wasted promoting this charade?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'd say the biggest charade of all is Ottawa pretending that they know more about how to help build an environmental strategy for the provinces than the provinces themselves do.

I'd say the second biggest charade is that Ottawa thinks that its going to help the economy of this country blossom by taking billions of dollars out of the hands of working families, seniors living on fixed income, struggling people, and taking it to Ottawa and then getting credit for sending it back somehow. I don't see this as helping our economy. I don't see this as helping our environment, either.

So, Madam Speaker, when the man speaks about charades he's speaking about what's going on in Ottawa right now.

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

Carbon Pricing Revenue Low-Income Tax Relief

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier says that by abandoning the Pallister government carbon tax he will not be able to pay for his planned income tax cuts.

I will note that in the first two years of a federal carbon tax Manitobans will actually be paying 20 to 60 per cent less than they would have pay than they would have under the plan the government has

abandoned. Now, it's also the—worse pointing out, Madam Speaker, that the promised income tax cuts were regressive, trickle-down cuts that only save people living in poverty a few dollars while handing hundreds of dollars to people at the top of the income scale.

The government side were effectively voting—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —themselves a tax cut.

Under the NDP, as we know, low- and middle-income Manitobans paid the highest taxes in Canada because the tax cuts they delivered, too, were at the top.

The Province could still proceed with a better tax relief for people at the bottom of the income scale without massive handouts to people who don't need it if they used earned-income tax credits.

My question to the Premier is: If the federal carbon tax will bring in more revenue than the Pallister government carbon tax, why not use it for bigger tax cuts or relief?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): That was the ultimate Liberal question right there, Madam Speaker. Why not raise taxes and lower them, he said. Well, frankly, we're not for raising them on this side of the House; we're for lowering taxes.

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

Order.

Manitoba's Climate Plan Removal of Carbon Pricing

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, in July, Premier Doug Ford of Ontario tweeted that—for—the Premier would be abandoning the carbon tax, a tweet that was later deleted. Yesterday, minutes after the government issued a press release about the carbon tax, a Conservative MP asked a question in the House of Commons about it.

It seems that the House of Commons in Ottawa and, indeed, the Premier of Ontario knew about this plan before Manitobans did. It seems that, far from standing alone, on principle, and defending his plan for Manitoba, the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont:—Premier has caved in to peer pressure from Conservatives in Ontario and Saskatchewan. Perhaps the reason this government faces this—challenges getting anything done is because the First Minister has to ask permission from Conservative leader Andrew Scheer first.

Did the Premier of Ontario and the federal Conservative Party know about this plan before Manitobans did, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): You know, Madam Speaker, actually, the Prime Minister and I have had several good discussions about this issue, including, but not limited to, just two weeks ago. And it was very, very clear, as a result of that series of discussions, that he was steadfast in wanting to have a higher carbon tax for Manitobans. He wanted it double and, frankly, he wanted it for nothing.

So what that means, Madam Speaker, is that the member has a choice to make next Thursday as well. He has to decide if he wants to back the Prime Minister and get into the pockets of Manitobans for no good reason, or whether he wants to back us and have lower taxes for Manitobans, and that's going to be his choice next Thursday.

Madam Speaker: Is there a question?

LGBTQT* Students Support for Bill 224

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Just a few years ago it was this current Minister of Education that led the charge in opposition to Bill 18, which helped Manitoba students create gay-straight alliances. Bill 18 offered young people a greater share of basic freedoms like freedom of association and freedom of speech, and most importantly, they were student-led and student-focused.

Now, Bill 224 seeks to strengthen the protections of the rights of those LGBTQT* students.

So will this Minister of Education admit that he was wrong about Bill 18 and stand in support of Bill 224?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, The Public Schools Act has a number of different principles. And certainly, one is that all students should feel safe and should feel accepted in the school environment. Of course we support that. Another principle is that there should be respect for professional teachers to allow them to apply their knowledge to individual

circumstances—and we support that; and also that parents have rights as well when it comes to the education of their children.

All of those are reflected within The Public Schools Act, and we support all of those, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we recognize that all people, including young people in this province, deserve to decide when and to whom they disclose their sexual or gender identity.

The new Minister of Education once said that he was never more proud of his community than when 1,000 people gathered to oppose gay-straight alliances. I sincerely wish that his proudest moment instead was when Steinbach residents gathered together for their first-ever Pride parade, instead. That would have been much better.

Will this Minister of Education open his heart like the people of Steinbach who led that first Pride parade and commit to bill—supporting Bill 224?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, there is no question that Steinbach is a wonderful community and I'm always proud to represent it.

As I've already indicated, Madam Speaker, The Public Schools Act clearly delineates and supports the need to protect all students so that all students can feel safe within the school environment. It already protects the rights of parents, and it already protects the professional teachers to apply their knowledge to situations as they need to. We support all of those principles, and we'll continue to.

* (14:30)

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, many people watched in dismay as—and fear—as Doug Ford scrapped Ontario's progressive sexual education curriculum, setting Ontario's sex ed back by two decades.

Along with the critical issue of consent, the Ontario curriculum taught students about sexual orientation and about bullying. Thousands of students have voiced their outrage at this setback by walking out of classes.

Yesterday this Premier, who opposed bill 18 and once called LGBTTTQ marriages a social experiment, proved that he is, in fact, willing to follow Doug Ford's path.

Will the Premier prove that he will not betray Manitoba's LGBTTTQ community and commit to supporting Bill 224?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, my first three questions as the Education Minister, none of them had to do with the results that students actually get in schools. None of them had to do with the fact that over the 17 years the NDP were in government the results got worth-worse for math, for reading, for science.

That member opposite, all he ever talks about is how much money is spent, Madam Speaker. When my son comes home from school I ask him the question, what did you learn in school today? I don't ask him how much did the government spend on you in school today.

Our focus will be about results. I hope he gets on board with that.

Provincial Finances Deficit Reduction

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Our PC government was elected on a promise to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild our economy.

This coming Thanksgiving weekend Manitobans will have over 1.7 billion reasons to be thankful for that. That's because if the NDP had their way our deficit this year would be \$1.7 billion, and that's without accounting for the cost of all those NDP election promises, not that anybody should be believing those.

So with only two years of our government we have shown more progress in reducing the deficit than 17 years of NDP government.

So my question for the Minister of Finance is: Can he please inform the House about this important work that we're doing to reduce Manitoba's provincial deficit?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker—and it's an honour to talk here in the Legislature about Manitoba's finances. I can tell you that Manitoba is on the path to recovery when it comes to the finances of Manitoba. Our deficit is

over \$145 million less than we anticipated in the last budget. That's over the second year.

The hard work that the former minister of Finance and the rest of our government has done to come—to maintain stability in terms of our finances is important. We're doing what we said we were going to do and we're doing what we were elected to do: clean up the mess from the former NDP government.

St. Boniface Neonatal Unit Nursing Overtime Concerns

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, yesterday the First Minister said he would give straight answers to my questions, and I appreciate that.

This week I received a letter from nurses at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at St. Boniface Hospital. Over 70 nurses signed a letter and, frankly, it was a cry for help. They are pleading for change for this government to do something about the dangerous levels of overtime that nurses are having to endure. Just as recently as last weekend, nurses are being forced to work 16 hours of overtime and even a shift as long as 20 hours.

This government promised to protect front-line workers and the most vulnerable. Intensive care nurses are the front line of the front line, and babies in intensive care the most vulnerable of the most vulnerable. This has been going on for months, Madam Speaker.

Does this Premier seriously believe that of all the places in health care to shake up that newborn intensive care was the place to do it?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I thank the front-line workers in health care in particular for their understanding and their patience during this period of change. It's not easy, Madam Speaker, and I understand that very well.

I also understand that their involvement, their voice, is important to this government and I have had the great chance to be the beneficiary of a lot of input, as have my colleagues from people who work in the front lines of health care and we have listened and we are acting on those concerns.

I can also encourage him to visit the new Grace Hospital ER and to see how bigger, better and faster it can work to benefit the clients of our health-care system, and to see all the intricate design advantages that we've derived in expanding the ER by listening to the front-line workers themselves—not just nurses,

but also the health-care aides and others whose input was vital in making sure that we improve our system, that we shorten wait times and that we make sure that, as my friends who are nurses have told me, they want to work in a system that works better for patients.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, the Premier and his government can talk about wait times. My question was about St. Boniface NICU and the nurses there. There is no such thing as a wait time for a mother in labour.

What is being asked of nurses is not just unfair and unreasonable, it is dangerous. There are limits on how long truckers can drive without sleep so they don't kill someone on the highway. We have a situation where nurses who are looking after babies who are the sickest of the sick are being forced to work dangerous hours—20-hour shifts with three or four hours of sleep. They are being told that when they need to cope, they should get therapy through the employee assistance plan.

The Minister of Health is aware of this issue. The Premier is aware of this issue.

Are they willing to accept responsibility if something terrible happens, as the nurses have warned, or are they willing to act now to listen and engage?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The member should know that we've already acted. We're aware of this. There is a 10 per cent increase in volume at St. Boniface in the NICU unit. We're aware of this. I've immediately instructed the WRHA to work with that hospital. They're working collaboratively both with the staff and the union to address the immediate issues.

However, I'd also say that since the letter that he's referring to was written there have been a number of nurses hired. Indeed, 35 new nurses have been added to St. Boniface, and three or four more already into that particular unit.

We're aware. We're acting. We care.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I first heard about these issues almost a year ago, in October of last

year. So the idea that this is a problem that only came about because there's been a 10 per cent increase over the last year is false. Though—or perhaps the minister has erred.

In responses to nurses from St. Boniface Hospital—the response of nurses has been that they're preparing a briefing note and a business plan to try to address the issue. One of the elements of the BITSA bill the government introduced states that all employees in health care in Manitoba are now employees of shared services.

This government promised to protect the front line. They promised to protect the most vulnerable. And they promised to cut from the top.

In the 1990s, the PC government created RHAs, a massive new layer of bureaucracy at arm's length from accountability in part so they could blame someone else for their cuts and their mistakes.

How can this Premier justify the creation of yet another layer of bureaucracy and even greater central planning while cutting front-line care and closing hospitals and departments across the province?

Mr. Friesen: So the member's assertion is incorrect and, actually, I would want to indicate to him that, while there are some pressures faced at St. Boniface NICU because of volume increases, which we're addressing, he should know that since January of 2016, in the province of Manitoba, nurse overtime is down 29 per cent.

Madam Speaker, our plan is working. In the meantime, there are jobs for nurses, for all nurses who want to work. But I would remind him as well that when it comes to this specific issue, the CEO for St. Boniface clearly says that the shortages that they are experiencing are long-standing and they are addressing them.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bill 16—Suggested Amendments

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans deserve a real plan to tackle climate change so that the natural wonders around us are protected.

(2) The Premier's Bill 16, The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act, will cost Manitoba families \$300 more per year while offering no new programs or incentives to help people transition to low-carbon lifestyles.

The carbon tax is doing little for the environment or Manitobans and instead being used for general government revenue, despite the Premier's promise to return all earnings of the carbon tax to Manitobans.

The Premier's cuts and failure to act is costing Manitobans more for greener options such as public transit and hydro.

(5) The provincial government needs to be more open and transparent with Manitobans so they can better understand the financial repercussions of this bill and weigh in on how the provincial government can help the average Manitoban reduce their emissions.

(6) Revenue generated by the carbon tax should go back to Manitobans in new programs designed to help people adopt greener lifestyles, such as efficient and affordable transit, geothermal retrofitting, affordable hydro rates and home composing, but Bill 16 fails to mention any reinvestments.

* (14:40)

(7) Bill 16 fails to mention waste reduction while the Minister of Sustainable Development even acknowledged that the best way to reduce methane in landfills is not to have it produced.

(8) Many large 'polluters' are exempt with no mandating supports in Bill 16 to reduce their carbon footprint while leaving the average Manitoban to bear the costs.

(9) The Premier's Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act only serves to financially hinder Manitobans while doing little to help the environment.

(10) Manitobans need a provincial government that cares about the environment and prioritizes measures that ensures environmental protections now and for future generations to come.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to amend Bill 16 to include provisions and incentives to recycle revenue from the carbon tax back to Manitobans and include greater scientific evidence,

including programs, policies, and measures to reduce waste in landfills.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

Vimy Arena

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

(6) The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obvious other locations in wealthier neighbourhoods, such as Tuxedo and River Heights, have not been considered for the Manitoba

Housing project even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

(7) The Manitoba Housing project and the operation of a drug treatment centre falls outside the statutory mandate of Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purposes of park land and recreational activities for public use, including, as an important part of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and the Sturgeon Creek ecosystem, under the current designation of PR2, for the 255 Hamilton location at Vimy Arena site, and to maintain the land to be designated for parks and recreation, active neighbourhoods and communities.

Madam Speaker, this has been signed by Ryan Thompson [*phonetic*], Val McHale, Peter Harding [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Seven Oaks General Hospital Emergency Room

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Raj Sharma and many, many other Manitobans.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I move, seconded by the MLA for Burrows, that under rule 38(1), the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the need for urgent attention to the health needs of individuals who may have been adversely impacted by the undue delay in reporting test results of contaminated sites in Winnipeg, and the urgent need to prevent further adverse impacts.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, I should remind all members that under rule 38(2), the mover of the motion on a matter urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed not more

than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beauchesne's, citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent public importance. It is my first opportunity to raise this very important issue since the health of many Winnipeggers could be compromised due to high levels of lead in the ground in their communities and sometimes in the air in their communities. This contamination is in our schoolyards, our parks and in our gardens. I had hoped to rise on this issue yesterday, but was advised by the Clerk's office that, due to my not yet having taken my seat, I would not be able to provide notice and not be able to raise this important sooner than today, and I also remind the House that rule 38(1) states that matters of urgent public importance must be raised after petitions.

On July 17th, 2018, the day of the by-election in St. Boniface, the Pallister government released a report revealing soil test results in south St. Boniface showing elevated levels of lead and other metals, contradicting a report that was released the year before. The government claimed that the report could not be released due to a legal blackout on announcements during elections. There are clearly exemptions to those announcements, Madam Speaker. For example, requests for proposals and requests for proposals were made during that by-election period.

* (14:50)

However, the Winnipeg Free Press, using freedom of information requests, showed that Minister Squires received the report from her deputy minister June 4th. The by-election wasn't called until two weeks later, June 19th. The minister then changed her story on the dates and blamed her own staff, claiming she didn't know about the reports, even though her deputy minister and other staff had included her on emails.

What we have yet to hear from this government is a plan to mitigate and correct this issue. The

government should consider offering testing at no charge. One of the issues I've faced in questions from my constituents—we've had pregnant constituents who literally don't know whether it's safe to eat the food in their gardens.

There was a further revelation, Madam Speaker, that the previous NDP government sat on a report about extremely dangerous lead levels for years, though it took the current government a year to realize it. They replaced the report online a year ago. The levels of lead in neighbourhoods such as Weston were several times what was discovered in St. Boniface. And what's even more concerning is that, when we look at the historic reports into these levels, they were associated with smelters, as well as with auto wrecking and recycling, both of which could still be contaminating these neighbourhoods.

In the early 1980s, the report—well, the report into lead examined or blamed lead gasoline for much of the contamination. The report was partly paid for by one of the smelters involved, which raises the question of it being independent.

So again, Madam Speaker, I believe this is to be an—this is an urgent issue. We have a long history—decades, in fact—of the government failing, and sometimes doing testing on lead knowing it's in the community and then failing to advise residents of Manitoba about what they should do. There's an urgent need right now to let Manitobans of—residents of these communities know what they can do to make themselves and their families safe.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Again, you know, I would restate what I stated yesterday for the member. I know the member's relatively new and we're pleased to have him in the House.

Matters of urgent public importance, of course, have certain criteria that need to be met. And not reflecting on the importance of the issue, Madam Speaker, does it rise to the level that it—there's no other opportunities for this matter to have been addressed?

Of course, he knows, having just completed question period, that there was opportunities to raise the issue during question period. He knows that there are debate times within the afternoon and there's opportunity to raise the issue in the context of debates often, Madam Speaker. So there are many opportunities for the member to raise the issue that he is raising. And, again, I won't reflect on the

relative importance of it, but it certainly doesn't arise to the level of a matter of urgent public importance in terms of the ability to debate this at another time.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I would like to just rise in respect of the member for St. Boniface's (Mr. Lamont) matter of public importance request to the House.

I would suggest—'similary' to my colleague, the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), I would also reiterate that the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) has actually had now, in the last two days, four opportunities to raise matters that he deems of public importance. He did not do so today again, so—he did not raise it in QP. He had the opportunity to ask the question directly to the First Minister and chose not to.

And also, I do just want to point out, Madam Speaker, that we've raised this with the Ombudsman and we know that the Ombudsman is presently investigating this present issue. So I would actually stand in concert with my colleague across the way.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, is the member seeking leave?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Yes, I'd like to ask leave to speak to this matter.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to comment on this? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Fletcher: The leader of the second opposition party, I think, articulated quite well why he is raising the matter now and not yesterday. It's simply on the advice of the clerks.

Due to some issues that, hopefully, we addressed last night at the rules committee, the member from St. Boniface was not able to take his seat until yesterday. And that led to a series of events that led to the member not being able to bring up this matter yesterday.

I would also point out that the matter is, again, a complex one, and a simple question—answer does not deal with the matter. It is a matter that is complex and has some serious issues implied. The issues that, I think, add to the leader's argument about urgency is if there was two weeks between when the minister found out about the report to the by-election to when it was eventually released, why not release it two weeks beforehand, and how many other reports have not been released? How many other Manitobans or contaminated sites is the government aware of that may be of great public interest?

Madam Speaker, contaminated sites is a problem across Canada. I've had the experience of dealing with Royal Oak Mines in Yellowknife and dozens of other contaminated sites across the North when I was a minister of the Crown federally, and in some cases urgency is very important to the safety—to the public safety.

Madam Speaker, the member from St. Boniface raised the issue of lead, but there are other that—now lead is bad enough that we all—or some of us may recall the issue in Michigan during the last presidential election in the United States where lead found in the pipes and wasn't disclosed as led to lead—no pun intended—has led to a huge public health crisis there. And to say that there is some sort of rule to not tell the public about critical—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the member again to be speaking about the urgency of debating this today and not getting into the content of actually debating the issue. So he needs to focus on why this is important to debate now and avoid talking about the actual content of the MUPI. So he needs to focus why is it urgent to discuss this now.

Mr. Fletcher: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The urgency is what other chemicals and contaminants are in the soil? What is the government not telling us, the public? What are the remediation measures? What is the public health risk? Why didn't the government disclose this public health issue immediately? Is there other public health issues that we don't know about? How is this issue going to be dealt with in an appropriate manner? That's an urgent issue.

If the lead contamination is at a elevated level—at specific level—it can be a massively important issue, or if there's other toxins, Madam Speaker, immediacy goes to the—you know, I—this is not the case in St. Boniface and I'm not—but there are instances where there is, in other places in Canada and around the world, where there—the contamination may be nuclear or cyanide or, you know, there's a lot of—

* (15:00)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The member is straying off topic again in terms of we're talking about the urgency, the need for this debate to happen here right now related to a Manitoba issue and not related to the broader issue of

contamination around the world. So I would ask the member to please zero in, make his point, so that we can move on with this debate.

Mr. Fletcher: I raise those issues as examples of where action was taken immediately or action was not taken immediately. And when it's not taken immediately, people die, often—maybe not right away, but in time—prematurely. That seems like an immediate thing.

There's—Madam Speaker, there's also the issue of why the report wasn't released immediately, and that's an urgent issue. Another urgent issue is: can the government confirm that they have not disclosed further information? That's an urgent issue. It's urgent to know what the levels are. Is the testing been done adequately? I'm not debating any point. I'm not making any case. I'm just asking the questions that we need to know on an urgent basis.

And if the member from St. Boniface would like to raise this, I would hope that the House would, in principle, agree that it is an urgent public health issue that was not immediately disclosed, and we have to wonder why. And it's also urgent for peace of mind for the people of St. Boniface and everyone else that (a) that St. Boniface is—the land is safe or blocked off and it's going to be remediated and (b) to all Manitobans, that there's no other surprises in this area.

Madam Speaker, it's immediate—it's an issue of immediate importance because we don't have all the information. And not having all the information immediately on something like this can cause panic, distress and even death, either immediately or, again, in time. We need to know. We have a report. It's—and the member—the elected member from the area would like to discuss the issue, and, on principle, this place should do it immediately because there are accountability issues in this as well for the minister, for the government and for public health professionals.

So, Madam Speaker, immediately, I think, is appropriate, and hopefully the House will, in the spirit of transparency, accountability, immediately deal with this matter of urgent public importance.

And I would like to thank the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) for bringing this to our attention immediately.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable leader of the second opposition

party for a matter of urgent public importance. The 90 minutes notice prior to the start of routine proceedings required by law 38(1) was provided, and I thank—[*interjection*]-rule 38(1) was provided, and I thank the honourable member for that.

Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward. Although the subject matters of reporting test results of contaminated sites in Winnipeg and the need to prevent further adverse effects are issues that many Manitobans are likely concerned with, I do not believe the public interest will suffer if the issue is not debated today. I would also note that there are other opportunities available to raise concerns regarding this issue, such as asking questions in oral question period and the procedures of members' statements and grievances.

In addition, there is a requirement in our rules that this afternoon the House is obligated to complete consideration of the second reading of designated government bills, and this must be a priority for the House over other business, according to the rules.

Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I rule this motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business.

I am seeking leave of the House so that when we get to second readings of designated bills—presumably after 4 p.m.—that the question period that ministers partake in happen immediately after the minister responsible has given their remarks on second reading.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House for the question period of designated bills to take place after the minister has spoken at second reading instead of

after all applicable members have spoken? Agreed?
[Agreed]

Point of Order

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): On a point of order.

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Nesbitt: Madam Speaker, I'm rising to indicate that I have a potential conflict of interest in a portion of Bill 8.

The conflict arises because I own a corporation that operates two community newspapers in Manitoba. This legislation may or may not result in a financial change for my corporation. However, out of an abundance of caution, I will withdraw from the House when Bill 8 comes up for further discussion and will not participate in any voting on second or third readings.

Madam Speaker: I recognize and thank the member for Riding Mountain for bringing that up. I would indicate it is not a point of order, but I thank him for advising the House on the conflict of interest declaration he has just put forward.

House Business

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader—oh, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

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

Madam Speaker: Pursuant to rule 33(8), it has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview. The title of the resolution is Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Would you please call for second reading, Bill 34, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes—

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, on a—on a point of order.

Point of Order

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

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): On—it is my understanding, and I'm sure you'll correct me that if there are other members that have resolutions to be presented, that they should be brought forward first before other resolutions go into their second reading or continue into their second hour.

So I just would like to ask the Speaker if there could be some assurance that the private member's resolution that I've brought forward will be dealt with some time in this session.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I would point out to the member that he does not have a point of order.

A—private member's resolutions for independents are dealt with on Tuesdays and not Thursdays, so in order for him to bring forward a private member's resolution, he would need to speak to the Government House Leader.

So the member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for second reading of a—Bill 34, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. And if we are fortunate enough to have that concluded, then the following bills in the following order: No. 8, 12, 16, 24 and 27.

*(15:10)

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider the following business this afternoon: second reading of Bill 34; second reading debate of Bill 8; and second readings of bills 12, 16, 24 and 27.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 34—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Madam Speaker: So to start with, then, we will go to Bill 34, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson), that the Bill 34, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Her Honour, lieutenant governor general has been advised of the bill and is tabled in the message attached.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), seconded by the honourable Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 34, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has advised of the bill and the message is tabled.

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak on Bill 34, the budget implementation and tax statute amendment act, 2018. As we focus on fiscal management, our government has continued to listen to Manitobans so that our priorities and suggestions inform government direction and decisions.

Based on the evidence and advice from experts, the public service stakeholders, and the public, we are taking concrete actions now. We are ensuring that the provincial tax measures and supports continue to meet the intended outcomes in a fiscally responsible manner without compromising their effectiveness.

Our ongoing review of tax credits resulted in phasing out of tax credits that were not meeting their intended objectives, Madam Speaker. The extension of others in the cultural industry and further review is under way as well as introduction of new credits.

As announced in Budget 2016, the bill includes aligning the education property tax credit whether the property tax credits to apply on school taxes imposed on the residency of property, and eliminating a \$250 deductible, eliminating the process of applying—Manitoba Finance for the school tax reduction which generally simplifies the whole process for homeowners.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Streamlining the administration—calculation of primary caregiver tax credits by replacing the process of applying to government to reapply or reapprove with the registration only as requires and also has changed—charged the credit a flat fourteen hundred annual credit, eliminating unnecessary paperwork and red tape.

Establishing a new and unique refundable child-care tax credit to assist corporations and non-profit

businesses with the creation of new child-care spaces in the workplace for the benefit of employers and the community, increasing the amount of business income eligible for the small business deduction from 450 to 500 thousand effectively of January 1st, 2018, aligning Manitoba with other provinces and territories.

The extension of Manitoba book publishing tax credit and the cultural industry—of print tax credit by one year to December 31st, 2019, while the government completes a review of these credits.

Bill 34 also phases out the credit union's special tax deduction over five years that was done by other provinces like Saskatchewan, PEI, and Quebec, as well as the federal government, recognizing the maturity of the sector since the deduction was first established way back in 1972. At the same time, we are also eliminating the credit union profit tax introduced by the previous NDP—the previous government, effective 2019, which is partially offset by the five year phase-out of the special deduction for credit unions.

The bill eliminates the rental housing construction tax credit that was not fully meeting its intended objectives, but extends the deadline to complete a rental housing project to ensure existing projects benefit and still can be accredited for corporations that apply.

Based on the numbers of considerations and deliberations on the federal legalization of cannabis, Bill 34 also introduces a retail sales tax exemption for non-medical cannabis, once cannabis is legalized on October 17th. This will ensure that prices are low as possible so that we can eliminate the illicit black market as soon as possible, while protecting vulnerable populations, in particular, youth.

Changes are also being made to exempt fertilizer storage bins used in farming and drill bits designed for use in oil drilling rigs for the retail—from the retail sales tax.

Based on the request from the Manitoba Chiropractors' Association, the bill also introduces legislation that allows chiropractors to provide their services through a corporation, like other self-regulated professions, like doctors and dentists and others.

Finally, the bill also makes several technical and administrative amendments to tax statutes that are required to ensure Manitoba tax system is fair, efficient and enforceable.

I recommend Bill 34 to members of the House, representing as it does the steps we are taking to fix our finances, repair important vital services for Manitobans and rebuilding the economy. Thank you.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member of the following sequence: First question by the official opposition critic or designate, second by the second opposition party and 'subsequent' questions be asked by each independent member, the remaining questions asked by any opposition members and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): A new minister in the chair and I know that he has a lot on his plate, I'm sure, and a lot to answer for here. So we'll start with an easy one: Why did his government delay BITSA and hide it from Manitobans for months?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our government did not delay the bill. There was more information that was needed from the federal government. That was an agreement that was made by our House leaders with a requirement to—part of the agreements between the opposition as well as the government is that information would be shared on BITSA in summer and I can report that that was done on time.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): So could the shiny, new minister explain to us why the government refused to present any estimate of revenues from impending legalization and sale of cannabis to Manitobans?

Mr. Fielding: The government, of course, will be going with all other governments across Canada into a new venture, in terms of cannabis sales. We, of course, don't know what the costs and revenues are. We, of course, through our budget process, will be asking not just municipalities but our departments to track and monitor what costs are associated with this new venture that government is engaged in by the federal government.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the government has denied compiling estimates of revenue in advance of the legalization of cannabis. Will the minister indicate today if his department has prepared any documentation or any estimate of potential revenue from the sale of cannabis?

Mr. Fielding: A part of budget process 2019—of course we're going to be reviewing what costs and revenues are associated. That is a normal course of business that government does throughout the budgetary process, as well as setting budgets, and so that work is going on. We're not finalized. We don't know if the—this has not been legalized. It will be legalized in the next few weeks and we'll have a better indication of what costs and revenues are associated to, but what I can confirm to people—this is not going to be a huge windfall for government. There is substantial costs that are associated with this and, you know, we look forward to the introduction of it, to tracking and monitoring both.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, maybe, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it is a shiny, new minister, because it was his predecessor who said that there was no estimate, no study had been done, no scenarios had been examined or possible revenue. There was no possible way, in fact, that the government could know. But, in fact, now we learn that the minister does have that information, that his department has done that work.

So I ask: Will the minister present that information to the House and present it to Manitobans so that we can see clearly what this government expects to bring in, in revenue from legalization of marijuana?

*(15:20)

Mr. Fielding: That is not what I said. What I said was a part of Budget 2019. We're evaluating what costs will be associated to it. I can be very clear on the fact that this is not going to be a money-maker for the government for a number of years. This is a new venture that people across the country are going into. So somehow to project what exact costs and what exact—or what exact costs and what exact revenues are out there would be foolhardy. We need to evaluate this and make sure we're doing this in a steadfast way, and that's exactly what we'll be doing in the budget '19.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): The government claims that cannabis was the delay. The minister talks about exact figures. But yesterday we just learned that the government is not going to have the carbon tax and is forgoing, presumably, transfers from the federal government. So that's over \$300 million each year. How can we possibly have a public—a accurate, exact budget implementation bill when the revenue that they had planned on has been totally blown? The government has been busted, and

now we're going to have a busted budget implementation bill. Why and how—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time is up.

Mr. Fielding: That is inaccurate. What we can say, a part of Budget 2018, of course, there was revenues that were booked in. This—the bill was, of course, delayed until December. If you look in the report of Q1, which is included in the Public Accounts, that lays everything out in terms of our financials, and I can tell you that we are on track.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): When it comes to the child-care tax credit, it would appear that for not-for-profit corporations to qualify, they have to have at least 74 spaces in Winnipeg and 52 outside of Winnipeg to be eligible, with a utilization rate of 87 per cent, and they're allowed to charge the maximum daily fee. What's the rationale for this, because it would appear to do nothing for those who need affordable child care, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Fielding: I can speak with some authority, and this is—I was involved in the dedication of this. This is a program that will be effective. It provides \$10,000 refundable tax credit to corporations and non-profits that are involved in a workplace to develop a space. There was a similar program that was done at the federal level; was unsuccessful because the credit was associated with any expenditures that were supposedly to be with building a permit. What our program does effectively, it adds spaces to corporations. And I can tell you that we've had a lot of interest, in fact, a very lot of interest in terms of people setting with child-care spaces. It's an important development for working families.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, how many mobile homeowners will see their taxes increase as a result of this government's elimination of the ability to transfer the Education Property Tax Credit to their municipal taxes and by how much?

Mr. Fielding: Putting the education property credit on school is exactly similar to all the other credits that we have in government, including the ones that were established in the former NDP government. Over 95 per cent of people will see absolutely no changes, and what is benefit to the change that we are making is in terms of renters. All renters will benefit because the elimination of a \$250 deductible reduces the amount rents needed to be eligible for a full \$700 credit. We also think that there are

streamlining process for this; people don't have to pre-apply for this. And this is very much in line with our commitment to go towards summary financial budgeting because school are part of the summary financials and municipalities are not.

Mr. Fletcher: A made-in-Manitoba financial fiasco is what we have here with this budget implementation bill: \$300 million of revenue taken off the table just yesterday. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) said the decision to do this was in the last few days. So how on earth can the minister say with any—well, there is no credibility in the budget financing. Will the minister just apologize for the budget fiasco that we now have in Manitoba due to poor planning? Thank you.

Mr. Fielding: I won't apologize because the budgeting makes sense. The budget implementation bill, of course, booked in some revenues associated with the carbon tax. This was delayed, you know, a few months, because of what we're debating here today as opposed to the regular time that would be done.

If you look at our first quarter report that is included in the public accounts, our government is on track to hit our budgetary goal. I am—would like take this time to gloat a little bit from our government's point of view for hard work because over the last two years we have come in under budget, both budgets. The first year, it was over \$147 million below what we projected. And in the last budgetary year, we finished \$145 million under budget while delivering great services for Manitobans.

Mr. Lamont: One of the questions I have, actually, relates to the cannabis tax, one—or the fee. If it walks like a duck and it quacks like a duck and swims like a duck, but it's called a fee, it's probably a tax, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I can't—one of the reasons why it's the—why is this social responsibility fee called a fee and not a tax when it's clearly a tax?

But the other is—relates to the question of the 75-25 split between the provinces and the federal government. Twenty-five per cent of that, it's been suggested, has to go to the—to municipalities, to be shared with the municipalities because they, like the provincial government, are expecting new costs as a result of cannabis legalization.

Is this 25 per cent of this going to be dedicated to the municipalities in order to address their new costs with legalization?

Mr. Fielding: The reasons why we introduced—we did not introduce sales tax associated with cannabis—in fact, we are the only province across the country to do as such—is we wanted to keep the cost of non-medical cannabis low so we can drive out the black market, the gangs, from this endeavour. We have put a social responsibility fee on that. We think that everyone does have a responsibility to pay for costs, whether it be advertising or for medical costs, these items that are there.

In terms of the second part of the question, in terms of the federal excise tax, we don't have agreement with the federal government in terms of the exercise tax yet. They haven't said no; they haven't said yes. What we have put is a 75-cent placeholder which would be equivalent, the exact same amount as the federal excise tax, the federal government has spoke of.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the reality is is that this minister is changing the rules of the game in the middle of debate over BITSA. We, of course, didn't get the BITSA bill until very late. This government was intending to keep it hidden and keep it away from Manitobans. And now, of course, this minister and this government is changing the rules of the game when it comes to revenue on marijuana as well as on the carbon tax.

So it's—really, it's a question of why this government has continued to hide and continued to run from their plan when it comes to their budget and when it comes to the implementation of the BITSA bill.

Mr. Fielding: If we go a little bit back, sometimes we learn most when we look back at history. We know what the NDP budgeting forecast when they pulled out the old crystal ball and looked at budgeting forecast. The last example, what we can see is the NDP missed their budgets by close to \$400 million. I mean, really? How do you do that? How do you—I—you can understand maybe missing by a certain amount up and back, but missing and having more of a deficit by over \$400 million. So, to be fair, I'm not sure we can take seriously any criticism from the NDP when they talk about budget forecasting.

Mr. Fletcher: On one hand, the minister says, well, we would have the carbon tax in June if the NDP had not delayed it. And now the government is saying, we're not going to have the carbon tax because we don't want it, because we have this outraged—we're outraged with Ottawa. Nothing has changed. So

which is it? Are you outraged with Ottawa, or were you going to tax Manitobans last June? But you just flip-flop, flip-flop for a financial fiasco that's made in Manitoba. Financial fiasco: that's all that this is. And the minister—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Fielding: What I can say is this government made the right decision. We're listening to Manitobans and we're protecting Manitobans, that—why is—the policy of the government has changed. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) announced that. We think that is important, in terms of the finance, as mentioned, that we anticipated revenues coming in from the carbon tax that would happen in June. There is offsetting money that would go back in terms of the basic personal exemption, with a kick in in January.

* (15:30)

So there is a gap between the two, but what we are saying is that we are putting off the basic personal exemption while we are eliminating our process in terms of the carbon tax.

So we made the argument before that that process would have been revenue neutral. In fact, it would have given more back to residents over a four-year period—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

Mr. Lindsey: So let me see if I've got this straight.

The minister couldn't figure out how much revenue they were going to create from cannabis sales. They've introduced a bunch of fees, which I'm assuming they must have some idea what that's going to bring in. Maybe not. Maybe they're just going to wing it there, too. Then there's the carbon tax that they were going to implement, that—they had an idea how much money it was going to bring in, but now it's not bringing in—anything in, but their numbers are still pretty much right on, he figures. And then the costs of cannabis, he was able to guess at what that was going to be, but he can't guess at how much money it's going to bring in.

So could the minister—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Fielding: Well, I could understand why the NDP would be so upset of us not introducing a new

tax. I could get that. I mean, that's—you look at history, you know what their approach is in terms of that.

What I can say is that we are evaluating—we've asked people to evaluate what costs would be associated with cannabis. We don't know because it has not been introduced yet. There's a whole bunch of variables of why—how much revenue—going to bring in, how much of strength it is, how much people are going to consume of it, how often edibles come into the equation.

So I don't think, to be fair, to suggest that the government is wrong in terms of our revenue projections when we haven't even entered into this venture for the next two weeks.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired. The debate is open. Any speakers?

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I would suggest that the minister might want to go back to his briefing books. I think I saw him opening those up earlier, and I think he might need to do a little bit more reading up. I know he is a new minister and he is—got a very large portfolio. But all he has to do is go back to the Estimates process and go back to some of the questions that his predecessor answered in that process and get him to explain just how the minister, the former minister, did have those costs laid out for us and was very happy to talk about them, because he did know exactly what it was going to cost the government to implement legalization of cannabis. And, in fact, he told all of us in this House and every Manitoban that it was going to cost the province \$100 million to implement legalization of cannabis in this province.

Well, that's a pretty large number, I think, by anybody's estimation. Whether it's not—you know, not just little old me from Concordia, but even for the Finance Minister, I would hope that he would know where \$100 million of this province's money is going to. So he needs to talk to his former colleague, his colleague who occupied his chair and ask him exactly where is that \$100 million going to, because the minister of Finance was quite clear that's what it was going to cost Manitobans.

However, when we asked him, okay, \$100 million, well, that seems excessive, that seems high, that's a very ambitious target to set for government—for \$100 million of new spending in order to implement legalization of cannabis,

certainly you can share with us some information about what some of the revenues might be.

Now, the minister—when I asked him earlier—was quick to say, no, no, no, no, you've got it all wrong, we have no way of knowing how much we are going to be getting in revenue, there's no possible way.

But I think that he does. And, again, I think this might be just a fact that he hasn't looked at his briefing book. He hasn't spent the time to dig into that. Or maybe he needs to talk to his department officials and ask them point blank. Say, you know, there's got to be some way that we know what the revenue stream for cannabis is going to be. I mean, we know it's more than zero. We have a number of tax measures in place, as the minister was quick to point out. They're happy to be bringing in the social responsibility. I think they call it a tax on—or, levy, I guess they're calling it. I'm just trying to keep up with the terminology here, Mr. Speaker.

But he was happy to say that we are bringing in that revenue. We're happy to take that from Manitobans, and yet cannot give us any indication—any indication at all where that money, how that money is factoring into the very BITSA bill that we're debating here in front of us.

So this is just part of a pattern that we've seen over and over and over again from this government, whether it be, you know, going back to last year's BITSA bill where, you know, all of us around on the opposition side said, well, we need to see the BITSA bill. We need to debate this. We need to bring it forward to the public. We need to have a thorough vetting of this information, make sure that all this information is correct, that the public is aware of it; and the government said no, no, no, no, no. Let's just move it through. There's no reason to look at that. Just let's just keep moving. This is just boilerplate. We're just fixing, you know, cross the t's, dotting the i's. You know, we forgot to carry the three. That's all that the BITSA bill is going to be and, lo and behold, that wasn't the case. That wasn't the case at all and, in fact, what we found were major changes to government finance policy that were not even mentioned in this government's budget or budget speech, which I would say is completely unprecedented. In the history of this province that has never happened before, that the government came out with all the pomp and circumstance in this place, that stood up—the Finance Minister, you know, new shoes and all, and was ready to make that speech and that announcement to all Manitobans, to

set the financial path forward for this province, and then, oh, well, we just forgot to mention a couple of things.

Well, those things were major things, Mr. Speaker. Those things were items that Manitobans across this province, you know, it turns out were up in arms about it. They were completely baffled by. So what were those things? Well, they were the backing off or the walking away by the Province of the 50-50 transit agreement that it had with municipalities. This was a major shock. The mayor said at the time, you know, we had no idea; this came totally out of the blue, changed the formula completely with municipalities, and yet, had—we had no indication. So this is an example of what we were dealing with with the BITSA bill for last year.

Now, this year; fast forward to this year, and we said okay, well, we're moving through the spring session. We're ready to, you know, go, you know, along with the agenda of this government. We're ready to debate items as they are presented to us and come up. And all of a sudden, well, where is the BITSA bill? Where's BITSA? Where's BITSA? We don't know. We don't know where BITSA is, and, in fact, when BITSA, you know, did finally appear, it was in just the last few days of this Legislature. And so it was this opposition that stood up with Manitobans to say no. This won't be something that you sweep under the rug, that you move forward with without anybody having a chance to look at it. We want to see every line of the BITSA bill before we go anywhere for the summer; and, in fact, we held this government to account. That is our role and that was—well, we were able to do. We don't have much power or control over the government's agenda, but we certainly were able to exercise it in that instance, and we sat. We sat into the summer, well into the summer. We were ready to sit longer. But it was only after we stood up and we said, wait a minute, you've got to show us your cards before this government finally said, well, okay. We'll get it ready and we'll present it by August. As the government, as the minister said, it was presented in August.

Now, my question to the minister, and maybe I should have asked this in question period. I'm sure we'll have more than ample opportunity to debate the BITSA bill going forward. There's multiple opportunities, I believe, for us to debate this, and we can spend days and days and hours and hours debating this particular bill.

But what I want to know is what was in the bill before August and what was in the bill after August? And now, more importantly, I guess the question would be, what is in the bill now?

* (15:40)

Well, you know, we had this Premier (Mr. Pallister) come out yesterday and—you know, maybe he talked to a select few of his caucus, you know, a couple months ago and said, you know, well, I'm starting to think maybe the NDP's right. Maybe this carbon tax is not such a good idea for Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —maybe \$50 a ton is not a—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —good idea for Manitobans. Maybe that's what—I think the Premier said, I bet you, I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) is right. I think maybe we should back off on this.

Maybe that's what he thought, but I don't know who he shared it with, because he certainly didn't share with the larger caucus; he certainly didn't share with his colleagues here. I wonder if he even shared it with his closest advisors. Maybe this was dreamed up on the beaches of Costa Rica in the middle of summer. As the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) rightly said yesterday, when he was writing his essay, his summertime essay: What did I think about over the summer months? Well, I thought maybe that the Leader of the Official Opposition is right that Manitobans aren't asking for a \$50-a-ton tax that puts none of the money towards environmental stewardship or improvement; in fact, takes that money out of Manitobans' pockets and puts it into general revenue and disburses it as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) sees fit.

That is not what Manitobans are asking for with a carbon tax. That has nothing to do with the intent of a carbon tax. It has no bearing on the environmental outcomes that this Province should be setting and should be targeting itself towards. It has—it makes no—has no effect on the carbon output in this province.

But, you know, it was an idea originally dreamed up by the Premier, or maybe by David McLaughlin on one of his flights back and forth from Ottawa, or maybe—maybe it was dreamed up in the back rooms. Either way, the Premier said, no, wait a

minute, I'm actually going to listen to the Leader of the Official Opposition, I'm going to stand against this idea and I'm going to look for a different way.

Well, he brought forward a lot of noes: no to the federal government, no to a carbon tax, but he didn't give us any sense of what the revenue projections or what impact that's going to have on the budget, and so here we are today, standing and debating a BITSA bill without any information. I don't know if the minister got this information before he—before question period yesterday, either. I wonder if he or his officials knew or whether this was dreamed up by the Premier. Now he comes to us without any hard numbers and no ability to explain it—no ability to explain it before the House.

So it, you know, it just—it is a pattern that has played itself out over and over and over again. This government is playing fast and loose with the finances of this Province. They are desperate to show an improvement, and absolutely, they will show an improvement at, you know, absolutely every opportunity they can. And yet, they are unable to give us a clear idea—or, I mean, you know, hey, so you don't need to tell us. We're just the official opposition, but maybe you should tell, I don't know, maybe the business community in this province, maybe the, you know, small-business owners. Maybe you should tell low-income people what to expect.

This is the uncertainty that they're dealing with. This is the uncertainty that they now do not know, along with us as the official opposition, what comes next. And this bill is simply an extension of that attitude of not telling anybody what their plans really are. So we—you know, again, we have some power, we have some ability. We're willing to exercise that in whatever way we can, but it is incumbent on this government to put that information clearly and honestly on the table so that every single Manitoban understands what's at stake, what they're actually facing over the next year, and this government has yet to do that.

So we know, for instance, Mr. Speaker, that the bill changes the eligibility of the \$700 education property tax rebate. Well, the government's line—budget line says that the changes that they're making, you know, the—again, the minister wants us to believe they're neutral, these are neutral changes. But they may be neutral for the government, but that's not the case for those Manitobans who are asking, what's next, what is the plan, where is my money going to go to in the next year. So, for Manitobans,

where—who are getting this rebate, upwards of 30 per cent of recipients will lose some funding. And I asked the minister just one aspect of that today and he was unable to give a clear answer about what kind of increases those Manitobans are going to be facing.

We also know—and again, this was the example that I mentioned earlier—that mobile-home owners will no longer be eligible for the rebate in any way. So that means \$700 is going to be taken from the pockets of every single mobile home owner in this province. The changes mean that the worst impacted will be those with the least—or with the very modest homes or mobile homes in this province. So we see this very clearly as a regressive tax move by this government that punishes those who are least able to pay this tax.

The bill also ends the Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit. This is a short-sighted move, as seen by our caucus and this side of the House. It also changes the employer of all health employees to Shared Health. So we know that the Pallister government's changes have created chaos and confusion across the health-care system. We've talked about that here in this House, and we're happy to be continuing to talk about it going forward. But we're concerned that this is just adding one more level of strain for those folks working in the health-care sector, a sector that's under stress, under strain. Those individuals who are on the front lines of our health-care system are—need little more in added stress.

The bill also exempts, as I said earlier, cannabis from the PST. So, you know, here we go, the cynicism of the Pallister government on this, absolutely endless when it comes to cannabis and the legalization. So there's several different levies—and the minister has, you know, admitted that so much in the—in his answers to the questions today. And they're getting levies from retailers; they're getting levies from individual users. So it's just another example of a shell game where the minister says he wants to keep cannabis costs low, and yet he's charging extra levies. So he's not charging PST, but as the member—as my colleague said earlier, it is simply a tax by another name.

If this was the reason that the government delayed introduction of this BITSA bill, it really speaks volumes about how little regard this government holds for openness and transparency, and that is the most important point here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

So when the Pallister government introduced the budget, they claimed that they were going to be changing the education property tax, but they said that those changes were going to be minor and, again, claimed that those would be revenue neutral. But once we started to dig into the details, we saw very clearly that this is, in fact, a regressive move. It's going to hurt those with modest incomes absolutely the most.

At the heart of this change is that until now, the legacy—due to the legacy of the program, the Education Property Tax Credit could be applied to the property tax portion of a person's tax bill. This was especially important, again, for those in very modest houses whose education property tax bill was less than \$700. They could then apply for the remaining tax credit to be applied against their property tax bill. The change now means that the credit cannot be applied against the property tax, only those education taxes.

So this poses some very serious problems, Mr. Speaker. It hurts those who need the support the most. Homeowners in the most modest of houses will lose big portions of their tax credit. Worst of all, though, mobile home owners, as I said, they will have a different levy for their taxes. They will pay a separate levy to their municipality, not a property or an education tax. As a result, due to these changes by this government, these mobile home owners in the province will lose that \$700, and that is not a progressive move at all. And it's certainly not revenue neutral for those folks.

Communities like those in Flin Flon are warning that their residents in that community, more than 440 of which will be impacted by this change. And those properties assessed between \$15,000 and \$72,000 will be most affected by these changes.

You know, I'm sure that my colleague from Flin Flon has got a lot to say about this. I'm looking forward to this bill coming forward again so that we can debate this more fully. But he knows very clearly these aren't the mansions on Wellington Crescent; these are the people with the most modest of homes. These are the people who are least of—able to pay. And so a several-hundred-dollar increase is a big deal to those people. And I wonder if the minister is listening to those people.

* (15:50)

You know, the minister and the previous minister, they wanted to get us lost in the definitions

and they wanted to make sure that we didn't pick up on issues where Manitobans were getting a raw deal, but, in fact, here we see a perfect example where those at the lowest income brackets and those with the least ability to pay are getting hurt the most. So they could have made changes to this program. They could've made changes but ensure that those with the most modest houses weren't hurt, but, in fact, that isn't something that they wanted to move forward on.

Rental housing construction credit, Mr. Speaker. So, we know absolutely every member of this House—I'm sure you could ask every single individual member in this Chamber about the need for rental housing in their constituencies. They will tell you. They probably met, either through door knocking, constituents coming to their offices and saying how difficult it is to find affordable or social housing and how much of a need there is in every single community—doesn't matter where you are, whether it's in Winnipeg, any community in Winnipeg, or whether it's across this province, in any rural or northern community across this province.

So, this is a big deal for those people and it should be a big deal to us who represent those individuals who reach out to us and tell us of this issue. It's a concern because the province's social housing has in fact declined over the last two years. There's been a net loss of social housing in our province, and that's a big problem. And the government is going to need absolutely every tool to ensure that it can address that problem.

Those turning to the private market are seeing their RentAid cut. You know, in fact, it was this Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) who was the previous minister of Families, responsible for housing, who stood up and was proud that more and more people needed the RentAid program. More and more people were in poverty and they needed the Rent Assist program. They wanted Rent Assist because they couldn't afford the places they were living in, but at the same time, they were reducing the amount that individuals could get from that program. They have to spend 30 per cent of their income on rent before they are accessing that program, when before it was 25 per cent. But again, this minister was quite happy to champion more and more poor people in our province. He thought that was a sign of success. Nobody told him that, in fact, that was not.

The result is that it's getting harder and harder, we know, for renters to find affordable housing. We

know it's harder for them to make ends meet on a monthly basis, and instead of having a plan, we see nothing. We see no plan. The Province should have a plan to address this growing unaffordability of housing and should use its ability, in a program such as this particular credit, to amplify that investment in affordable housing across our province. But instead, they're just taking more and more money from Ottawa. They're happy to take that money. They're happy to take whatever the federal government will give them and say, oh, we've got no money, we've got no ability to do this, and cut it and make it harder for Manitobans to access affordable housing.

We know that since 2017 the policies of this government has pushed 300 people more off of Rent Assist, and that was according to the CBC. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) also reduced the Rent Assist benefit by—for over 7,000 families, cutting benefits by up to \$1,200 a year. These—according to Make Poverty History, quote, these cuts will put affordable housing further out of reach for low-income renters in Manitoba. End quote.

So the Premier hiked rental costs for those low-income earners who were living in Manitoba Housing, could see that those rents are going up by more than \$720 per year, and yet, when given an opportunity to take a credit and use it—use it—to make a difference and build more affordable housing in this province, instead, this minister and this Premier has failed Manitobans once again when it comes to affordable and social housing. They have failed to build a single new unit of social housing since they were elected, Mr. Speaker, and that is a shame, and they should be ashamed of that record.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Shared Health—Shared Health, Madam Speaker, and I see that my time is getting short. You know, I—we could just ask for leave; I could continue on. We could go all afternoon. Okay, maybe I—I see the Clerk saying no, that's not a good idea. That's more paperwork for her, so maybe I won't ask for that. But Shared Health, it's in this piece of legislation and BITSA that we're debating this afternoon. This establishes all those who work in health as employees of shared health. It's a continuation of this government's regressive Bill 29, which was passed in 2017. That legislation was modelled after similar legislation in Nova Scotia passed in 2014, which merged dozens of health-care sector bargaining units into four categories.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In Nova Scotia it resulted in years of negotiations between the provincial government, the unions, and the bill's provincially appointed arbiter. The arbiter was fired multiple times, struggled to conduct the process without violating union members' charter rights to a free association and it set the negotiations between workers and the government in Nova Scotia back, and here we are seeing a government following in the footsteps of that government as they've been doing with other right-wing governments across the country. They're happy to follow Doug Ford. They're happy to follow Jason Kenney; they're happy to follow all of the—
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —their right-wing cousins across—if there's a bad idea by a right-wing government in this country, they're willing to grab it and bring it over to Manitoba. They're not shy about doing that. So he's following the lead of Doug Ford. He's following the lead of all of his friends across the country, and this is another example here in this BITSA bill of an implementation that—a process that was failed in Nova Scotia, and now, this government is willing to push forward through with, here in this province.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, because I see my time is getting short, cannabis and the PST exemption. So, for months, this Pallister government has said they had absolutely no revenue estimates from cannabis—no way of knowing whatsoever; not a way to go to other jurisdictions where they've gone through this process, no way of talking to their peers across the country in other provinces where they have done this work. There was no possible way that they could possibly estimate what the revenue was going to be.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

As I said earlier, Madam Speaker, they did have an idea about the costs, you know, didn't have any details, but they certainly were able to say \$100 million of Manitoba's taxpayers' money was going to implement the legalization of cannabis, and when I asked, well, what would that money be going for? Well—well, we can't tell you that, but 100—it's got to be \$100 million. And yet they were unable to give us any information at all about what kind of revenues they were going to expect.

So, you know, this minister stood up, and I think this was a breakthrough—shiny new minister, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) called him—

An Honourable Member: Shine's coming off already.

Mr. Wiebe: The shine is coming off, maybe a little bit, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), as we go through this process, has pointed out, but, you know, the minister was willing, I think, as a breakthrough, was willing to say there is going to be revenue. He at least admitted that there's going to be revenue and, in fact, I think he was almost on the precipice there of saying, well, you know, actually, my department, of course, has done some of that work. That information is available. It may not be perfect, but it is available, and he's got his briefing book in front of him. Maybe he—you know, he could ask for leave to stand up and give that information, table it for the House. We'd be happy to look at that and work through that with him, but until we see that information, we have a BITSA bill that doesn't contain all the facts. We have a BITSA bill that doesn't include this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) last-minute road to Damascus, wants to talk about how good of an idea it was to postpone the carbon tax by this member from Fort Rouge who said that Manitobans reject a \$50-a-ton carbon tax that has no plan behind it, that has no way of actually impacting on carbon output in this province. All of a sudden, the Premier says, you know what? The member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) was right.

* (16:00)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 4 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have two minutes remaining.

The time being 4 p.m., I am now interrupting proceedings to conclude second reading of the designated bills.

For designated bills that have already been fully debated, I will immediately put the question without further debate; for designated bills that have not yet been fully debated, the minister, critic and each independent member may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes; and as agreed by leave, the up-to-15-minute question period will follow the speech of the minister.

If any of the members I've just noted above have not spoken to any of these bills they will be given that opportunity as part of this process.

For the information of the House, the following designated bills have already been—*[interjection]*

The following designated bills have not yet been debated and will proceed to debate as I have noted: 12, 16, 24, 27. The bills will be called in the order they appear on the Order Paper. The House will not adjourn until all of the applicable questions have been put.

Finally, in accordance with our rules, matters of privilege and points of order will be set aside until votes are completed.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

Madam Speaker: I will now call on Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended), and will indicate that only the two independent members are the ones that have not spoken yet on that bill.

I will now put the question, then, on second reading of Bill 8.

Oh, the honourable leader—or the honourable—*[interjection]* Oh, there's no points of order.

I will now put the question on second reading of Bill 8.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

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

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended).

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 15.

* (16:20)

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READINGS

(Continued)

Bill 12—The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2018

Madam Speaker: We will now move to second reading of Bill 12, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2018.

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 12, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Mayer: I'm pleased today to rise on a—to speak on an important bill, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, Bill 12, our second annual bill aimed to help reduce red tape. The 2018 bill removes regulatory requirements that cost non-profit, local governments and businesses significant time and money without adding value to Manitobans.

Just as significant, provincial civil servants are required to implement these outdated and unnecessary rules, forcing them to divert resources away from more important front-line services. In total, nearly 875 'burdensome' and unnecessary regulatory requirements will be eliminated. Of these, 399 requirements are currently enforced, with the remaining 475 requirements pending.

We believe these streamlining efforts will save the provincial government nearly \$1 million annually in time and money. Millions more will be saved by impacting organizations, businesses and individuals by reducing the administrative burden of government rules.

Actions like this bill are the reason Manitoba is now recognized for creating North America's best regulatory accountability system. For the first time ever, Madam Speaker, we are identifying and tracking how these regulatory requirements the Manitoba government has created. There are nearly 925,000 currently in force.

Earlier this year, we received an A in CFIB's 2018 Red Tape Report Card, the highest grade amongst provinces for this work. By comparison, Manitoba's last grade under the NDP in 2016 was an F, the worst grade amongst provinces, Madam Speaker.

They didn't even keep track of how many rules they created or what their impact was. We are cleaning up this red tape mess left by the NDP, Madam Speaker. Since forming government, we have removed nearly 25,000 unnecessarily regulatory requirements forced on local governments, businesses, non-profits and citizens—a reduction of nearly 2.6 per cent. The changes made in this bill will continue to build on our track record. Bill 12 will redirect government resources from red tape creation to front-line services support.

To highlight some of the changes in Bill 12, Madam Speaker, one of them will allow MPI to—the ability to provide licence notifications via email when drivers request it; will harmonize governance procedures of the College of Pharmacists with those of other regulated health professionals, as requested by the college. We will also be presenting in this bill eliminating unproclaimed requirements for snowmobiles to have licensing decals in addition to licence plates; allow the government to decide when organizations that receive municipal grants should

provide financial information to local councils, rather than a one-size-fits-all provincial policy. We will be repealing the NDP's proposed tax on school sites in new developments. We'll be consolidating reporting requirements for Manitoba Student Aid programs for—from two into one; streamlining the lien process for contractors on provincial infrastructure projects; and there are many more.

I encourage all members of this House, Madam Speaker, to support the bill and the important changes it will make to improve the services Manitobans rely on and help us rebuild the economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I want to congratulate the member on her new appointment.

Is the member aware that reducing red tape may jeopardize the safety and efficiency of services that Manitobans depend on?

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): Well, Madam Speaker, 17 years the NDP government sat on their hands and didn't take care of any of this. They're not concerned about Manitobans then, nor are they concerned about Manitobans today.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I have a question, Madam Speaker, relating to The Residential Tenancies Act. There are a number of changes that'll be made, that residents will no longer be able to appeal rent increases at or below the maximum increase allowed, and that restricting a very—or a variety of ways in the tenant objection can be made.

There are a number of the members opposite who, on their conflict-of-interest reporting to the Legislature, state that they are landlords. So the one question is I hope that they will consider refraining from voting on this—refraining on voting from this

legislation because I believe it would be a direct conflict of interest in that they could be seen—and that we don't even want even to have a perception of a conflict of interest—seen to be voting to benefit themselves.

Mrs. Mayer: I want to thank the member for the question, and a first opportunity to welcome in this House. We are border mates in the south part of the city, so thank him very much for that question.

You know, what we've been doing, Madam Speaker, we have consulted with our stakeholders, we have asked our community leaders, we have talked to Manitobans about the changes in this bill. And, you know what, today we are delivering.

Mrs. Smith: I know the minister's only been in her role for two months. She, you know, talks about consulting all these people.

Can she tell us actually who she's consulted? You know, mainly renters, municipalities, fire commissioners?

Mrs. Mayer: We have consulted with stakeholders. We have consulted with Manitobans, Madam Speaker. And we are going to give those services to Manitobans.

* (16:30)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to congratulate the member for her appointment as minister. I'm sure it won't be a lot of fun. But a good life experience.

The—Efficiency Manitoba is a new Crown corporation being created by this government. More bureaucracy, expensive bureaucracy, to do nothing.

How can this government be serious about red tape reduction when they're creating new Crown corporations?

Mrs. Mayer: I'm proud to be the Minister of Crown Services that is leading the Efficiency Manitoba Crown corporation. We have a strong board chair in Dr. Jeannette Montufar. We have a strong board that is working together. We are just on the cusp of hiring a CEO. We have an interim in place. We are going to provide value to Manitobans.

Mrs. Smith: At the same time as the Minister is reducing financial accountability through The Municipal Act, the government is not extending whistle-blower protection to municipalities. It's voluntary only.

Would the Minister reconsider that and ensure municipal employees have protection when reporting improper financial activity in their workplace.

Mrs. Mayer: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. And I thank the member for the question. I know that my colleague, the minister responsible for municipalities is working with everyone across this province, all municipalities. And we will continue to work together to bring those services and streamline the regulations that are going to make it better for them.

Mr. Lamont: I have a question regarding the changes around The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act. This is basically a grandfathering clause. Of all the things in our city, we have hundreds of rail cars that run through our city every single day. We actually have—which often carry hazardous or dangerous waste. There are a number of hazardous facilities, or have our zone sites in St. Boniface.

One of the issues there, one of the contentious issues around lead pollution, or metal pollution in the air in St. Boniface is that an environmental licence was granted by the previous NDP government because it was grandfathered.

What is the compelling rationale that we need to grandfather—make it easier for hazardous waste disposal facilities to be located in Manitoba with looser regulation?

Mrs. Mayer: This change will remove the requirements for companies to get two licences for the same plant and it'll affect about 20 to 25 businesses and make it easier for the department to use enforcement and compliance measures.

Mr. Fletcher: I wonder if the Minister is as proud of Efficiency Manitoba as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is of the carbon tax. Wait a moment, Madam Speaker, the Premier up until just a few days ago, was very proud of the carbon tax. Now he's not. Perhaps the Minister will consider cancelling Efficiency Manitoba. Manitoba already has two Crown monopolies.

Why are we getting a third monopoly on energy? Three monopolies does not reduce red tape, Madam Speaker. I'm going to table some documents and give the government an 'F' on recent fundraising letters on this very topic.

Will the government apologize for everything that they've done.

Mrs. Mayer: Well, that is an interesting question, because here on this side of the House, this team that you see before us, stands together for the betterment of Manitobans. We know how to work together. We know how to find efficiencies. We know how to provide better services, Madam Speaker. So the member from 'Assiniboian' can sit there and ask for apologies all he wants. But maybe what he should be asking? For apologies from his—or he should apologize to his community in Assiniboia.

Mrs. Smith: Why does the government think renters should not have the ability to object within guidelines to rent increases? Object to—within rent increases.

Mrs. Mayer: I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, I did not catch that question. Maybe she could ask it again so the—with a little more fulsome so I could.

Mrs. Smith: So do you think it's okay that renters aren't allowed to object to rent increases?

Mrs. Mayer: Renters are Manitobans. And, Madam Speaker, we are working to better the lives of Manitobans.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, I was warned before I started working here that it is called question period and not answer period. But I do want to draw attention to the fact that the minister has not answered, in a meaningful way, any of these questions.

I asked—when I stood in the House, my very question of the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —First Minister, one of my first questions of the first minister was that if I asked a straight question that I would get a straight answer. What is the rationale for changing the dangerous goods and handling transportation act? And I will add this: It is not simply a question of saying that it's easier to investigate because we've had—we have—we're dealing with cases of 10, 20 and 30 years of inspections and reports which have been buried and ignored.

So I—once again, I will—explain what is the rationale for the—can you explain in the meaningful, is there a risk to Manitobans for deregulating the handling of dangerous and—dangerous goods?

Mrs. Mayer: Facilities will now be exempted from needing a licence under the dangerous and good

handling act if they have a licence under the environmental act for the facility. So it removes, Madam Speaker, companies from having to get two licences when they have the same plant.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: Three Crown corporations. One has a double monopoly, Manitoba Hydro, for electricity and gas, and now we're going to create a third Crown corporation in the same area.

Madam Speaker, how is creating a new Crown corporation reducing red tape? It just increases expenses, bureaucracy. And let's look at what the Crown corporation is doing. It's regulating, among other things, potable water. Who regulates potable water? Is the government planning to put a price on water?

Mrs. Mayer: This new organization has aggressive reduction targets which it will achieve, and we will have not waffled from our position like members opposite have previously, Madam Speaker.

As I said, Efficiency Manitoba will be just that; it will be efficient. We have a board chair who is working with her board and her interim CEO to hire a new CEO. We are—they are working on finding ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They're working together, Madam Speaker, and that's what we're going to continue to do for Manitobans.

Mrs. Smith: Did the minister consult with the Auditor General about the changes to The Municipal Act considering the office has been investigating improper behaviour in municipalities in the past? Does this open it up to abuse?

Mrs. Mayer: As a former City of Winnipeg employee, I know full well many of the councillors, the Reeves throughout our fine province—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mayer: The Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Wharton) has that relationship as well. He is talking with all municipalities. We're going to continue to listen. We're going to continue to do the work that's important.

I just want to take a moment to thank the member, or sorry, the Minister for Municipal Relations for the hard work he does on behalf of every municipality.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (16:40)

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, this minister is bringing forward a red tape reduction bill. Isn't that ironic? A bill to reduce red tape. That sounds like red tape in itself. Why don't they just do it rather than bringing forward legislation? But then, this is also the government that is bringing forward a new Crown corporation. Maybe we should rename it inefficiency Manitoba. Yes, that's right, inefficiency Manitoba, because it will be inefficient, costly and useless. Will the government withdraw—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —this new Crown corporation and save Manitobans a lot of money and a lot of bureaucracy and a lot of red tape? Withdraw the bill. Let's get on with governing the province.

Mrs. Mayer: The member asks if I will withdraw the bill. The answer is simple. No.

Mrs. Smith: Does the minister believe that whistle-blowers at the municipal level deserve to be protected?

Mrs. Mayer: All Manitobans deserve to be listened to, and that is exactly what our team is doing.

Mrs. Smith: There's a difference between listening and protection. Maybe that's why, you know, she needs to get things right. I realize she's only been in that seat for two months, but, you know, this is about protecting whistle-blowers. Who is going to come forward if she's talking about listening but not actions against it?

Since the protection of whistle-blowers only be voluntary, what kind of repercussions can municipal employees who speak out against illegal activities—*[interjection]*—the member over here likes to talk. Sorry you're not a minister and you're not answering the question. Will they—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I would just urge everybody. We've got many hours ahead of us tonight. I would urge everybody for some respectful dialogue here. I would actually urge people to bring down the level of heckling too, so that we can properly hear the questions and answers that are being asked because certainly we know that with the increased heckling, we end up with some heated discussions and things getting said that shouldn't be said. So I would urge everybody to just be really cautious about what we're saying

or what we're flinging across the room because this should be a respectful environment where professionals can actually debate in a respectful and civil way.

So I would ask for everybody's co-operation. These are important bills. They've been held over now. We've got four of them to go through, and we will be here for many hours, so I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, so that we don't add a whole bunch of extra hours to the sitting tonight, and we can look at this with fresh minds as we are proceeding through the evening.

Mrs. Mayer: We are getting it right, and one fine example of that is our no-wrong-door policy. While members opposite chose while they were in government to hide the shame that was cast upon their employees in this building, we are protecting all Manitobans, Madam Speaker. We are listening. Whether you're staff, a stakeholder, whether you are a senior or a child in this community, we are working for the betterment, and no one on the other side of the House should be giving us lectures on behaviour.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act amends 37 acts and repeals four acts through 'ominous' legislation to reduce or eliminate regulations in order to streamline government operations. The Pallister government is using heavy-handed ominous-'omunous' legislation-'ommiss' legislation to push through many changes that affect the health and safety of Manitobans. They're trying to push everything through, like throwing everything into the bathtub, including the sink. Like, these are all different things. Many of them don't even relate.

It shouldn't be this way. The changes in these bills are too significant to be pushed together in one bill, and they know it. The so-called red tape bill and the similar-named bill last year, bill 24, shows this government is focused, again, on profit over people.

Start putting the people first. You say you care about Manitobans. Put the money where your mouth is. Manitobans are starving; they're out there, you know, on crystal meth; they're homeless. There's 1,000 more people this year than last year that are

homeless, and it's starting to get cold. This so-called red tape bill and—you know, they're copying the same book that has led to so much harm in other places. But do they care? I actually don't know if they care. You know, their actions don't show that they actually care about Manitobans. Maybe some, but not all.

In Ontario, the Harris government's slashed-and-burn approach to regulation led to the Walkerton tragedy. We don't need that here in Manitoba. We claim to care about Manitobans. Stand up for them.

In the United States, the Trump administration has adopted the same exact approach as this government is doing right now. Shame. You know, we don't need that kind of heavy-handed approach here in Manitoba.

And in the UK, we all remember the terrible fire at the Grenfell Tower. Investigations that followed showed that the government had cut very protections that should have kept the public safety. And they're, you know, going to take away regulations that actually keep Manitobans safe.

We're especially concerned about changes in the health and safety that are not being given enough consideration by this legislation, and that's why we held it over. We don't want this bill. Manitobans spoke up; they don't want this bill. But yet, you know, this government continues to push through with their heavy-handedness and claim to be listening to Manitobans. But, you know, they listen with earplugs in, which is a shame because, you know, these are the very people that we are supposed to be keeping safe and supporting.

We're also concerned that this bill will make life less affordable for Manitobans. Someone goes and wants to, you know, take because their rent increase was too high, they have nowhere to go. They're taking away that right of renters. They claim to have consulted. Well, I've talked to people in my constituency who come to our office all the time about rental and housing concerns, and none of them have ever been consulted. So, you know, I asked who was consulted. We heard stakeholders. Well, I think Manitoba renters are stakeholders, and they deserve to be talked to.

We all want government to be accessible for Manitobans. You know, we hear all too often that, you know, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba isn't available to meet with Manitobans, to meet with

our mayor, who's actually running our city. You know, we have to work collaboratively. And they talk about being a team. Well, a team is working collaboratively with the city, working together collaboratively with the federal government. But yet, you know, on that side, they seem to like to pick fights, fight after fight after fight. You know, we hear from the Manitoba Metis Federation; that's the last fight that they picked. You know, I wonder, this session, who the next person is going to be, next group that they're going to pick a fight with.

You know, it's just atrocious how we claim to be team players, but yet we don't know how to play as a team. You know, how—[interjection]

We're all government; you know, we're all leaders here, but yet sometimes we don't act like leaders. We're standing up for Manitobans. That's our job, to be critics, to bring, you know, these issues forward and what people are saying to us. You know, and what people are saying is that this bill isn't a bill that they support, and they're throwing so many things together that don't even fit, and they're just going to trudge right through it because they're in power, and sometimes people in power, you know, have too much power.

So, for example, the changes to the fire protection and emergency response act, well, this will allow fire inspectors that are currently conducted by municipal employees exclusively to now be contracted out to private contractors. You know, who knows what qualifications they're going to have? Even if they're qualified to be able to be, you know, conducting these—[interjection]—well, who knows? Happens all the time, right? Look at the other—these cuts to safety standards are of great concern to us.

* (16:50)

Just last year, the Grenfell Tower fire in UK killed 72 people—72 people—because people who were going to inspect were not properly—they didn't have the proper credentials to be able to spot the things that should have been spotted. The approach of this Conservative government is, you know, like the EK. It's eerily familiar.

We're all concerned about the cuts that will be making life less affordable for Manitobans. I represent a community where, you know, many of my constituents struggle to pay rent. They—you know, the \$10 that was cut from Rent Assist, that's a meal for their family. You know, I don't think any member on that side ever had to worry about having

\$10 in their pocket or having to worry about feeding their children, but constituents that I represent have to worry about that every day. You know, they have to worry if their rent is going to be increased and they can't go anywhere and, you know, get anyone to listen or advocate for them because of this bill.

Changes in Bill 12 to The Residential Tenancies Act will leave renters whose apartments are falling into disrepair with no recourse to repeal a rent increase to the residential tenancies board. The increase falls within a set rate, so it's 2.2 right now is the set rate, but people—I've gone to visit people in their apartments in social housing. They're riddled with mice. They're riddled with cockroaches. They're riddled with bedbugs.

You know, I don't think the members opposite realize these are children that are being bitten. You know, you can't open a cupboard without seeing a cockroach running. There's, you know, mice droppings all over. That's not good for the health, you know, and, you know, is this government standing up? Are they doing anything about it?

These people have to—actually, they're seniors, a lot of them. They're expected, monthly, to move their own furniture away from the walls for them to come and spray. Some of these seniors can't even get out of bed. They're, you know, they're in wheelchairs. They don't have very good mobility, but they're trying to, you know, live on their own still, but their level of, you know, life is not good because of these things.

And is our government doing anything about it? No. There's not enough housing, and they unfortunately have to live in social housing because that's all they can afford. And, you know, it's—there's not a lot of maintenance happening. They cut the maintenance in half. You know, our government had a full maintenance crew. If somebody needed something done to their apartment, they would go and do it. This government, they've cut it in half, so there is social housing sitting—just needs a paint job for a family to move in—but are they doing it? No. It's just sitting there. In—just needs a paint job but, you know, they cut half the staff that are able to do that.

The government didn't just jump at raising the cost of living for renters. The proposed changes to The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act could lead to higher rates for drivers too. You know, the minister talked about eliminating the stickers off of snowmobiles. Well, I'm a snowmobile rider. You know, people who are enforcing that, they don't have computers in their snowmobiles or their

side-by-sides to be able to see if they are a registered owner.

I drive a quad. Same thing: I got pulled over. I didn't have my insurance in my quad with me. They weren't able to pull it up on a phone. I see the member from—or—Radisson holding his phone up. They don't have that technology. They're not able to just pull up your thing.

So I'd implore this government not to go forward to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I did want to speak to this again. I want to reiterate the issue of conflicts of interest when it comes to—especially when it comes to residential tenancies.

Conflict of Interest Commissioner Jeffrey Schnoor has made it absolutely clear: Manitoba has some of the weakest conflict of interest laws in Canada. They haven't been updated since 1985. Even then, it's been hard for some of the members to even meet that bare minimum standard, like the First Minister.

But, one of the challenges here—and I would also remark that one of the very first committee meetings I attended was an attempt to not just reappoint the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, but to remove his security of tenure.

So it's clear that this—when it comes to conflict of interest, this government is on rather weak ground. And we should—we absolutely have to, in this day and age, remove not just the conflict of interest, but the perception of conflict of interest. I'm sure that the people who are members opposite—perfectly fine—they may be fine landlords. But they are landlords. And if they vote for this they will have a benefit. That is not something they should be doing.

And as far as stakeholder consultations—I don't know where the minister has disappeared to, but—you know, as far as stakeholders, if she needs to consult the stakeholders—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order please. I would just remind the new member that we are not to be making any references to the absence of members from the House, and encourage the member to follow those rules.

Mr. Lamont: I apologize, Madam Speaker. I thought she'd moved within the Chamber.

So when it comes to—but, and again, when it comes to consultation with the stakeholders, she could've quite literally consulted with members of the caucus—of her own caucus, or her own cabinet, who are on their conflict-of-interest statements, have—are registered owners of residential properties. And I want to express my serious concern about this hazardous waste. The fact that it makes it simpler and yet we don't have to—basically grandfathering the issue of hazardous waste and as long as there's an environmental regulation. This is the entire issue that's at stake in St. Boniface.

What happened in St. Boniface is that there was an old scrapyard which bought new technology, and one of the things that it did—and it was granted an environmental licence by the previous government. It was granted an environmental licence that would never have been granted if it were a green-fill development. It was only granted because it was grandfathered. And the new technology involves vaporizing metal and throwing it up into the air.

So one of the whole questions, again, in St. Boniface with lead contamination is not just whether it's old lead contamination, but whether—or, and other metals—but whether it's being thrown off by new technology at this facility. And it seems to me that this legislation is going to make that easier, not harder. In St. Boniface, there was an explosion in 2010, and people were extremely lucky that more people weren't killed. It was terrifying for firefighters who had to come in.

And one of the things that the report of the Speedway International fire had was not just that the—it was operating—the facility was operating without an occupancy permit at all from the City of Winnipeg, but that it's possible for—because provincial regulation is so weak and there are no provincial inspectors who are allowed onto some of those sites because of the companies who operate in that industrial park are able to just shift the hazardous waste onto trains which can only be inspected federally and aren't inspected by the Province.

So, Madam Speaker, I'm extremely concerned. The fact is some regulation is about protection. And the idea that you can make the province safer by removing the need for seatbelts or airbags or anything else in order to make it more convenient for people to get into their cars—it's simply not the case.

The fact is, where there are no rules, there is no game.

And we—the problem with Manitoba has actually been we have incredibly weak regulations—not too many of them—and they're seldom enforced. And we've seen it. There are decades—decades—of reports of lead contamination that were suppressed. I mean, one of the ironies of the report that came out when the government released the report saying—into lead contamination, there was data from 2007—it actually referred to lead contamination reports that had been unreleased since 1989 under the previous PC government.

So this is—the idea that we're necessarily going to make regulation better by cutting it mindlessly is—defies common sense and frankly, this is not a bill worth passing. Thank you.

* (17:00)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'm going to build on what the member from Point Douglas and St. Boniface has—have said and make some additional reflections. It is ironic to have a bill to reduce red tape, which is actually red tape in itself. Perhaps the bill should be renamed—an amendment—the blue tape bill, or, to be fair, the orange tape bill, but red tape—it just seems inaccurate because, in fact, what is happening is there is more red tape, and it's not a reduction, it's an increase.

The government is being—there's an old saying—penny-wise, pound-foolish. So the government has picked out some regulations or acts but have missed the big picture. They've missed the big picture. Instead, they are creating a new Crown corporation. We heard earlier, the minister's proud of the Crown corporation. I wonder if it was as proud as the minister—prime—or, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was about the carbon tax up to a few days ago. But that creates more red tape for hydro, for central gas, for people who are using drinkable water, because, Madam Speaker, that piece of legislation goes much further than what the minister was suggesting. It goes to transportation, potable water, yes, and gas and energy.

And, Madam Speaker, the electricity thing is absolutely ridiculous. They want to reduce GHGs by reducing the electricity consumption. Well, in Manitoba, almost all—ninety-nine per cent of our power is clean Manitoba Hydro. So, to set in a corporation—new Crown corporation—to reduce electricity consumption in the name of the

environment, in Manitoba's case, it doesn't work, and moreover, they want to reduce energy consumption, but we have a lot more energy coming online because of overbuilds in generation capacity. So that costs billions and it will cost Manitobans billions over the years, and that's from the Public Utilities Board. That's pretty expensive red tape; really expensive red tape.

The member from Point Douglas raised the issue of housing and some of the social—you know what, Madam Speaker, I'll add another area where we need to look at smart regulation, not reduce regulation but smart regulation, and that's the prescription of drugs. You know, you go to the pharmacy—you know, how are people getting a hold of these opioids? They're over the counter, but you need to get a prescription from a physician, you need to go to a pharmacist; but somehow, there's an oversupply, but it's supposed to be controlled demand for good reasons. That's an area where regulation that is enforced would be very appropriate, but the government completely ignores where places can be smart regulation.

Another area, Madam Speaker, on the order paper, there is a bill introduced by the member from Assiniboia and that member suggests the reduction of seats—MLA seats in this place, and because with each MLA not only does it cost millions of dollars, there's a lot of red tape associated.

So, if the government was serious about reducing red tape, they would embrace my legislation on reduction of seats.

Madam Speaker, on smart legislation, the member from Point Douglas raised the issue of Manitoba Public Insurance. Well, it so happens that on the Order Paper I've already introduced a bill on Manitoba Public Insurance and—that would help young people—young people who have received catastrophic injuries. In fact, it was that issue that got me involved in politics in the first place, 25 years ago, which is amazing. But still, nothing has really progressed on that. Maybe that's something the government could do.

And, Madam Speaker, there is another piece of—it's on the Order Paper and perhaps the government hasn't noticed yet, but it amends The Efficiency Manitoba Act. Ooh—maybe the government should embrace that piece of legislation because Efficiency Manitoba is inefficient—penny wise, pound foolish. So, a little here, a little there, but missing the big picture.

And the member from St. Boniface raised an excellent issue, and that's the conflict of interest—smart regulation. The—I've been saying for years that the conflict of interest regulations in Manitoba are pathetic, are a sham and need to be updated. The government has done nothing. They did nothing when they formed government. They did nothing when I introduced a substantive bill of 35 pages based on best practices in other places. There's a—I have a resolution on that same issue and the government seems to be delaying it as long as possible.

Now, I know the communication is really awesome between the government caucus and their ministers, but it might be that one minister didn't let the other minister know about the resolution—I don't know, but it needs to be debated and it's on conflict of interest. The point is you can have a smart regulation and we need to have smart regulation.

Madam Speaker, the government has the ability to deal with red tape through—and, in fact, regulatory process through Treasury Board, orders-in-council. They should do that rather than creating more red tape. Now, if you have to delete or get rid of acts, well, okay, but do it in concert with Treasury Board and other regulations so that you can have smart regulation without silly acts.

And speaking of silly acts, that brings us back to the red tape reduction bill that creates red tape from a government that creates new Crown corporations that will cost billions of dollars. And, in the same breath, the government that does not introduce a budget finds that there's \$300 million shy based on a split-second decision, apparently, from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) yesterday.

Maybe we should have a regulation—a smart regulation—about budgeting, basic budgeting, because it appears that no government, regardless of their political affiliation in Manitoba, seems to be able to budget. You need revenue and you need it to be 'expended'. You cut the revenue, you need to do something about the expenditure, or you're just going to end up borrowing more money. But when you do it badly everyone pays.

Madam Speaker, thank you.

* (17:10)

Madam Speaker: I will now put the question on second reading of Bill 12, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2018.

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

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): Madam Speaker, 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 12, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2018.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 36, Nays 15.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 16—The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to second reading of Bill 16, The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 16, The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table that message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Sustainable Development, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 16, The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill and we table his message.

Ms. Squires: I'm pleased to put a few words on the record about Bill 16, The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act.

Our Manitoba government is moving forward with our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, without a carbon tax. I anticipate that members opposite, particularly the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), will support this legislation because he said as recent as last night that he does not believe that a tax—a carbon tax would achieve carbon emission reductions.

We, on this side of the House, believe that we will achieve significant carbon emission reductions without a carbon tax. Last year, our government received legal advice that the federal government has the constitutional power to impose a carbon tax, but only on provinces that do not implement plans of their own.

After consulting with thousands of Manitobans, experts and stakeholders, the Province released its Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan on October 27, 2017. Additional consultations continued after the release of that plan. Our made-in-Manitoba plan proposed a flat, fixed tax rate that would provide stability to consumers, businesses, industry and agriculture. It would also save Manitoba families and businesses more than \$260 million over five years compared to the Ottawa plan. Most

importantly, all monies collected under our plan would be returned to Manitobans in the form of tax reductions.

However, immediately after unveiling our Climate and Green Plan and on numerous occasions thereafter, the Manitoba government sought the federal government's assurances that it would not impose its escalating carbon tax plan over and above the Manitoba tax. That assurance has not been given and, in fact, as recent as two weeks ago, Ottawa had acknowledged that our plan was the best in Canada; however, they would not take off the table their option of imposing an escalating tax on Manitobans. They have stated that they will impose that higher tax and rising taxes—rising carbon tax on Manitobans every year after that. This would mean twice the tax with poorer results. It would threaten jobs and economic growth throughout our province and take money off the kitchen table of Manitoba families.

That is why we are move forward—we are moving forward with aggressive climate mitigation measures without a carbon tax. This includes a \$100-million investment and a conservation trust for nature conservation and wetland restoration for all Manitobans. We're also phasing out—or, we have phased out the use of coal in Manitoba and are investing significantly in flood mitigation and other climate mitigation factors in the—in our province, measures that the NDP failed to do over 17 years in office.

Our Manitoba plan focuses on four pillars of cleaner water, conservation of natural areas, effective steps to address climate change and strength—while strengthening the economy. It is a plan that will continue investments in renewable energy while encouraging Manitobans to reduce their energy consumption. Manitoba's plan will make a significant and lasting positive impact on the environment and the economy.

We are standing up for Manitobans by saying yes to a green plan, no to a carbon tax.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by

each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So I spoke to stakeholders yesterday. They had no idea that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) had done his one-eighty. I had spoke with a—many people in the media who are typically tipped off—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —by this government, and they had no idea that this was coming. Judging by the reaction of people on the government benches, I think most of the backbenchers had no idea that this change was coming. There was a lot of, you know, staffers kind of with slumped shoulders yesterday. I don't think they knew what was coming.

So I'm curious to know, when did the Sustainable Development Minister learn that there would be no carbon tax and that all of the rhetoric she's been using for the past year to argue for a carbon tax would now have to be used to argue against it?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Well, thank you very much, and I'd also like to point out that even after being told about the new change in direction, the member, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), he still did not know because he had not listened and he was still rambling on in his question or in his opening statement yesterday, railing on and on about the negative impacts of a carbon tax.

So—and I would also encourage him not to take my slumped shoulders as anything other than, perhaps, poor posture.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, my understanding is that the plan for a climate and green fund was to indicate that the dollars from the carbon tax, some of those would be going to a climate and green fund. I ask the minister, what will happen to the climate and green fund? Will there be any dollars for it? Will there be fewer dollars if there's no carbon tax? Does the minister have any idea how many dollars will be in it?

* (17:30)

Ms. Squires: Well, that is an excellent question from my friend from River Heights, and I can reiterate something that we've been saying all along and perhaps he never heard, but the reality is is that all

the money that we would have collected from a carbon tax was going to be directed back to Manitobans in the form of tax reduction. We were always intending it to be revenue neutral. And on the aspect of a climate fund, in our government it's called the Sustainable Development Initiatives Fund as well as some other initiatives in my department. And those initiatives will continue, and in fact he will see more initiatives as we move forward with significant climate mitigation strategies being funded out of our government.

Mr. Kinew: So, Madam Speaker, when did the Sustainable Development Minister learn that she was going to have to say that there would be no carbon tax? Was it during, you know, routine proceedings yesterday? Was this two weeks ago after the infamous meeting with the Prime Minister? Was it after, you know, backbenchers on the government side were threatening to join our colleague from Assiniboia over there in his freedom caucus? When, exactly, did she learn of the change to the policy that she's been instructed to tell us is the government's position for now?

Ms. Squires: Well, I can assure the members opposite that I have—I probably learned before he learned that his member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) was going to go out and say that carbon taxes don't reduce climate—or carbon footprints.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to table a letter. This letter is a fundraising letter released by the PC Party of Manitoba, signed by the member—the minister, discussing the benefits of the carbon tax. And I have, quite helpfully, when I received it last week, red marked it, and the minister got an F minus on the paper, and it turns out that everything that is in red has been prove true. Madam Speaker, when did the minister—like, the minister's in an impossible situation—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: So I did not get a question out of that, so I'd just ask the member to restate his question please.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, to state his question.

Mr. Fletcher: So who's going to resign: you or the Premier? Because the Premier obviously does not talk to anyone. So it probably should be the Premier. I—this minister, I generally like, but the Premier—*[interjection]* No, I'm—people are—it's a serious

public policy, financial fiasco, and this minister is stuck defending the impossible. Madam Speaker, will this minister call on the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to resign?

Ms. Squires: Well, I mean, I'm, you know, open to answering any reasonable question, but clearly the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher)—that's not even a reasonable question. However, he did raise the issue about the efficacy of a carbon tax, and unlike the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), who said that a carbon tax has absolutely no ability to achieve carbon-emission reductions, we on this side of the House, we did do extensive modelling, and we found that there are substantial carbon mitigations to be had from a variety of methods, including a carbon price but including many other initiatives, and we're going to achieve up to a megaton of carbon-emission reductions on some of those other measures.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, my follow-up question: The minister refers to the fact that the intent was to make this revenue neutral. Within this bill, my understanding is that the revenue neutrality came from the increase in the personal income tax exemption and that the carbon tax money would largely go to allow that increase in the personal income tax exemption. If there's no carbon tax, does that mean that the minister will be withdrawing the increase in the personal income tax exemption that's in this bill?

Ms. Squires: Yes.

Mr. Kinew: Well, you know, I sympathize with the minister who's just been handed this report card style paper that's been graded. I don't know if the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) expects her to get that signed and brought back to the House or what, but hopefully she doesn't lose too much sleep over it.

She did however just say that she believes that carbon pricing is effective. We just heard that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said there won't be a carbon price. The minister's been forced to kind of follow the Premier back and forth onto both sides of this issue. But I'd like to ask what she believes. Does she believe that there should be a price on carbon in Manitoba?

Ms. Squires: Thanks, and I do appreciate that question from members opposite. And our government has always been very clear, we believe that carbon pricing was one tool in the toolbox. We had proposed in our 60-plus, 60 page climate and green plan that there were many, many measures of—to

achieve climate mitigation and carbon emission reductions. We had done modelling that would show our carbon price, a \$25 flat price on carbon would achieve over a megaton of carbon emission reductions.

It's unfortunate the federal government never respected that plan. We asked them to look at the carbon emission savings that we would have—the reductions that we would have—and to respect our plan and not implement an escalating price. They did not do that and that is why we're backing away.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, there were some interesting elements of the government's approach, that the government was planning to exempt farmers and farm fuels from the carbon tax, that there was to be in companion legislation an exemption for aircraft with regard to interfacility transfers and so on, and this bill contains provisions for what will happen with large industrial emitters.

If the government doesn't put on the carbon tax and the federal government does apply its carbon tax nationally, what will be the situation with regard to the exemption for farmers—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: Thank you, and I would encourage the member to pick up the phone and ask Ottawa that question. We will be standing up for Manitobans as we always have done and ensure that our trade-exposed industries are protected. We believe in protecting the environment and protecting the economy at the same time. And I hope members opposite would phone his Liberal cousins in Ottawa and ask them to respect Manitobans as well.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, I will note that the minister did not say no to my previous question about her demanding the Premier's resignation.

Madam Speaker, the fact is the plan presented by the Province was spending more money, taxing more money and doing it faster than the Liberal plan. The Efficiency Manitoba is a fiasco. Will the member—will the minister be open to amending the Efficiency Manitoba legislation?

Ms. Squires: Well, it's not part of this bill so I encourage the member to get his bills straight. But the one thing that I can assure him is that we're working together, and I'm pleased to be working with our new Minister of Crown Services (Mrs. Mayer) and the chair of Efficiency Manitoba, Jeanette Montufar, on ensuring that we have the best demand-

side management plan in the country, and making it definitely smaller and more efficient.

Mr. Kinew: So the minister has said just today, even after the Premier says no carbon tax, she said here tonight that she believes that a carbon price can be effective, would be effective. Their plan called for bringing in a price on carbon this year, the Liberal backstop wouldn't really kick in for a few years now

So the question that we're left with, if she believes it would be effective and the, you know, cudgel that the federal government is holding wouldn't be implemented for a few years from now, why now? Why the sudden about face, why, you know, force the Premier to do such a one-eighty, such a dramatic flip-flop in front of everyone here? Why now? Why not bring forward a measure that you believe will work and then wait and see whether you can get a better deal down the road from the federal government?

* (17:40)

Ms. Squires: Well, far be it for me to give the Leader of the Official Opposition advice, but I could assure him that one year—a one-year climate mitigation strategy would be not effective. It would not produce the results that Manitobans need on climate change, and it would not do anything to protect the Manitoba economy. And he knows full well that the federal government was giving us a one-year ultimatum and that they had told us that in a year's time our carbon price would not be adequate and that we would have to, quote, unquote, up our game.

And so he says that this has just been a very rapid decision, and it's been one that's been in the making for a long time.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, Madam Speaker, this bill contains provisions in terms of industrial—large industrial emitters, and my question is: Are those provisions going to continue? And related to that is what representations the government is going to make with respect to large industrial emitters and the federal government's approach to taxing carbon or other.

Madam Speaker: The honourable minister of Crown—pardon me. The honourable Minister of Sustainable Development.

Ms. Squires: As I'd mentioned to the member before, our concern has always been about ensuring that we had a plan in Manitoba that was better for the

environment and better for the economy, and part of that included working with our large emitters and helping them reduce their carbon footprint while respecting the diversity of their operations and understanding that they are, at times, emissions intensive and trade exposed. And we're going to continue to work with large emitters, Manitoba businesses, in this province and protect those jobs that are dependent on those industrial entrepreneurs and businesses.

Mr. Fletcher: I'd like to correct the leader of the opposition. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) did not do a one-eighty; he did a sixteen-twenty. He went around and around and around a few times and then came up to where it is now.

The fact is, the carbon pricing—the federal government never changed its position. The provincial government clearly has. There's a huge hole in the green plan. Why doesn't the government just simply admit that they made a mistake? And somebody should resign. It should be either the minister or the Premier. It's probably the Premier because he just tells what—tells everyone what to do and to write. Please—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: Again, I'm not sure I even heard a question in there, but the member did ask what had changed, and as he knows, on October 27th last year, we unveiled a very ambitious climate and green plan. It was a plan that had the confidence of many Manitobans and we had had many discussions with the federal government over the course of 11 months, and we'd asked them on a number of occasions to respect our plan, and they did not do that, and that is why we have done what we have done.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, I do really, you know, sympathize to a certain extent with the minister because she's been, for a year, for I don't know how many press conferences they had to re-announce this thing, this plan of theirs—she's been armed with one set of arguments to go out and say there needed to be a carbon tax here in Manitoba. Now the Premier, apparently on his way into the Chamber the other day, decided that there should be no carbon tax, and

she hasn't been given new talking points or speaking notes.

Armed with the exact same information and armed with the exact same arguments, she's now being asked by this Premier (Mr. Pallister) to come back in here and use all that evidence and all those arguments to say now there should be no carbon tax. That's certainly a challenging position to be in, so I understand that that's definitely a challenge.

Now, the question that's not been answered by the government yet is, which of their backbenchers were threatening to cross the floor to join the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) with his Manitoba Party? Which of the MLAs on the government benches were holding that threat over the Premier's head that forced the Premier to reconsider his position?

Now, I understand that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), his ears have perked up and all of a sudden he's paying attention. Perhaps it was the member for Radisson. But when they announced the closure of Concordia Hospital and people all over northeast Winnipeg spoke out against the closure of Concordia's ER, we know that that member said absolutely nothing. So I doubt that it was he who had the nerve.

I see the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) grinning across the way, a 'mischievous' smile; perhaps he was the one who threatened the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and said if you don't join Doug Ford and Jason Kenney in opposing Justin Trudeau's attack plan, then I'm headed to the freedom caucus. I'm fretted—I'm headed to the freedom caucus right away.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

But then, again, I don't know if it was him or not. I have no damning evidence, no document that I can table—though, perhaps another red-marked member for Assiniboia's (Mr. Fletcher) scrawled paper will find its way to the Chamber before long and we'll find out that it was in fact the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) standing up for his constituents in a way that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) would not when it came to the closure of the ER at the Concordia Hospital.

Then, again, perhaps it was an urban MLA. Perhaps it was the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) who was standing on the side of Doug Ford and Jason Kenney and, you know, the who's

who of the rebel media all-stars that are populating social media these days.

But the bottom line is that there has been a remarkable, remarkable about-face by the Premier. So for well over a year, going back to the last election, the Premier has talked about bringing in a price on carbon. He's talked about it in all sorts of different terms and flowery language. They've announced this thing three times, three different Throne Speeches. It's figured prominently in the government's agenda. And then all of a sudden, even after an entire summer of talking about why a price on carbon was so important to help the environment, of course, the Premier comes in here this week and says, ah, nah, sorry, we're not going to do it. The member for Riding Mountain got to me and we're doing a one-eighty, a ten-twenty, a seven-twenty, a ten-eighty. Who knows how many degrees of spin that have been applied?

We know when the Conservatives are involved, there is plenty of spin involved, but this case has been particularly egregious because, again, the—it would be one thing if they changed the rationale, right, and if all of a sudden, you know, they came back in here with a new argument. But they're even using the same arguments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just a week ago were being used in that fundraising letter to argue for why a carbon tax had to be brought in here in Manitoba. And so it makes really no sense whatsoever, and it shows, really, again, as was raised in question period earlier today, what happens when you have a leader who believes that governing is a one-man show, because you have the entire 'apparati' of government marching in one direction one day, and then all of a sudden, 'ERHHH'—sorry, everybody.

An Honourable Member: Sorry, Hansard people.

Mr. Kinew: I changed my mind. Yes, I do apologize. I believe that was spelled e-r-r-r-h, exclamation point, for the folks in the Hansard booth.

So, anyway, I was just characterizing the screeching tires of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) runaway train there, the screeching brakes, I should say, of the runaway train there that was all of a sudden being brought to bear and turned around entirely.

Of course, I'm having some fun here. We're sitting in an evening session. But at the heart of the matter is something that is very serious. It is very important. And that is that we have a moral responsibility, a moral obligation, to protect the

environment, to ensure that there will be clean air, clean water and a habitable earth for future generations, not just here in Manitoba—of course, including Manitoba, but also around the world.

And while many other jurisdictions, you know, they appear to be caught up with the, you know, the rising tide of populous sentiment represented by Donald Trump and, you know, the CAQ in Quebec and Doug Ford in Ontario, it seemed that perhaps here in Manitoba, there would be an ability to have a more reasoned discussion that we could, as we were, up until a few days ago, debating the finer points of a price on carbon.

* (17:50)

It did seem that we would be able to claim that, but then, of course, it turns out that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) here is not such a moderate after all. He put on a brave face during that election campaign that I talked about, put on a brave face during all those throne speeches that we all sat here and, you know, saw the fancy guests come in and listen to. But then, of course, once the crazies showed up on the national scene, like Doug Ford and Jason Kenney, then all of a sudden the Premier's mask came off and he said, ah, my people are here; right on; excellent. Why don't we just throw this entire multi-year planning process and all the, you know, spin and rhetoric that we've been pumping out into the public sphere, why don't we just throw that in the trash bin just like the plan that we have here for the environment?

So of course that brings us to the question of the hour, which is that we're debating a bill. Why are we debating this bill? Why are we debating a bill here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government has now backed away from? They have announced that they intend to amend this bill at committee. They are going to amend the substance of the bill. We know that the other measures that they're talking about here are measures that could have been put in place without legislation, and so it really begs the question as to, you know, why are we here. And the simple answer is because the Premier sprung this decision on everyone in his caucus, in his staff, and, of course, in his Cabinet. Because if this had actually been the result of serious planning they would have taken steps to ensure that we don't have to debate this bill any longer.

And so it's just another, I guess, sad testament to the failure of leadership that we're seeing here. It's a failure of leadership not just because the Premier

backed down from a fight with Justin Trudeau. We know that he likes to pick on Justin Trudeau in the media every time that he's in trouble, but of course when it actually came down to having a real showdown with Trudeau in Ottawa, the Premier retreated, was not willing to engage on the battlefield, shied away from that sort of conflict, and just said, well, I'm going to take my ball and go home. And his consolation, of course, is that, you know, those members who are threatening to walk out on him, perhaps they'll live to fight another election, though of course I can tell you that they're very likely to lose their seats in those elections.

Of course, some seats are safer than others. Arthur-Virden—I'm not too sure how intensive a campaign we'll put up in that neck of the woods, but that's just an observation apropos of nothing there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So these are the sorts of things that I think a lot of Manitobans have been thinking about over the past few days. I'm sure the journalists would love to know whether, you know, it was one MLA or the other whose plea, you know, got through to the Premier and forced him to change his mind. In fact, I would like to know, because there's other things we would like the Premier to change his mind about. We would like him to back off his plan for health cuts, and if it turned out that the member from Gimli has a special power to be able to get the Premier to change his mind, then maybe we'll just all go march over to the member's office there and say, hey, can you get him to back off the plan to close ERs in Winnipeg?

Or maybe, for instance, if it was my friend from Kildonan, who has the ability to miraculously change the Premier's mind about the coming cuts to education. Maybe we could have a different Education Minister, one who believed in evolution. We could, you know, march over to his office and have all these changes made here.

So if there was all of this attention paid to the issue for the right reason, which is for us to stand up for the environment, then that would be one thing, but unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all the attention is coming onto this issue simply because the Premier is playing politics, simply because the Premier cannot abide by a principled position and because he's backed away from a fight with Trudeau.

So, again, I thank you very much for this time and I would say that we have to do better to help the environment for our kids and our grandchildren's sake.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, there are huge numbers of problems with this legislation and I will just go through some of them, reasons why we would not support it.

First of all, this legislation eliminates The Sustainable Development Act, a broad approach to the environment which this bill tries to focus, but doesn't do it very successfully, on climate change.

Items which are missed are the eco-certification of fishes important for sustainable development, approach to plastic contamination, the approach to lead contamination, which has been an important subject, and the situation of Lake Winnipeg. I hear recently that there are now huge masses of sewage and algae at the junction of the north of south basin in Lake Winnipeg, and yet this bill has no measure in terms of sustainable development as it relates to Lake Winnipeg.

It needs to be clearer, No. 2, that this bill is not a plan and the government has not presented, to date, a plan. It says in this bill, the minister must develop a plan with a comprehensive framework of programs, policies and measures. Clearly, the document that the government has presented and proposed that it might be a plan, is not, because it's not comprehensive. It doesn't include agriculture; it has no targets, no plan to meet those targets, and, indeed, it has not had advice from the advisory council, which is a mandatory aspect of this plan that's in this legislation.

So the government has presented something which is a document which is almost ridiculous in terms of trying to address climate change and brings this bill forward to bring in some sort of a new plan which includes the advisory council and is somehow much more comprehensive, and the minister has provided no clues as to what she's going to do.

But it's obvious that she needs a new plan because the very core, the very centre, of this bill, was to introduce a carbon tax of \$25 a ton. Everything else in this bill is sort of surrounding that. I mean, the idea that it is carbon neutral, and so it was included in this bill, the increase in the personal tax exemption to balance off the monies coming in from the carbon tax. We hear that the minister is going to continue the increased exemption, and so her whole idea that this was somehow carbon neutral has just gone up in smoke.

The plan was built around this has industrial emitters, has a farm tax exemption, has all sorts of things in it, all centred around the fact that they

would have a core increase of \$25 a ton in the carbon tax. So we need to understand why they, at the last minute, did this sixteen-twenty and turned around several times and ended up with this situation. A No. 1 reason is that clearly they wanted to blame the NDP for delaying the original legislation which could've been passed by now but wasn't; all because of the NDP's fault we don't have a \$25-a-ton carbon tax.

Second, the primary and probably a major reason was that they consulted with a lot of people and they found, in fact, that their plan to increase the carbon tax to \$25 a ton right away would create the biggest, well, almost the biggest, carbon tax in the country and would be considerably higher than Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Quebec for the first couple of years. And so—but it would be there with the federal government's bringing it in. What you have to recognize is that this was a problem all of a sudden that Manitoba was going to have a higher carbon tax than other provinces and out of synchrony and people would be purchasing gas in other jurisdictions, et cetera, et cetera. So it didn't make sense. There was a lot of blowback, and there was a basic problem at the very core part of what this legislation was.

And thirdly, I believe the government decided that they could, in taking the carbon tax, the provincial carbon tax, off the table, they would be in a position to blame the federal government if the federal government brought in a carbon tax. So they—primary reasons were being able to blame others rather than for substantive reasons.

And by the way, the minister is actually right that there are, done properly—I'm not sure that this bill was done as well as it could have been—but done properly, putting a tax on carbon will reduce carbon emissions. And this is—the minister is right and a lot of other people are wrong, including, perhaps, if he really meant what was ascribed to him, the member from Wolseley, in this respect, that carbon taxes can be part, an effective part, of a plan to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

* (18:00)

There are aspects of this. This will abolish the Water Council and move this into the expert advisory committee. The Water Council needs, in many circumstances, quite different expertise than is needed to address climate change. I'm not sure that the expert advisory committee to address climate change will be the optimum one for addressing water

issues. It doesn't really make a lot of sense, quite frankly.

The fundamental problem in what the government has presented so far is that they are not going to address agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture make up about 40 per cent of the province's greenhouse gas emissions, with about 15 per cent coming from nitrous oxide, 15 per cent coming from methane and 10 per cent coming from fossil fuels used on farms: tractors, trucks, heating barns and all these sorts of things.

The government has been suggesting that the number produced by farmers is lower. There are actually very efficient and good ways of reducing nitrous oxide production in a win-win way for farmers, but this government won't listen to those sorts of ideas.

And so, as we, you know, get to this bill and where it's going, the sad thing is that this bill, as it's presented now without the \$25 tax increase—our carbon tax, it's a shambles. It's a farce. It doesn't make a lot of sense. The government should have just withdrawn this bill instead of trying to debate it and to bring it through.

And, you know, one mistake after another: creating a sixteen-twenty, going round in circles a whole bunch of times. This government is not looking very good on this bill—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —has really made a mess of things, and the government should just admit it and totally withdraw this bill at this juncture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I have to correct the member from River Heights. It is actually impossible for the government's plan to go up in smoke, as the member said. Smoke is not carbon-neutral. The fact is—you get it? You know, smoke—anyway, too late at night for everyone. *[interjection]* Oh, thank you. Thank you.

The issue around what has happened here on this bill is quite serious. It speaks to how our democracy works, how—to planning and just good old Manitoba common sense. In—not so long ago, I was quite pleased to join the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in celebration of an election victory. I was quite pleased to have the opportunity to serve in a caucus.

But what was amazing in all of this is—and I can say this because it was a public meeting and everyone in this room on the other side will know exactly what I'm talking about. It was March 20th, where we were going to discuss stuff, but it ended up being an open meeting with all the staffers, the president of U of W and God knows who else, on this issue of Efficiency Manitoba and the carbon tax.

I had 40–40–binders, two-and-a-half-inch-thick binders of material that I was hoping that would be discussed. None of it was discussed. I actually had to bring a cart into the committee room—a cart—because there was so much stuff, research—good research—that I did with my background as an engineer and as a parliamentarian.

Now, I don't know where all those binders went because there were members of the public, there were members—there was staff, and there were MLAs and God knows who else. Not one MLA acknowledged or even read the material, and that material has turned out to be bang on. I knew that then, but that's the problem with the government, is they do not talk. They—the—there's no respect for anyone else. It's just a one-person operation. Now, the members over across the way I think are good people, to a person. In fact, everyone in this place is a good person, but it is no—should be no surprise to anyone that this bill and the carbon tax and many other things have turned out badly.

The carbon tax is absolutely correct and I'm absolutely correct on Efficiency Manitoba. The experts agree, Public Utilities Board agrees, engineers agree, Hydro agrees. Hydro wouldn't even show up at the committee meetings to defend or speak to the bill, and then the minister says in committee, oh, well, Hydro would be in a conflict. Really? Well, then the minister must be in a conflict.

I was—as that was the first opportunity for me to speak, was at committee, I did, because that is what an MLA's supposed to do, is represent their constituents, and if you can't do it behind closed doors, by golly, by—you have to do it at committee and in the community. That is your responsibility, and if people are not strong enough or insecure or unable to articulate why they support a position, well then they probably shouldn't be in the position and they probably shouldn't be in public office.

Fast forward—and there are a couple other things. I—the day that I was expelled from the Conservative caucus—well I found out two days later by the media—three reasons were given. One was my position on

Efficiency Manitoba; the carbon tax; a presentation I made to the group called Manitoba Forward, which is online for everyone to see, and some private members bills I introduced: private members bills on organ donation and on conflict of interest. And I think it was—I knew when I introduced the conflict of interest bill that that was probably it, but what is remarkable is how entrenched the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has been on the carbon tax and how vindictive and how personal and how irresponsible.

The Premier and the leader of the Conservative Party met in April. Apparently they talked about a lot of things, but they didn't talk about the carbon tax, but they did talk about me and my bid for a nomination for the Conservative Party, which at—in public. And the deal, it seems, was that the federal MPs in Manitoba, the Conservative MPs, would not speak about the made-in-Manitoba carbon tax or environmental plan. In exchange, there would be some sort of support down the road.

* (18:10)

So, rather than dealing with the issues, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) went right down to petty personal politics, and, consequently I was denied the—even the opportunity to run for the nomination. But what is more despicable, I guess, is denying the membership and the people of the riding the opportunity to select their candidate. Now, that will be—there'll be a reckoning for what is happening inside the federal Conservative Party. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: When—as it goes with us in Manitoba, this bill is ill-conceived. It is unfunded. It is unfunded. That—there's a huge hole in the budget if this bill goes ahead. The public policy is weak and unproven at—the minister refuses to amend the act. Because the demand-side management aspect is ridiculous, especially in a already hydro-rich power generation province. This plan will cost Manitoba Hydro billions of dollars, billions of dollars it doesn't have. You can talk about the NDP messing up Manitoba Hydro. Well, this government is doing a pretty good job in screwing up our largest—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

I will now put the question on the second reading of Bill 16, the climate and greenhouse implementation act.

All those in favour of the motion, please—*[interjection]*

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried—oh, the honourable opposition House leader.

Recorded Vote

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been asked. Call in the members.

* (18:20)

The question before the House is Bill 16—the second reading of Bill 16, The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 35, Nays 16.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

**Bill 24—The Social Services Appeal Board
Amendment Act**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll go on to Bill 24, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 24, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission d'appel des services sociaux, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I am pleased to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 24, the Social Services Appeal Board.

The Social Services Appeal Board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an appeal board composed of a broad range of Manitobans, and the appeal board members are tasked with reviewing administrative decisions for various government-funded programs such as Employment and Income Assistance, the Community Living disABILITY Services and Rent Assist.

The purpose of the appeal board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to provide for informal and timely access to an independent review of program decisions related to service or benefit eligibility and certification or licensing. The board must issue decisions within 15 days after an appeal hearing ends.

As some of you may be aware—many members here will be aware, the Court of Appeal issued a decision that the Social Services Appeal Board has jurisdiction to hear appeals that are based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and I'll refer to this Charter jurisdiction. However, the court decision also acknowledged that determining whether a tribunal should have Charter jurisdiction is a legislative function and a matter of legislative policy. It is therefore within the authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the Legislative Assembly to limit or restrict the board's jurisdiction by amending the act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's after careful review of the practical and functional realities of the appeal board, as well as the approach taken in other jurisdictions, that we have made the decision to

amend The Social Services Appeal Board Act. The purpose of these amendments is to make it clear that the appeal board has no jurisdiction to consider constitutional challenges to legislation or to the grant Charter remedies. This is in keeping with the court decision that acknowledged that the Legislature has the authority to restrict the jurisdiction of the appeal board through legislative amendments.

In practical terms, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amendments will clarify that the appeal board cannot refuse to apply a provision of an act or regulation on the grounds that it violates the Charter. It is also prevented from ruling that a particular administrative policy or action is unconstitutional. The highly complex and time-consuming legal arguments in a Charter challenge, given their significant implications for all Manitobans, we believe are best addressed through other matters and through the courts, just as they have in the past and as they are still able to do going forward. The courts, with experienced judges and highly trained lawyers, are best equipped, we believe, with the necessary expertise to argue and determine difficult constitutional questions.

Those who believe their Charter rights have been infringed may apply to the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench for a declaration as to whether a program, policy or practice or legislative provision is unconstitutional. They may also ask the court for other remedies under the Charter that the appeal board is unable to provide.

We are also concerned that if we do not amend the act, it could negatively affect the timeliness of appeal board decisions. Timely access to independent review of government program decisions is a key feature of the Social Services Appeal Board, as many Manitobans rely on these services and benefits for daily life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill is also in keeping with the approach taken in other jurisdictions. For example, Alberta has legislation that restricts Charter jurisdiction for quasi-judicial tribunals unless another act explicitly grants Charter jurisdiction. The appeal boards that hear income assistance related appeals in Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario also do not have Charter jurisdiction. Furthermore, decision to confirm that the courts are the appropriate jurisdiction to hear Charter challenges is entirely consistent with the amendments made by the previous NDP government in 2005 to restrict Charter jurisdiction in The Workers Compensation Act

because, like the other Social Services Appeal Board, the Workers Compensation Board is not designed to deal with the complexity of constitutional questions.

Using language that is consistent with The Constitutional Questions Act, the proposed amendments as drafted achieve the following objectives: (1) the proposed amendments clarify that the appeal board has no jurisdiction to consider constitutional challenges to legislation or to grant remedies under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and secondly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the proposed amendments do not preclude the board from considering Charter values when making a discretionary decision specific to the appellant and the matter of his or her appeal. In such cases, the board's decision would only apply to the appeal in question.

Charter values are the fundamental social values that underlie Charter rights, such as equality and free speech. The appeal board's obligation to consider Charter values in the context of discretionary decisions in individual cases would, in fact, continue. As an example, consider a policy that says a person's benefits may be reduced if the person does not report a change in their circumstances.

* (18:30)

If a person was unable to report a change in their circumstances because they were hospitalized due to a disability, the appeal board must take the Charter value of equality into account when deciding whether to reduce the person's benefits.

In making its decision, the appeal board would consider the purpose behind the discretion, which is to ensure that benefits go to the people who are eligible for them and weigh this against the importance of equality for persons with disabilities. Taking these considerations into account, it would reach a decision that is fair and reasonable in the person's unique circumstances.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that it is very important to maintain the timeliness of social—of the Social Services Appeal Board decisions, as vulnerable Manitobans rely on the board for fair review of their eligibility for services benefits, such as employment and income assistance or residential care for adults with intellectual disabilities.

So with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll leave it at that, and I'm happy to entertain any questions that other members in the Chamber have today.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member of the following sequence: first by the question of the official opposition critic or designate, second by the second opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions may be asked by independent members, remaining questions asked by any opposition members; and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): If the Manitoba Court of Appeal ruled just last year that the Social Services Appeal Board has the jurisdiction to hear cases regarding people's Charter rights, why is this government making it a priority to refute what the court's already decided?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): In fact, the member is wrong. We are respecting the decision of the appeal court, who also indicated that it's within—entirely within the provincial jurisdiction to make—changes that we are doing today.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Can the minister explain why she believes the Social Services Appeal Board is not competent enough to hear these cases?

Mrs. Stefanson: The appeals board—and I know they—there's many incredible members on the appeals board. I had the opportunity the other day, in fact, to go and meet with the Social Services Appeal Board itself. They have concerns about—themselves, about seeing and hearing on constitutional issues within their area.

In fact, what this will do—while these people are very qualified individuals within Manitoba and what they're doing, they're not necessarily experts when it comes to constitutional matters. We believe that those constitutional matters are more appropriately dealt with at the court level.

Mrs. Smith: So the minister's saying that there's certain cases that can't go to the appeal board.

Is this minister prepared to put money aside for those that can't afford to get a lawyer to take their appeal somewhere else?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question and, in fact, what this will allow is many more Manitobans who have—who want to bring appeals forward to the appeals court, it will allow them to ensure that there aren't the backlogs that can sometimes result with more complex cases.

We know that constitutional cases are inherently more complex. What this will allow is to take that out of there to the Court of Queen's Bench. There also is the opportunity, as well, to go to the Human Rights Commission as well and appeal for a human rights cases there as well. So there is that opportunity through that avenue, but on constitutional issues we believe it's more appropriate to apply through the Court of Queen's Bench.

Mrs. Smith: So I'll repeat that question again. Many people in my constituency can't afford \$25 to go seek Legal Aid. Is this government prepared to put money aside for those people that can't afford a lawyer, that need to appeal their decisions?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, people still have the right to be able to go forward to the Social Services Appeal Board. What we're only doing here is taking the more complex constitutional-related matters—which there are very few on an annual basis—there are two opportunities for them.

They can take that to the Human Rights Commission, which is a similar administrative tribunal that can look at issues such as that. So there is that opportunity. There's also the opportunity to go to Legal Aid for access, if they want to, and take their appeal through to the Court of Queen's Bench.

I think it's very important in these very complex matters that these individuals are dealing with that they get timely access to justice that they need. And we believe that people at the Social Services Appeal Board who have other appeals believe that they need to have the timely access to those appeals at the Social Services Appeal Board. We don't want to create backlogs there—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

Mrs. Smith: So, I got no answers, so I'm assuming that this government isn't prepared to support people who, you know, can't afford—and this is exactly what this bill is about. It's about, you know, taking rights away from the poor people.

So, the minister is talking about a timely manner. Can she tell me how long it's taking for someone to go in front of appeal board, why there's such a backlog?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, I think the member opposite needs to understand that this is something that, under her—the previous NDP government, when it comes to the workers compensation appeal board,

this is exactly what they did back then in 2005. And I know there's some of her colleagues that were maybe around back then, the former minister of Justice, that could maybe talk about why they made that decision to remove those constitutional appeals from the Workers Compensation Board. This is, in fact, exactly what the NDP did back in 2005. This is exactly, you know, why we're doing this now.

Mrs. Smith: So the member—the minister didn't ask—answer my question. She's saying in a timely manner because cases aren't being heard fast enough. How much of a backlog is there?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I want to thank the member for the question. And I will remind the member opposite that she talks about needing affordability when it comes to legal services for Manitobans. And I'll remind the member opposite that she applied—her—it was her NDP government that applied the PST to legal services and she proceeded to increase the PST in Manitoba, so when it comes to affordability, this member doesn't—I will take no lessons from this member opposite.

Mrs. Smith: So, you know, you talk about all of these things that were put on by our government, but let's talk about something that this government has done. They've decreased the amount of money that they're giving people for rent, so their rent went from 25 per cent to 30 per cent. People cannot afford—in two years. So it went from 28 per cent under Minister Fielding to 30 per cent under this minister. When will these rent increases stop?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Yes, I just want to remind the member that you're not supposed to use the person's name, just ministry, title or their constituency, okay? Just a reminder.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, in fact, Madam Speaker, those rental increases are a result of legislative changes that were made by the previous NDP government, madam—or Mr. Deputy Speaker, so we're simply continuing along with legislation that was adhered to under the previous NDP government.

But getting back to the Social Services Appeal Board, we believe that those who have appeals that they want to bring forward should have the timely access to those, and it's just—it's common sense and common knowledge that constitutional issues are much more complex cases that are more appropriately dealt with in other—in the Court of Queen's Bench.

And I'll remind the member opposite that it was her government that made the same decision back for the Workers Compensation Board.

Mrs. Smith: Can the member tell us how many actual cases have to be referred? Because when we went to the briefing, we were told only a couple. So they're taking this right away from, you know, vulnerable people that can't afford to go and seek a lawyer, can't afford the \$25. They're not about to put extra money in to support legal costs for families that need to appeal.

You know they have to appeal their decision within 30 days? If they get cut off disability or EIA, like, who's going to protect them? Because this government isn't protecting them. So just how many cases is—are being referred, and how much time do they plan on saving by passing this bill?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I think the—we're not sure in the future of how many people are going to want to come forward and appeal their cases to the Social Services Appeal Board. What we want to prevent from happening is that—you know, is that those people don't have access as a result of a tie-up in the system of constitutional matters that are much more complex and are better dealt with at other areas like the Court of Queen's Bench.

* (18:40)

There also is the opportunity for those individuals to also take their appeals to the Human Rights Commission as well. So there are other avenues that would be more appropriate to take these appeals to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Smith: So how many hours in a fiscal year is this government—the last fiscal year—thinking that they're going to save by taking these rights away from people, Manitobans?

Mrs. Stefanson: What would be taking the rights away from Manitobans is not giving them access to the Social Services Appeal Board when they need it and want it and deserve it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, you know, so the member opposite needs to understand that this is—we're trying to prevent something from potentially happening in the future.

I'm sure the former minister of Justice can indicate as well that, you know, when the decision was made back in 2005 to make these changes with respect to the Workers Compensation Board, there were likely similar reasons why he was making those decisions at the time. So maybe the member

opposite, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), can talk to her colleague, the former minister of Justice, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), and ask him why the NDP made this very decision with respect to the Workers Compensation Board back in 2005.

Mrs. Smith: Can the minister tell me who they actually spoke to about this? Because we're hearing from disability advocates, we're hearing from people who are renters, we're hearing from people who've actually gone in front of the appeal board and felt that the decisions that came from it were, you know, good decisions, and they felt that the people who were on these boards were competent people able to make these decisions. So who, exactly, has this minister consulted with?

Mrs. Stefanson: I will inform the member opposite that we consult with Manitobans each and every day. Members opposite chose, when they were in government, not to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, they don't even consult within their own caucus. They're divided within their own caucus on many matters.

But what I will say is that persons with disabilities, what they want is to have access to a system, an appeal system that will work for them when they need it, and that's exactly what we're doing here.

Mrs. Smith: I don't know what, you know, fairyland world that this minister lives in when she thinks that people who have disabilities, that have, you know, financial difficulties, that can't access lawyers, that have mental impairments, that have all kinds of reasons that they don't want to go in front of a court but they would rather sit and talk to people in a, you know, a humanistic way rather than going in front of a judge and having to have a lawyer.

Why does this minister feel that going in front of a judge is more a humane way than sitting in front of a board and allowing people who are actually people who have been in the system and understand it and that are competent to make these decisions can't make them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mrs. Stefanson: Perhaps the member opposite, again, could consult her—the member for Minto. He was here in government back in the time, in 2005, when they made this decision. The former NDP government made the decision to apply this to the

Workers Compensation Board. So perhaps she could ask her colleague why he made that decision back then. Is she accusing her own colleague of doing that to Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

So what I would say to her is that we—what we've heard from Manitobans is that they want access to the Social Services Appeal Board. They want to be able to bring those appeals forward and they want to ensure that they have a timely access to those appeals, and that's what we're ensuring by these amendments.

Mrs. Smith: So the minister's saying there's a backlog, that, you know, they want to have the capacity to be able to send people elsewhere. Can the minister provide examples—concrete examples—of administrative tribunals in Canada where allowing Charter arguments have caused extensive delays?

Mrs. Stefanson: We do know other jurisdictions, such as Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, also do not allow for constitutional appeals at their social services appeal boards as well. We are not the only jurisdiction that is looking to do this. This is practised in other provinces, and they want to ensure in other provinces, as we want to here, we want to ensure that people have access to those—the—those social services on an appeals basis when they need it in a timely way.

Mrs. Smith: Has there any—has there been any research done on the impact it'll have on vulnerable Manitobans, and their Charter rights and remedies—or yes, remedies?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think you only need to see that these changes will allow better access to Manitobans who choose to make these kinds of appeals. And so we think that that's a very important thing, maybe members opposite don't think that that's an important thing for people in the communities to be able to have access to those services. We believe they do. And so we will stand with members of the community before the NDP anytime.

Mrs. Smith: This minister was the Justice Minister. She understands how the court system works. She thinks that this is going to be handled in a timely manner. She knows how backlogged the courts are. I don't know why she thinks that people who can't afford to get a lawyer, she just wants them to, you know, roll over and accept being cut off EIA, or roll over and, you know, accept getting their disability cut off. Where is the money going to come from for these people to be able to go to court and access

these decisions, and how does she think that that's going to be done in a timely manner?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I thank the member again for the question, and, of course, there is the ability for them to go the Court of Queen's Bench for this. But there's also the ability for someone to take their issue with respect to human rights forward to the Human Rights Commission, so—if that's the way they would like to go.

What we don't want to do is duplicate efforts through our different administrative tribunals. What we're trying to do is create a simpler, more efficient and effective system for all Manitobans to ensure that they have access to the services that they need when they need them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is now open. Any speakers?

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): This government should just do the right thing, withdraw this bill, quit trying to take the rights of people away.

I've had constituents in my constituency go before the appeal board. It's not a long process; there's not big, long waits like this government is trying to paint a picture of. People are getting their results within 15 days. You know, people feel that these—the appeal board committee is competent, they're getting good results. They feel that the people that are sitting on there have lots of experience, that they can make the decisions, and they don't need to go to court.

I had a constituent come into my office that was living at Siloam Mission, because he had found himself homeless—60 years old. EIA forced him to take his pension early. He did not know that he could appeal that. That's what this decision is going to do: This decision is going to take the rights away from our senior citizens. It's going to take the rights away from our disability people.

We have people coming in our office that are getting cut off disability that have special diets; their diet allowance is being cut off. They are—you know, life happens. Sometimes they can't report their income right away. It does get in there, and then they get cut off. Those are things that the appeal board can totally handle.

You know, this man that's 60, unfortunately, he did apply and he did, you know, get his old age. But it got clawed back, dollar for dollar, which means this poor senior, when he turns 65, he's going to get less money per month because of this government.

So what they're doing is they're putting people in poverty—maybe not from 60 to 65. They're already in poverty living on EIA; they're not getting much. And then this government has the audacity to claw back, dollar for dollar. And then, when he turns 65 and he gets his old age, his old age doesn't go up. He gets the same amount. But had he not taken it out at 60, he would have got more money; he would have had more money to live.

* (18:50)

And, as we know, you know, people that are elderly, they're on fixed incomes. You know, inflation goes up—they get a little bit. Food goes up—they don't get a bump up in their monthly allowance to live. But this government, what they're saying is, let's just take that right away from everyone. If I want to go and I want to go in front of the appeal board and say what they're doing is wrong, they want to take that away from Manitobans.

Shame on this government. You know, they're ruling with a heavy hand. These are vulnerable Manitobans and one of—my constituency in Manitoba, in Winnipeg, in the North End of the city, and the minister from Kirkfield Park, who used to be the minister of Families, will know because I'm sure he got a lot of calls from my constituents, that when they took government they started cutting people off EIA. They started taking off their—taking their special allowances away. They started increasing rental—rent aid. They cut the amount of people who were fixing up housing in half, which essentially means there's social housing sitting there that have not been repaired, just needs a paint job.

And I said this earlier, but this government doesn't care about vulnerable people. They care about, you know, a few Manitobans, but not those that don't have—that aren't wealthy, that don't have the wealth to be able to pay market rent, that are seniors that are fixed—on fixed incomes, that are disabled, that can't afford to go and get a lawyer.

And the gentleman I'm talking about, he couldn't even afford to go to Legal Aid. Legal Aid costs \$25 for you to even get an appointment. Then, once you sit down with them, if you make a little more money, you have to pay a little more, and some people

struggle. They don't even have enough money, and this government is proposing that they go see a lawyer and that they take it to the justice system and that the justice system is going to be quicker than going to an appeal board because they're saying, oh, there's a backlog at the appeal board.

That's simply untrue, and I know that for a fact because I have many constituents that actually go in front of that appeal board. In fact, I just had someone have a decision back a couple of days ago that's seen them last week. I think it took seven days in total, and for him to get in front of the appeal board was less than a week. So you can't tell me that there's a backlog and that they're doing this to save time so people can get timely access to a decision. That's simply untrue.

What they're doing is they're picking on the vulnerable. They're picking on the people who are disabled. They're picking on our seniors.

Enough's enough already. You know, withdraw this bill; quit picking on our Manitobans that don't have access to the same rights that, you know, people with money can go and see a lawyer. My constituents certainly can't. You know, I can't even—maybe a handful in my constituency, but I've listened to Manitobans. I've talked to people with disabilities, I've talked to people that are vulnerable and I've certainly talked to seniors, and none of those people have said that they would support this bill.

So I don't know who, you know, the government is talking to that they feel that this is a good bill to pass. You know, they're ruling with a heavy hand and that's how—they think bullying people and just bulldozing through things. You know, I—they're not representing the Manitobans that, you know, have disabilities, that don't have the money to go to see a lawyer. And, you know, like I said, it's 30 days they have to come back with a decision. That's not going to cause a big delay. You go see the appeal board; within 30 days, they give you their decision. This gentleman got his decision back within five days.

There's lots of rental agreements that are going to be coming up. You know, this government isn't even prepared for that. There's going to be lots of people that are homeless that are kicked out of, you know, these places that—and, you know, this board's working. I don't understand why this government's trying to take away the rights of Manitobans, people that they claim to represent, you know, people who elected them.

You know, I would be really, you know, cautious, in 2020, you know. There's many sitting MLAs here that won't be here in 2020. You know, they—[interjection]—good luck with that—good luck with that—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order.

Mrs. Smith: —and do you know what? It's because of what they're doing. They claim to be standing up for Manitobans; they claim to be representing everyone; they claim to be listening. They're not listening; they got earplugs in. They don't even talk to people. You know, when was the last time you came to a, you know, anything to do with Make Poverty History, the census, you know? I don't see any of the ministers, any of the backbenchers, any of them, come to any of those.

You know, there's people last year that went out and they collected census. There was 1,400 homeless people. In one year, there's 1,500 homeless people.

They're doing a census again. Next week is when it rolls out again. I invite all these ministers to come. Come and listen to what's happening there on the street. You've never had to worry about sleeping on the street, you know, worrying about where your meal's going to come from, worrying about \$25 to go and see a lawyer.

You know, it's horrible for you to take these rights away from people. You know, we're supposed to be standing up and protecting the rights of Manitobans. Well, what you're doing is you're taking those away and you're infringing your own rights, and you're taking away their rights.

So do the right thing. You know, I know you're a new minister in this job, and you've been there for two months. Go and talk to the people. There's still time. You can withdraw this bill. You can take it out, and you can start listening to the vulnerable people.

Miigwech.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): On November 7th, 2017, the Manitoba Court of Appeal published its decision in *Stadler v. Director, St. Boniface*, where it overturned a previous decision regarding the Social Services Advisory Committee, which once said that the advisory committee did not have jurisdiction to hear Charter of Rights and Freedoms issues. After this decision was made, the advisory committee was replaced with the Social Services Appeal Board.

This bill, which limits the ability of the Social Services Appeal Board to hear constitutional challenges to legislation or to grant remedies under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, may fall under the same exact situation as the previous advisory committee did. In the recent Stadler case, the court applied the Conway case to the new appeals board, and found that the board was in a similar situation to the advisory committee.

In the Conway case, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the Charter is not some holy grail which only judicial initiates of the superior courts may touch; the Charter belongs to the people. All law and lawmakers that touch that must conform to it. Tribunals and commissions charged with deciding legal issues are no exception and that the administrative tribunal with power to decide questions of law and from whom constitutional jurisdiction has not been clearly withdrawn, have the authority to resolve constitutional questions that are linked to matters properly before them. And, secondly, they must act consistently with the Charter and its values when exercising their statutory functions.

According to the Stadler decision, questions of law play an essential part of making decisions related to the social benefits and programs under various legislative schemes which end up before the board.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

While the Manitoba Court of Appeal has not given any specific details as to what specific remedies for Charter issues that the appeal board would be able to offer, they did declare that the board does have jurisdiction and the obligation to consider Charter issues if properly raised before it.

My concern about this legislation is whether or not this government pursued consultations in regards to this bill, and if so, why did this government table a bill that carries the possibility of going against an established court decision? Whether or not this government believes that the court is the most appropriate venue for the consideration of constitutional challenges to legislation and to the granting of Charter remedies should not mean that we should be passing legislation that contradicts the previous rulings of our court system. In this province, any court of competent jurisdiction can hear a case involving the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and there is no reason to try and remove this important feature of our system.

Why is this government trying to pass this bill, and does this government seek to possibly undermine a decision of this—of our courts?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (19:00)

Madam Speaker: I will now put the question on the second reading of Bill 24, the social services appeal board amendment.

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

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): Madam Speaker, 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 24, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Allum, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan),

Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 37, Nays 15.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 27—The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to second reading of Bill 27, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that the Bill 27, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, now be read a second time and referred to the committee of the House.

* (19:10)

Her Honour, lieutenant governor general has been advised of the bill and—table this message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, that Bill 27, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill and the message is being tabled.

Mr. Fielding: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 27, what amends The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act, passed in June of 2007. Bill 27 continues the requirement for each consecutive budget showing progress towards balance through progressive smaller deficits, ensuring a sustainable financial future for the Province of Manitoba.

The bill also continues to hold ministers responsible for achieving deficit reductions of at least \$100 million per year related to the 2017-18 budget baseline and staying on track. To clarify, the baseline for 2017-18 is—the starting point for the deficit reduction targets under the legislation is \$924 million. Targets for substantial years will go down by \$100 million each and every year going forward.

The amendment in the bill will remove the disincentives to go beyond the \$100-million target reductions amounts and reward the eventual success of balancing the budget. In addition, the bill adds a requirement to specifically account for the amount of salary withheld for each minister. It confirms that the

consecutive for non-compliance is a loss of ministerial salary.

It provides authority to pay a rebate to ministers of cumulative amounts withheld upon 'reaching' the balanced budget prior to 2026, creates a more certain planning framework in instances when accounting standards change or organizational changes are made within the government reporting entity, the results of one-time revenue reductions or expenditure increases by more than \$25 million.

Bill 27 recognizes that the members of Cabinet play a significant role in ensuring that our government is on a financial prudent course. The bill eliminates disincentives and recognizes progress by reinstating salaries when real and sustainable financial results are achieved.

As reported in 2017-18 Public Accounts, the deficit balance calculated under the act will be \$782 million, reduced by \$142 million in the 2017 baseline of \$924 million. Included in the calculation is a deposit of \$50 million in the rainy day fund, five times more than the \$10 million we anticipated putting in the budget. That's an important number, Madam Speaker, because there hasn't been a deposit in a very long period of time, and so our government is committed to doing that.

In 2017-18 we exceeded the budget—or, the deficit reduction required under the act while setting aside more planning for a rainy day—which is important to families and Manitobans.

I am pleased to recommend the legislation to the House and look forward to any questions on Bill 27 in my speech.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized parties—opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I'd like to ask the minister, how many times has the balanced budget legislation come before the House brought forward

by his government, either for repeal, changes or amendments?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I'd like to—I'm—I'd like to inform the House that under the former NDP government to—the balanced budget legislation changed nearly seven times. I think the former—the Minister of Education talks that every spring there was a, you know, you would have—beautiful weather would come on and the NDP would change their balanced budget legislation.

This is the second change. We think it's important that Manitobans get progress, over \$100 million in savings on a yearly basis, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): My simple—the question is if you—if it was a problem when the NDP were doing it, why is it not a problem that you're doing it? Or, that the minister is doing it?

Mr. Fielding: The difference between our government and the NDP government is we're actually hitting our budgets and exceeding our budgets. In fact, in the last two budgets alone, the former minister of Finance tabled budgets that reduced the budget deficit by over \$147 million in our first year and over \$145 million this year. That's in contrast to the last—one of the last budgets the NDP brought forward where they missed their budget projections by close to \$400 million, Madam Speaker.

That is the big difference between the two pieces of legislation.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, because the minister was unwilling to answer, I'll answer for him. This is, in fact, the third time that this has come forward to this Legislature, and I—you know, again, this seems to be a No. 1 priority for this government. Seems to be something that they see as the first priority.

I'm wondering why—why—exactly could that be? Does this have anything to do with the salary of this minister going forward?

Mr. Fielding: This bill is transparent. It reports on ministers' salaries—the holdback from ministers' salaries. And, I can tell you, under this legislation—under the current legislation that's in place, that ministers met their responsibility to taxpayers, where we reduced the budget deficit by over \$145 million

in the summary basis and close to \$148 million on the balanced budget legislation, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lamont: My question for the Finance Minister is: How much is he—how much have the increases in revenues been from transfers from the federal government, as well as how much more revenue—or, how much more is the Province taking in in terms of capital taxes, water rentals, et cetera from Manitoba Hydro over the last three years?

Mr. Fielding: In this previous—in the budget—the public accounts that was just tabled, we brought in—in fact, we underspent—we worked within our budgets. We reduced expenditures by over \$166 million, and we brought in more than \$94 million, Madam Speaker.

That is something that hasn't been done in this House through the government. It has been done for our government for the last two years—certainly, wasn't been—done under the former NDP government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wiebe: I—you know, I bring up wages simply because it's forefront on Manitobans' minds right now. They are thinking about their own wages and how they've been effectively frozen in this province since this government came forward. And yet the third time that this legislation has now come before the House, and it's all about protecting and enhancing—and, in fact, making it retroactive in this case—to protect those salaries.

So, once again, I just—I want to ask the minister: Is he concerned about the front-line workers' salaries out there?

Mr. Fielding: Our government and this legislation is about getting results. That's something—that is something that this government has got. We've invested more in services and we're getting better results, whether it be in health care, shorter ER time—wait times, shorter MRI times, more doctors coming to the province, less children in care.

These are important measures. That's what's important about here: getting results for Manitoba. We got some results for Manitoba, and the results of the legislation are clear.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister has gotten results when it comes to cuts. He's right—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —he's cut very effectively from education in this province. He's cut very effectively when it comes to health care in this province.

So, as this minister clocks his cuts—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —if he reduces the deficit, as he says, on the backs of Manitobans, is he still comfortable taking that raise knowing that he's freezing other salaries and he's cutting from the things that matter most in this province?

* (19:20)

An Honourable Member: The member is wrong—

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Finance.

Mr. Fielding: —again. We are spending more money in health care, over 380-some-odd-million dollars of spending more in health care on an annual basis. In terms of education, we're spending over \$299 million than what the NDP did in their last budget and substantially more in terms of \$200 million more in Child and Family Services. These are important investments we're making. We're getting results for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Is the House ready for the—oh, the time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): You know, I guess I just sort of, you know, got to the point where we weren't getting any answers out of the minister. We weren't going to get anything clear out of this minister, so I think it is time to move to debate because there is a lot to debate this evening. There's a lot to debate about this particular bill that's been brought forward, as I said, once again, by this government.

This is, you know, seems to be their top priority. Their top priority in government has been to bring this legislation back to this Legislature over and over and over again, simply to protect their wages. And, I mean, it's just—it's almost a little bizarre to see how this government has prioritized this over the needs of what Manitobans are telling us is important to them: that's health care, that's education and that's poverty in this province and good jobs. So this is something

that, you know, the government is wanting to bring forward to make sure that Manitobans see as a priority, and I'm glad that they're doing that because it's very clear what this legislation represents.

So when this government was elected, there was legislation on the books that would require salary reductions for Cabinet ministers when they were running a deficit. But they weren't too happy with that particular piece of legislation, so they took their 20 per cent increase, and then they received, and then they—that they had received and then they revoked the balanced budget legislation in 2016. That was change No. 1 that they brought forward.

Moving forward, they realized, well, you know, it wasn't very fair to be doing this the same time they were asking all Manitobans to, you know, to tighten their belts, tough times were ahead, austerity on the horizon. They were saying, we're freezing minimum wage at a poverty wage, we're freezing the wages of civil servants, we're hiking your hydro rates across the province, we're cutting the benefits for seniors, we're closing hospitals, we're cutting from health care, we're letting go nurses. This was seen by the public as a bit strange, that the government would prioritize their own raises and they would continue to bring forward that piece of legislation.

So, for once, you know, because it doesn't happen very often, and not that I'm taking credit for it, not that anybody on the opposition side is taking credit for it, because I'm sure they got the loud—the message loud and clear in their constituency offices. Every door they knocked, they said, we didn't vote you in to cut our health care, we didn't vote you in to close our hospital, we didn't vote you in to freeze the minimum wage, we didn't vote you in to attack our civil service. Nobody voted for that in the last election, and so all of a sudden their government—oh, they realized, oh, wait a minute, maybe there's a problem. Maybe we have to muddy the waters a little bit with regards to this balanced budget legislation. They can't just take a 20 per cent raise and, you know, go forward with all these cuts.

So it was dreamed up in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office, I'm sure, probably—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order.

I am having a lot of trouble hearing the member speak in debate, and I know it's getting late. Everybody's getting a little tired and cranky, and I would ask everybody to please, in order for me—I

need to be able to hear what is being said and so does Hansard, and all of us should be interested in that. So I would ask everybody if you could please just hold down the chatter so that we can properly hear what's being said on the floor.

Mr. Wiebe: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I'll try to speak a little louder for the members opposite there. Everybody can hear.

So, again, not that—you know, I'm sure they weren't listening to the member for Concordia, they weren't listening to the opposition, they're—maybe actually heard those constituents of theirs, saying, this was unfair. So, for once, they buckled. They actually buckled under that criticism and their pressure over those salaries. And so what did they do?

They dreamt up a new piece of legislation and they said, this is now our priority. We are going to address those concerns. So that was Bill 21, brought forward in 2017. This softened the balanced budget requirements that had been in place. They created a complicated formula for accountability by establishing, in fact, a third set of books that would monitor the performance of government. And this was the second time that it came before this Legislature.

So this was starting to get a little ridiculous, I think—and not just myself. It was, in fact, Conservative pundits who came out and said: This is a bit bizarre—a bit bizarre—why is this government so preoccupied with protecting their own raises while, at the same time, making these substantial cuts throughout our province?

So we went ahead—we criticized them. That's what we do. We criticized them. You know, they're twisting this law, you know, into a bit of a pretzel—everything that they could do to preserve those salaries. It was—as I said, even the folks at the Winnipeg Sun who came out—they ridiculed this government, absolutely tore them apart over the lengths that they were going to ensure that they didn't have to reduce their salaries.

So that brings us to change No. 3; that is, Bill 27 before us. And here we are, Madam Speaker, at 6–7:30—almost 7:30 at night debating this bill, a bill that the government felt was so very important that we would bring forward, that we would spend our time in this House debating at the same time that Manitobans are telling us that their priorities are health care, their priorities are education, that they're

looking for good jobs, that they're looking for ways to find housing and to address poverty. And yet this government feels that bill—no, Bill 27 is, in fact, the most important thing that we should be debating.

But, of course, this government wasn't done when it comes to this bill. So no sooner has this—had this legislation been printed, Finance Minister was devising new and ever more complicated ways of avoiding any kind of accountability for his actions.

And, as I said earlier in the debate over the budget implementation bill, this government has gone to absolutely great lengths to ensure that Manitobans could not fully understand where this government is getting its numbers and how its finding its numbers that it's presenting and, with significant changes, it's almost impossible.

You know, we went through a series of figures and numbers throughout the Estimates process that, for all intents and purposes, have been thrown out the window—with this Premier (Mr. Pallister) backing off of the carbon tax, with changes to cannabis and how it's going to be brought forward here in this province, without any answers from this minister.

So this is what they've—this is their newest scheme. This is their newest plan and the newest way that they would try to make sure that Manitobans didn't understand the numbers. So they've removed the WCB from the summary accounts and they've made even—they've even made an unauthorized transfer over the objections of the Auditor General.

All of this is being done to bend the numbers to make sure that the numbers could come in in favour of the way that they want to present them, and this is all being done regardless of the rules.

So now, what are we left with, Madam Speaker? In fact, we are left with four sets of books—four sets of books—in this province. Of course, we have the core numbers. We have the summary budget, but then, beyond that, we have accounting for the balanced budget accountability legislation that this minister wants.

He wants to meet that target. That is the most important one because he's going to get his raise. He's going to make sure that he's got that. That's an important one, but then there's the actual summary budget, if they were using the appropriate accounting that the Auditor General has now criticized.

So this bill—the Pallister government's recent actions show the absurd lengths to which they will

go to preserve their salaries, to manipulate the books to reflect whatever story they want to present.

* (19:30)

But once they protect their salaries, we know what the Premier's priorities are. He's only focused on cutting those front-line services like education and health care, and he's prioritizing balanced budget over protecting and strengthening the health-care and education services that we need.

Madam Speaker, this is just a whole 'nother' level of convoluted legislation that's being brought forward. You know, I heard the minister here reference the year 2026. That's a very important number; it's an important date for this government. And—well, that seems like a long ways out and—so I had to go back, and I—in fact, I just asked our researcher; I said, you got to help me out: 2026, what is this number? What does this mean? Well, that is the date that, if this government can show progress in 2026 on the deficit, that the retroactive payday will be coming in to all ministers.

And, you know, hey, I'm sure that, hopefully, everyone in the Chamber that's in the Chamber now is still with us, maybe not in the Chamber, but just in general with us. But it will be quite the payday if this government can meet those targets.

You know what, Manitobans are telling us right now they want to see a government that's being responsible with the money but is protecting those front-line services they count on, and that's certainly what we support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): This is bad, empty legislation. It's a sham. Balanced budget legislation is absolutely fraudulent. We know this because, as we've heard from both sides, virtually every time it gets close to being enforced, the—they end up moving the goalposts. It gets changed no matter who's in government. It is important to balance budgets over the long term, especially at junior levels of government, but this is an attempt to enshrine discredited, outdated economic ideas that are a proven failure in order to force every government, no matter what political stripe, to follow it. It guarantees that politicians themselves will be doing something they say they don't believe in.

Recently, a politician said that if we can't change economic policy with elections, there's no point in

having democracy. I believe extremely strongly in democracy.

And there used to be a bill that said if government ran a deficit, ministers would face a pay cut. But, again, not only does this government keep moving the goalposts, they're manipulating the books. They're backdating cheques; they're engaged in creative accounting. It's all completely meaningless. So let's be clear about how this government has driven down the deficit.

Second, this government is receiving nearly half a billion dollars a year more from the federal government than it did under the Conservative government—nearly half a billion dollars more a year. The federal government also increased the amount of money flowing into Manitoba for the child tax credit. While it is not taxed, that amount flowed—now flowing into Manitoba is \$500 million more than it was before which—a portion of which this government is seizing from children in care and effectively taxing at a rate of 100 per cent.

In terms of revenue, this government is taking more money from Hydro than the NDP ever did while piling debt onto that corporation that could break its back. That is why the board of Hydro resigned en masse. The reason why Manitobans are facing astronomical hydro increases is because the PCs and the NDP have been using Hydro as a piggy bank. No matter what government, Manitoba Hydro has been plundered to the point that that Crown corporation is going to have a debt nearly equal to the entire province. It's absolutely 'reckless'—reckless, and why is that happening? It's because rather than showing debt on the books of government, they've been shoving it onto Hydro.

In the last few weeks alone, the bailout for Investors Group Field of \$200 million was announced this year, but it was put on last year's books. The Auditor General registered his concern that the government transferred \$265 million into a trust in September but effectively backdated the cheque to last year.

The point, all of this is—once again, is the government is more interested in gaming the books than in being remotely responsible. This is not just political self-interest; it's actually—what's worst about this bill is that it turns what should be the public good into private self-interest, so when thinking

about what is best for Manitobans, they're thinking about what is best for their pocketbooks.

This is terrible legislation. It's the sort of terrible legislation that makes the public so cynical because it forces politicians to be hypocrites. It forces them to take credit for other people's work; it puts greed and selfishness ahead of the public good; it should be defeated.

Madam Speaker: I will now put the question on the second reading of Bill 27.

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): Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

* (19:40)

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 27, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Allum, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Swan, Wiebe.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 36,
Nays 14.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And if I may point out to everybody, our pages are only—have only been here for two days, and yet they've handled these votes excellently, so. Very impressive, and thank you to Ray from Chamber Branch who's been spending a lot of time with them, training them.

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

Happy Thanksgiving, everybody, and hug your families.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 4, 2018

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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>