

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 228—The Sikh Heritage Month Act

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 228, The Sikh Heritage Month Act; Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine sikh, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: It is my great honour to introduce for this House Bill 228, The Sikh Heritage Month Act. I was very humbled to be approached by members of the Sikh Heritage Manitoba committee, some of whom are in the gallery with us here today to talk about the need to have a provincial recognition for this very important month.

April is an important month in the Sikh faith and this bill would recognize April as Sikh Heritage Month here in Manitoba, providing all of us the opportunity to celebrate and uplift the Sikh community.

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

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, and I would indicate that the requirement—90 minutes notice prior

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Journée internationale de la Francophonie

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs): J'ai le plaisir de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie au Manitoba. Aujourd'hui, nous nous joignons à plus de 250 millions de francophones sur tous les continents qui célèbrent leur langue et font protéger leur culture.

Le Manitoba habite une communauté francophone forte et vibrante. Je suis très fière de la francophonie inclusive et diverse de notre province, où plus de 100 000 Manitobains et Manitobaines peuvent parler le français.

Cette semaine, la Maison Gabrielle-Roy organise la douzième dictée Gabrielle Roy, un événement qui attire presque 1 000 participants répartis dans trois pays. Notre gouvernement est heureux d'appuyer une telle initiative.

Madame la Présidente, le gouvernement de Manitoba continue à soutenir la vitalité de la communauté francophone du Manitoba. Un élément clé de la Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine est l'obligation pour les entités publiques de créer et mettre en œuvre des plans stratégiques pluriannuels sur les services en français.

En ma qualité de ministre responsable des Affaires francophones, je suis fière de rendre hommage à la communauté francophone du Manitoba, et de célébrer ses contributions à la diversité économique et culturelle de notre province.

Madame la Présidente, je demande à tous les membres de l'Assemblée de se joindre à moi pour féliciter la communauté francophone de son succès continu.

Vivre la francophonie.

Merci beaucoup, Madame la Présidente.

Translation

I am pleased to rise here today to recognize the Journée internationale de la Francophonie in

Manitoba. Today, we join over 250 million francophones on every continent who are celebrating their language and protecting their culture.

Manitoba is home to a strong and vibrant francophone community. I am very proud of the inclusive and diverse Francophone community of our province, where more than 100,000 Manitobans speak French.

This week, Maison Gabrielle-Roy is organizing the 12th Dictée Gabrielle Roy, an event that attracts nearly 1,000 participants across three countries. Our government is pleased to support such an initiative.

Madam Speaker, the government of Manitoba continues to support the vitality of Manitoba's francophone community. A key element of The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act is the requirement for public bodies to develop and implement multi-year strategic plans regarding French language services.

As the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, I am proud to honour Manitoba's francophone community and to celebrate its contribution to the economic and cultural diversity of our province.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating Manitoba's francophone community for its continued success.

Long live the francophone community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Je suis fier de pouvoir considérer le Manitoba mon chez-moi. En cette journée internationale consacrée à la reconnaissance et à la célébration de la langue, de la culture et du patrimoine français, je suis extrêmement reconnaissant de la diversité culturelle qui existe dans notre communauté francophone ici au Manitoba.

Translation

I am proud to call Manitoba home. On this international day dedicated to the recognition and celebration of French language, culture and heritage, I am extremely thankful for the cultural diversity that exists in our Francophone community here in Manitoba.

English

French speakers have shaped Manitoba for many, many years. In 1730, Pierre de La Vérendrye established a permanent presence in the south of

what would later become Manitoba. Depuis la fondation du Manitoba, le fait français fait partie intégrale du patrimoine et de l'histoire de notre province.

Translation

Since Manitoba's foundation, the French presence has been an integral part of our province's heritage and history.

English

Today the French language is part and parcel of our province and is being constantly renewed and enriched through waves of francophone immigration from all over the world. Franco-Manitoban culture is celebrated year round through a variety of organizations and events, most notably Festival du Voyageur which just celebrated its 50th anniversary.

But the French community has had to fight hard for the protection of their language and culture over the many years, and they fought for the recognition but also to be able to teach French in schools.

Malgré ces victoires importantes, la lutte continue aujourd'hui.

C'est décevant d'apprendre que le gouvernement veut réduire le montant de traducteurs au sein du gouvernement et qu'il a fait des autres compressions budgétaires pour les ressources françaises.

Translation

Despite these significant victories, the fight is ongoing.

It is disappointing to hear that the government wants to reduce the number of translators within government and has made other budget cuts to French language resources.

English

The NDP, we proudly support the francophone community in our province and know that it is essential to put that support into action in order to ensure the French language and culture can endure.

Madame la Présidente, nous reconnaissons aujourd'hui le rôle important que la langue française a joué dans le façonnement de l'histoire et de l'identité et du développement de notre province, et les efforts qui sont encore nécessaires pour la mettre en valeur.

Bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Translation

Madam Speaker, we recognize today the important role that the French language has played in shaping our province's history, identity and development, and the efforts that are still needed to highlight it.

Happy Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Chaque année, à cette date du 20 mars, on célèbre la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. C'est important de souligner cette journée internationale pour célébrer la culture française à travers le Manitoba, le Canada, et autour du monde.

Nous avons une forte communauté française ici au Manitoba et je suis fier de représenter la circonscription de Saint-Boniface, qui est le cœur de la francophonie de l'Ouest canadien. Mais il y a aussi des communautés francophones à travers le Manitoba, ainsi que l'Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta et Colombie-Britannique.

C'est essentiel que les francophones ont accès aux services dans leur propre langue et dans leur propre communauté quand ils en ont besoin. C'est encore plus important aujourd'hui, quand nous avons des gouvernement provinciaux partout au Canada qui éliminent et attaquent les services en français. C'est inacceptable.

Le Manitoba a été fondé par Louis Riel, qui était Métis, catholique et francophone, pour assurer un futur pour le français et les francophones ici au Manitoba.

Translation

Thank you Madam Speaker. Each year on this date, March 20th, we celebrate the Journée internationale de la Francophonie. It's important to highlight this international day of celebrating French culture throughout Manitoba, Canada and around the world.

We have a strong francophone community here in Manitoba and I am proud to represent the constituency of St. Boniface, which is at the heart of western Canada's francophone community. But there are also francophone communities throughout Manitoba, as well as Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

It is crucial that francophones have access to services in their own language and in their own community when they need them. This is even more important today, as we have provincial governments

all over Canada who are eliminating and attacking French language services. That's unacceptable.

Manitoba was founded by Louis Riel, who was Metis, a Catholic and a Francophone, to ensure a future for French and for francophones here in Manitoba.

English

When I attended Sacré-Cœur, I was taught by teachers who were not allowed to speak French in their school. In fact, school inspectors would come by. They had to hide their French books and pretend that they were only being taught in English, because French was suppressed for so many years. So there's been a reflowering of French in Manitoba, and it deserves our continued support.

Comme député, je continuerai à lutter pour les droits des francophones ici au Manitoba, à Winnipeg et au Canada.

Merci.

Translation

As MLA, I will continue to fight for the rights of francophones here in Manitoba, in Winnipeg and Canada.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba**

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today for my first private member's statement of the spring session to honour l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba.

Union nationale métisse formed in 1887, making it the oldest Metis organization of its kind in Canada. The strongest voices that make up this grassroots organization remain as dedicated to the preservation of French-Canadian Metis heritage today as they were over 130 years ago.

The history of Metis is imprinted in the foundation of our province, and anyone who travels throughout our communities will see that they continue to be a vital part of Manitoba.

This organization remains at the forefront of presenting the rights and the cultural history of the French-Canadian Metis. As I have attended many of their gatherings throughout my time as an MLA, Madam Speaker, I feel a sense of fondness as I recall sharing the stories, remembering the heritage that is unique to each and every one of us. The vibrant

celebrations, filled with music, dance and warm embraces, has come to be some of my favourite things to attend.

For their resilience and tireless advocacy through education, cultural events and acting as the protectors of the French-Canadian Metis people and their interests, I recognize each member of l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, both past and present. The spirit of Louis Riel and the founding members live through you.

And, Madam Speaker, as a Metis woman—Metis woman descent, I honour my grandfather and the generations who preceded him by standing before you here today to speak about an organization that continues to ensure those who come after us will remember their heritage. They will know that those who came before them will always remain an important part of Manitoba's history.

Vive le Métis. *[Long live the Metis.]*

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Changes to Election Campaign Financing

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): As we move closer to a provincial election, Manitoba voters need to know how this Premier (Mr. Pallister) is systematically—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —undermining the integrity and accessibility of our electoral system.

Since taking office, this Premier has passed two bills and now has introduced a third to restrict entrance into politics and ensure his Conservative Party's re-election. Bill 9 and Bill 26—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —previously passed, removed the per-vote subsidy for registered political parties and raised the political donation allowance to \$5,000, Madam Speaker, favouring the wealthy. Their newly introduced Bill 16 cuts a 50 per cent campaign rebate, placing into question how much the PCs value democracy.

All these provisions help new political parties and racialized and economically marginalized Manitobans afford to run a campaign against PC candidates funded by wealthy donors. And now, because of a potential financial burden placed upon candidates following the campaign, it will continue to discourage many from running, Madam Speaker.

It's 'posposterous' to think it's a—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

A member has the floor and we have a lot of guests in the gallery, so I would ask everybody's respect to please listen to the comments that are being made.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

It's preposterous to think that it's a fair playing field when it come to people's ability to financially contribute to the political party of their choice. This Premier is trying to price out his competition by ensuring only those with money will now be able to run as candidates and have their voices 'represented' in this legislature. Make no mistake, that's who these bills are intended for.

We have a Premier that has attacked and targeted indigenous men by constructing them as criminals. He's referred to Manitobans who are not Christian as infidels. He's referred to women as fickle. That's why political representation in this Chamber is so important, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans need to send a clear message that they believe in democracy and vote out this Premier.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable Minister for Crown Services?

Mrs. Mayer: I apologize. I ask for leave to include the names of the individuals from l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba that are here with me in the gallery to be entered into Hansard.

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

L'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba: Paulette Duguay, president; Guy Savoie, advisor; Jules Chartrand; Léo Dufault.

The Sawmill Tea & Coffee Co.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Madam Speaker, picture this: young moms are visiting on a comfy couch while a child plays nearby; two teenagers giggling; a small group of women chatting over coffee. At the table next to them is—a young woman reads aloud to a man in a wheelchair. This rich aroma of coffee and a lingering scent of roast beef lunches fills the air.

This is a typical afternoon in The Sawmill, a cozy, chic café, tea and—house in Boissevain. Coffee and baked goods are—sales are brisk, but the sign on

the entrance says no purchase necessary, come in and relax. This is what this place is all about.

Boissevain's Sawmill Tea & Coffee Co., which owns—which opened in 2010, is a revenue earning business, but the key return on investment is building social connections. Trust me when I say that the coffee is second to none and the cinnamon buns are a favourite.

It is run entirely as a not-for-profit enterprise, owned and operated by Prairie Partners Inc., a non-for-profit agency in Boissevain working for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Getting The Sawmill started wasn't easy feat. They relied heavily on volunteers and donations. Local teens volunteered to paint the facility while other community residents volunteered considerable time to furnish and decorate the place. Members of the RCMP detachment installed the flooring.

The coffee shop currently employs 27 people living with intellectual disabilities, with full-time staffers, and several volunteers help run the cafe. Proceeds on the shop goes directly for covering staff salaries and program budgets.

On November 2018, The Sawmill Tea & Coffee Co. was recognized internationally for their success, Madam Speaker. They received the Dr. Lucija Cikes award for providing support, employment and learning opportunities in the community.

Madam Speaker, let us all congratulate The Sawmill Tea & Coffee Co. for winning this international award.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Violent Crime Rate

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, I rise today with good news and bad news. The good news is that the Winnipeg Police Service has launched a new online report on criminal activity in Winnipeg. It is far more comprehensive than the previous CrimeStat report, which included only certain crimes.

The bad news is it exposes just how this Pallister government has failed at keeping Winnipeggers safe. A review of the website shows that violent crime in Winnipeg has risen 25.8 per cent from 2014 to 2018, and property crime in that same period has risen—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —by 63.1 per cent.

The website also allows users to look at specific areas in Winnipeg. In the last four years in the downtown area, which includes Minto, Wolseley, Logan and Point Douglas south of the tracks, violent crime has gone up by 38.4 per cent, and property crime has increased by a shocking 89.3 per cent. This follows nearly two decades of crime reduction in Winnipeg and across the province.

It's not getting better. Already in 2019 there have been 10 homicides in Winnipeg, including three in the West End. If this trend continues, Winnipeg will regain the unwanted title of murder capital of Canada.

For nearly three years now our NDP opposition has been trying to get this government to take seriously the threat that street drugs have brought to our communities. This government has ignored the voices of residents, community organizations and even the police about the threats our neighbourhoods face.

There has been no effort to decrease demand by preventing Manitobans from becoming addicted. There has been no effort to restrict the supply of these drugs and, in fact, this government disbanded the Manitoba Integrated Organized Crime Task Force, which used to disrupt criminal organizations smuggling drugs into Manitoba.

The sole investments made by this government deal with people after they are addicted and are woefully inadequate. Any additional money from the federal government is being used to backfill this government's cuts to addictions and mental health programming.

It's time for this government to do its job and protect Manitobans.

Investors Group Field and Crown Corporations

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): This week was world happiness week, and I'm really happy that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has liberated me from the clutches and the dungeon of the caucus—the government caucus because it allows—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —me the opportunity to reflect on not only the happy things that we should all be proud of in Manitoba, but also to reflect on things that people are very unhappy about. *[interjection]*

* (13:50)

For example, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) was just heckling me, Manitobans

are unhappy about using \$86 million to fund the new stadium at University of Manitoba because of decisions he made when he was at City Hall. Manitobans are not happy about the Minister of Finance—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —giving land away worth millions for a dollar because of mistakes he made when he was a city councillor.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans are not happy about Crown corporations that are governed through the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office. We've—they're not happy that outstanding Manitobans have resigned or have been let go from their positions as chair of the major Crown corporations like Manitoba Hydro or the—Liquor & Lotteries, and that's because they're not happy the Premier just wants to fight, fight, fight with everyone—in Ottawa, in the Province, in his own caucus. And that's one of the reasons why I am so, so very happy—

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

Order. Order, please.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been requested to allow the member to complete his statement.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to take this moment to introduce members that are in the gallery.

We have in the public gallery with us today members from the Financial Advisors Association of Canada, Advocis, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding).

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

We have seated in the public gallery from Miskoosepi School 12 grade 4 students under the direction of Caroline Hall, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen).

And also seated in the public gallery from Garden City Collegiate we have 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Kamal Dhillon, and this group

is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Every day we hear about the— [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —negative impact that this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) cuts to health care are having in the province of Manitoba. He's brought in the single biggest cut to health-care funding in Manitoba in more than a generation. He's cutting \$120 million from health care just this budget year alone.

Now, the real damage that will be seen in the health-care system is well known already to patients. We know that there's cancelled cardiac surgeries taking place in Manitoba. We know that later this year they're going to close two more emergency rooms, after already having closed an emergency room in the provincial capital, and we know that there are more and more nurses being forced to work mandatory overtime.

Now that the real impact of this Premier's cuts to health care are becoming more and more apparent and Manitobans are raising their voices louder and louder to protest these cuts, will he simply cancel his plans to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, the leader for the operation is just wrong.

I've attempted to show him—he and his colleagues—that when it comes to our government, funding for health care is up in each year that we have been in power. I have also attempted to show him that funding for health care is more than \$400 million more than the NDP ever spent. I have also tried to show them how the third-quarter results, compared to last year's, are \$150 million over last year.

But perhaps the best way to show it to this member is that spending forecast to budget is showing Budget 2019 will be \$118 million more.

Madam Speaker: I just want to remind members we've got a lot of guests in the gallery today, including a number of students, so I would hope everybody here will demonstrate that we can actually run our business in a very respectful manner and show that democracy is alive, but in a respectful manner.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) doesn't believe those figures because he won't stand in his place and share those lines. Instead, he sends out his minister to try and spin the public, and yet we know the truth.

When you look at the actuals, they cut a quarter of a billion dollars from health spending last year. So they underspent what was budgeted by a quarter of a billion dollars. Now they're proposing to cut an additional \$120 million from the budgeted amount.

So, with the history of underspending combined with the cut that they're booking on the budget this year, we can only predict that there will be hundreds of millions of dollars less for health care in Manitoba.

What is the impact for patients? Hundreds of cancelled cardiac surgeries just at St. Boniface alone, countless nurses being mandated to work overtime and the closures of the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia.

We know that the entire plan that this side is proposing is bad news, but will they begin to roll it back by cancelling the plan to close the emergency rooms at Concordia and Seven Oaks?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, we are pleased to have in the gallery today members from Advocis; and if that member would want to, any one of those financial professionals could indicate to that member that more is not less. But those financial experts would also say it's not simply about the expenditure; they would say it's about the value of the investment.

Madam Speaker, if simply spending more would have fixed our health-care system we would have been there by now, but we trail the nation when it comes to wait times and other metrics.

Madam Speaker, we are repairing the services. We are making good investments to transform a health-care system. Why? Because Manitobans deserve better care sooner.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, we know that the Minister of Health can spend as much money as he wants to trying to spin the people of Manitoba, but the reality is that Manitobans are waiting longer and longer to get the health care that they need, and in many—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —cases those surgeries and procedures are being cancelled outright, even after they arrive at the hospital.

Now, what is the cause of this? Well, we know it's because of the persistent underspending of the health-care budget, and now this year we are confronted with a further \$120-million cut to health care in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker, I hear the members opposite protesting. They're alarmed that the Minister of Health did not inform this before they were forced to vote on this budget. The members in northeastern Winnipeg were all forced to vote for the closure of Concordia Hospital even when they were not aware that there was a \$120-million cut at the heart of it.

So will the Minister of Health or the Premier please stand up today and announce that they are not going to close the emergency rooms at Concordia or Seven Oaks?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, this morning I had the opportunity to speak to hundreds of delegates of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. They thanked us for an update that we were able to give them on provincial planning, on the transformation of our health-care system; and they agreed that new things had to be done because Manitoba for too many years lagged other provinces, not making the investments, not modernizing our system, not aligning our system to get better results. And that is what it's about: getting better results for Manitobans.

The member is wrong. Our ER wait times are bucking a national trend, down when all other jurisdictions are going up.

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

**K-to-12 Education Review
Request to Cancel Commission**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Simply not true, Madam Speaker. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority says ER wait times are going up in Winnipeg and will continue to rise for the foreseeable future.

Now, we know that this minister has a tall order. He's trying to repair the damage that was caused by the previous minister of Health.

Now, what is this minister up to currently?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Well, he has turned his attention to the education system.

Madam Speaker, we know what parents in this province want: they want their children to have more one-on-one time with their teacher. Yet, that's not what this government is delivering. Instead, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has launched the commission with a predetermined outcome. The predetermined outcome is to cut school divisions, to cut education and to ensure that the Conservative ideology reigns supreme.

* (14:00)

So will the Premier listen to parents and educators, and rather than launching this commission, pull that plan back and commit to investing in real education here in Manitoba?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the only thing that was predetermined is that if we were to continue to do the same things we were doing in education as the NDP did for 17 years, we would've continued to get the same results. And what were those results? Last when it comes to science; last when it comes to math; last when it comes to literacy.

But they were satisfied. They were the party of last. They were happy to be last in everything. They kept throwing more and more money at the problem, didn't come up with any solutions. They were happy to be last.

We're going to improve the system because it's not about us, Madam Speaker, it's about young people and how they succeed.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, we know that this commission process is rigged.

We know that the outcome is predetermined because we know that the previous minister of Education has already carried out a consultation across the province of Manitoba, and I had the pleasure of sitting in on that session.

And do you know what this government was told? They were told if you want to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes, you need to move upstream and focus on the root causes. You need to fight poverty. You need to deal with mental health and you need to deal with all the different barriers that young kids around the province deal with before they enter the classroom.

What happened to that report? Well, the minister didn't like it. The Premier didn't like it. So that's sitting on a shelf somewhere, and they called in the Conservative cavalry to launch this new commission.

So will the Premier, will the minister, please cancel this new commission and commit to investing in education with a focus on dealing with the root causes of the challenge that the students face when it comes to numeracy and literacy in Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I know why the Leader of the Official Opposition is confused, because he attended a consultation and didn't understand what that was because he'd never been to a consultation. No wonder. He must've wondered, what is all this government talking to people about? What actually happens with that?

Well, I can clear up some of the confusion for him. Of course, it did produce a report, a report that was released, a report that is public, a report that Manitobans can look at and now come and speak to the commission about the entire K-to-12 system, Madam Speaker, because, again, he's going to be further confused. There's going to be consultations around the province, even online. He's going to be in a state of confusion for an entire year because of all the consultations that are going on.

He can be confused. We're going to consult, Madam Speaker.

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

**Curriculum Support Centre
Elimination of Library Services**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, perhaps the minister might like

to consult this, Madam Speaker. One teacher wrote to us to say, and I quote here: As a teacher, I use this resource every 'tay'—every day—talking about the curriculum resource library. She goes on, and I quote here: My colleagues and I were devastated yesterday to hear the news the centre was closing and are left feeling at a loss for how we would replace this resource. The types of resources the centre provides cannot be replaced through access online like was suggested. End quote.

So, again, this is a very important resource that helps teachers teach kids in their classroom to their full potential. Since the minister is such a big booster of consultation, perhaps he'd like to explain why this cut, this closure, was brought into place with zero consultation, zero notice not only for teachers, but also for the staff affected.

Now, of course, that might be an interesting postulation for him to put forward here on the record, but the question that I have to ask is much more direct: Will he simply cancel the plan to close the curriculum resource library and ensure that every teacher around the province can continue to teach students to their full—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member opposite is talking about a facility where 14 people entered a day and they had 21 staff; 0.00001 per cent of teachers were accessing the physical facility.

So we're going to do what every other province did. We're going to have more resources online. We're going to start with a collection of over 15 journals that'll be online. We're going to have more than 2,000 electronic books and audio books that are going to be online. We're going to have access to close to 250 K-to-12 curriculum co-ordinated videos that can be streamed directly into the classrooms, Madam Speaker, and, of course, the resources that can't be put online will still be available within the education system.

We're doing more. He wants less, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

B & L Foster Care Agency Moratorium on Placements

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Vanatasia Unique Emerald Green died in the care of CFS and in the care of B & L agency on Sunday. She was only four months old. Her family says that she was a

happy and healthy little girl. Her mother had just seen her on Friday.

Madam Speaker, we have raised concerns several times in this House about this B & L agency. This minister has not listened and she's continued to place children in this home.

We ask her today: What steps is she taking to ensure that no other child has to die in this agency and in the care of CFS?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, our condolences go out to the extended family, to the caregivers and to those who were involved in this child's life. While we must respect the confidentiality of the child and the family, we share in the grief during this very tragic time.

We know that the CF agency and the authority responsible for the child's care are gathering information to find the family the answers that it needs, Madam Speaker. We also know that this is before the Chief Medical Examiner and we will await his results.

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

Mrs. Smith: The minister has neglected, by placing children in the care of B & L agency. The minister did not previously take action when she knew that the agency was dragging their feet big time. It actually took the news to break that story and bring it to the public.

But there is a review in—called. No one knows actually what was in this review because this minister has not—she's refused to explain its terms or what steps she has taken. She even refused to write anything down to avoid accountability for her negligence. No one knows actually if anything was actually done for these children in care. The minister is accountable and she is ultimately responsible.

Has the—is the minister planning to continue to place children in the B & L agency?

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is just wrong. Immediately upon finding out these allegations we took immediate action and I put the deputy minister in charge of a review that took place with respect to B & L immediately. We didn't take time to sit down and write out terms of reference or anything else. We made sure that we

ensured that all of those children were safe, and that's exactly what we did.

Madam Speaker, this is an absolute tragedy. Any death of a child in our province and anywhere is an absolute tragedy. This matter remains before the Chief Medical Examiner and we will await the results of his report.

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

Mrs. Smith: The minister lifted the moratorium on placements at B & L, which ultimately resulted in Vanatasia's death. She stonewalls, saying only that her government would ensure that all—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —children are safe. We're in this House today. Sunday, this little 4-month-old baby died in the care of B & L.

Will she today stand up and tell us that she is going to stop placing children in these unsafe conditions and stop placing them in B & L and ensure every child in Manitoba is safe?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member opposite should be ashamed of herself in those allegations, Madam Speaker. I can tell you that I believe—I grieve with the family in this horrific tragedy that has taken place, and I believe that we all in this Chamber are honourable members and that we all grieve with the family at this horrible time.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that this issue remains in this—this incident remains in the hands of the Chief Medical Examiner and we will await the results of that report.

*(14:10)

The Pas Volunteer Firefighters Liquor & Lotteries Legal Action

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries under the guidance of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has filed a lawsuit against the Town of The Pas, but it goes above and beyond—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lathlin: —the Town of The Pas, Madam Speaker. The Premier has had the audacity to authorize a lawsuit that individually names our volunteer firefighters. This leaves a stain on the reputation of this Legislature and our province. These are individuals who volunteer to risk their

lives every day for the well-being, the safety of the town of The Pas.

Why is this Premier suing volunteer firefighters that risk their lives every day for the people of The Pas?

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): Shame on that member for putting false information on the record. The Manitoba government is not suing the Town; they're not suing individual firefighters.

I suggest those individuals get their facts straight before they start—continue—or before they continue to fear monger the good people who go out and protect us every day. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for The Pas, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: It saddens me to see the actions by this current government.

In July 2017 The Pas volunteer firefighters worked hard to put out the fire at the Town Centre Hotel, but, unfortunately, as sometimes does occur in firefighting efforts, the fire rekindled and the building was ultimately destroyed despite their efforts.

Under the guidance of the Premier, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is suing these individual firefighters. I table—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lathlin: —the statement of claim Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries filed with the Court of Queen's Bench.

Will the minister clarify for the House and put on record why Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is suing the Town of The Pas and our six volunteer firefighters? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mayer: The member opposite, who happens to be a lawyer, should know the law and exactly what this is. The insurance company—the insurance company—is the one who has put forward this claim. The Manitoba government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mayer: —is not—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I'm directing the table to stop the clock.

I would ask everybody on both sides of the House—I know issues can sometimes get—have strong emotions attached to them, and I recognize that, but there still is a respectful way in which to have this debate.

So I would ask members to please understand that we've got hundreds of people watching this Legislature on computers, on TV, and we have guests in the gallery and I think they'd like to ensure that these questions and answers are being heard properly and that—so that I can hear them as well so that I can rule if there is any breach of the rules.

So I would ask everybody's respect, please, in moving forward on this debate, and I would indicate there seems to be a little higher level of heckling today and, sadly, I have been forced to start my list again and I will not hesitate to start to indicate those voices that I'm hearing on both sides of the House that might be trying to heckle down the other side.

So I would ask for everybody's respect in this, please.

The honourable Minister for Crown Services to conclude her—

Mrs. Mayer: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to be very clear. The Manitoba government and the Crown corporation is not suing individual firefighters or the town. This is a claim that has been filed by the insurance company that insures Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries for their losses.

I want to just put the facts on the record: Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries received an insurance payment for their losses due to the fire and there was—is no reason for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to be included in this claim.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The statement of claim, which I just tabled for this House today, which is now in front of the minister, explicitly identifies Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries as the plaintiff. Quote: The plaintiff, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation, claims against the defendants jointly and severally as follows: one thousand four hundred—one thousand, forty-nine, six hundred, which represents the value of video lottery terminals and related equipment, damages, pre- and post-judgment interest in accordance with The Court of Queen's Bench Act, costs and such further other relief as this honourable court may deem just. End quote.

Why is this Premier (Mr. Pallister) suing our volunteer firefighters that risk their lives every day for the people of The Pas?

Mrs. Mayer: I won't comment any further, as this matter is before the court.

But I am going to take a moment to extend to all volunteer firefighters, to all people who put themselves in harm's way on a daily basis, an sincere thank you. Thank you for putting yourself out there on that call. Thank you for putting your community at risk.

I know members opposite don't care about members of the public. They didn't for 17 years. They don't today. They're going to continue to not listen.

We are doing right by Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: I don't know if members haven't heard me in the last number of times I've had to stand today, but I have had to stand a number of times, and I don't want to be doing this because I don't think this makes this Legislature look very good to the public when this kind of behaviour is allowed to continue.

So, we've still got a ways to go. We've got a long afternoon. There are some important issues being debated here. I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

And I'm hearing it from both sides, so I want to put everybody on notice right now that I would really hope that they can respect the Chair. And by respecting the Chair it's respecting this House and this Assembly. It's not just me; it's what this represents.

So I would ask everybody, please, to demonstrate that respect for this institution.

Election Campaign Financing New Legislation Concerns

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): This government recently introduced legislation to change the way the elections are financed. The Premier has said no one he talks to cares about election financing, but Manitobans absolutely do care about democracy and free and fair elections.

There is room for reform in campaign financing, but it shouldn't be used by the party in power to rig elections in their favour or to try to game the system with a goal of creating a permanent Conservative majority. That's what the Premier's former boss, Stephen Harper, attempted and failed to do.

There is a serious concern, that totally eliminating rebates will fatally weaken Elections Manitoba's oversight of campaign spending. In the past, these audits have revealed Conservative schemes, from the 1995 PC vote-splitting to the 2006 Conservative in-and-out scandal, two elections where the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was a candidate.

Is this bill an attempt by the PCs to hide their campaign spending from Elections Manitoba so they can ignore campaign spending laws, as they have in the past?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): This government takes great pride in the fact that we want to invest money where the priorities of Manitobans are. We know this—with this a political process that's in place, in terms of some of the changes that were made, will allow us to invest money where it should be spent; over \$3 million, Madam Speaker, on priorities for Manitobans, whether that be in health care or education or economic development. That's money that should be spent on Manitobans' causes, opposed to giving back to political parties.

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

Mr. Lamont: Again, the issue of campaign financing and deliberately ignoring campaign financing spending laws makes the difference between whether or not we have free and fair elections.

In 2006, the Conservative Party of Canada ran an in-and-out scheme where over 60 Conservative campaigns illegally used local funds to buy ads in different ridings where the race was close. They spent \$1 million over the legal limit and the scheme was only uncovered when the CPC applied for over \$700,000 in public rebates using forged invoices.

The Premier ran in that election, and I table an email that was part of that investigation where Don Plett, a CPC organizer, sent an email to all Manitoba campaigns, and eight said they would participate.

Could the Premier explain whether he is one of the eight campaigns that agreed to this scheme, and what he knew about it at the time?

* (14:20)

Mr. Fielding: It's always important to hear the hypocrisy coming from the other side. We know the mess that's going on in Ottawa from his Liberal colleagues in Ottawa that's there. This government is about transparency, openness. This election law 'trancing' act will change things to make things

appropriate where we can spend appropriate money. We don't think the fact that government should fund up to \$1.25 of every dollar that's contributed, through donations as well as contributions, back to the parties.

We think the money should be invested in priority areas for Manitobans. We're very proud of the fact to make changes in this way. We think it'll be more important to spend on priority needs of Manitobans like health and education, Madam Speaker.

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

Fixed Election Date Law Possible Spring Election

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I believe in public support for democracy because elections are too important to be left to donors alone.

Political parties and governments alike need to govern for the common good, for everyone, not just for the people who voted for them or the people who donated to them. Democracy is about one person, one vote, Madam Speaker, not one dollar, one vote.

The Premier has been very vocal about the rule of law, but his words and deeds show he wants to pick and choose which laws he follows. He says he isn't interested in judge-made law, which is all of our common law, Madam Speaker, and Manitoba has a fixed election date law. The Premier is second to none in his love of a good loophole.

Can the Premier explain why, if he calls an election this spring, he is not technically breaking a fixed-date election law, and can he identify the exact loophole in this law he will be exploiting instead?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): It's ironic that we hear from the member that has come into this House saying he's talking about sunny ways and improving the way politics is done, and yet we know what the audit—what's happening in Ottawa with his political parties in terms of cash for schemes that have gone in the past.

We don't agree with any political election kickback scheme that's a part of our process right now. We think the money should be appropriately spent where Manitobans want: in priorities. Our government took a focus priority of not taking any money in terms of a voter tax. That's something we took pride of in opposition. One of the first things we did in office is change that to make sure that

taxpayers working hard for their money do not have to pay for political parties. We think money should be kept on the kitchen tables of Manitobans, and we want to focus on those areas.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Methamphetamine Addiction Prevention and Treatment Services

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Actually, the first thing they did was give themselves a 20 per cent raise.

Last night the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself met—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —with concerned community and family members to discuss the current meth crisis. Manitoba families are struggling in unimaginable ways with the effects of meth, Madam Speaker. Families are fighting not only through meth-induced psychosis incidents, but through a system they can't navigate or barely understand.

The member for Point Douglas and myself are heartbroken at what Manitobans are currently facing day in and day out. We want to acknowledge Lisa Strong for organizing the community meeting and say miigwech to everyone that was there last night.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) commit to providing more prevention and treatment supports and services for our relatives in Manitoba who are struggling with meth?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): All Manitobans recognize that we have seen an increase in the use of illicit drugs in our province. It concerns us all.

We are also aware that it is not specifically or uniquely Manitoba's problem. We are all challenged in North America with the rise of use of illicit drugs. We need to show compassion. Compassion means acting. It's why our government is acting with more withdrawal management services, with RAAM clinics and other investments we're making like partnerships with Strongest Families Institute to get children access to mental health care sooner.

These are only some of the investments we are making on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Families and the individuals who are addicted want help. They want real help right now. Families want to help their loved ones get into treatment, and every day families are stepping up to support their loved ones through this crisis.

But we heard time and time again that families just don't know how to navigate the system, nor do they know where the supports and—and nor do they know that there are any supports available for their loved ones. They feel abandoned by this Premier and this Pallister government, and families like us can't wrap their heads around why this government isn't doing anything.

When will the Premier start to actually care about this issue and develop a comprehensive and robust strategy to deal with the meth crisis?

Mr. Friesen: The member repeats over and over about inaction, but somewhere today there is a woman in Winnipeg who will go into a treatment centre because there are 12 more beds for that woman to be in than there were under the NDP.

Somewhere in Thompson today there will be someone come into a RAAM clinic and be able to access directly a clinician or a therapist or an addictions doctor, who could not have done so three years ago.

That member can cry all she wants about inaction. Manitobans know the result of us taking action. It means better health care sooner for them.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Last night we heard from a daughter whose parents were almost killed by her brother in a meth-induced psychosis incident. Her mom had a shattered pelvis. We heard from a dad whose two daughters, 17 and 21, are sexually exploited on our streets right now, as we sit in this Chamber, addicted to meth. We heard from a mom whose daughter is homeless and has been trying to navigate the system for over six months.

The members opposite can think that we are crying over here over whatever; the reality is that nothing is being done in this province.

When are they going to actually care about these families that we met with last night?

Mr. Friesen: Her statements are untrue and her actions are regrettable, Madam Speaker. This government has taken strong action. This government will continue to take action.

It was only a few weeks ago that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) and I walked with the Bear Clan, and as I walked along Salter Street there were three things that one of the Bear Clan members shared with me: (1) none of this is easy; it's complex, (2) government must be assisted by people in the community and (3) we are all in this as Manitobans.

Why doesn't that member get alongside the efforts that we all must make to struggle and to make advances for all Manitobans in respect of addictions medicine?

We're getting that work done. It will take some time. We're committed to the work.

CNIB Post-Vision Loss Services Additional Annual Funding

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, year after year under the previous NDP government, Manitobans experienced some of the worst health-care outcomes and services in all of Canada. Manitobans suffering from blindness and vision loss weren't being supported. Our government recently announced ways in which we are investing in better care sooner for Manitobans, including those impacted with visual impairments.

Can the Minister of Health please update this House on the work our government has undertaken in this area?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, our government became aware that Manitoba was the only province left in Canada not funding post-vision-loss rehabilitation services. CNIB advocated, but the NDP did not respond.

We know that 17,000 Manitobans live with vision loss or partial sight, and that is why in Budget 2019 the Manitoba government will provide \$240,000 in additional annual funding to CNIB through their Vision Loss Rehabilitation Manitoba to eliminate barriers, to get help, to get back into the workplace, to get a better quality of life and to enhance their remaining vision.

I was pleased to visit CNIB with the member for Riding Mountain to meet Don [*phonetic*] Curtis, their chair, and Gary Nenson, their executive director, and make this investment on behalf of all Manitobans struggling with—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Children in Care Newborn Apprehensions

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I've said time and time again in this House that we are tired of burying our children, especially our newborns. Vanatasia Unique Emerald Green was from Miskoosepi First Nation, a life needlessly lost after CFS failed this mother, this family, but, most importantly failed her.

I can't believe we have to wait for the four months for the medical examiner. It's far too long. We need to know today.

* (14:30)

What is this minister doing to ensure the safety of our children? Will they stop apprehending newborns?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Again, our condolences go out to the extended family, the caregivers and all of those who have come in contact with this child.

I have already mentioned that we know that the CFS agency as well as the authority responsible for the child's care are gathering information to find the family the answers that it needs. This does—this is before the Chief Medical Examiner and we will await the results of that report.

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

Ms. Klassen: Vanatasia was placed under a foster-care home run by B & L agencies. I am hopeful that this minister is familiar with that group's past.

The mother said that she was not sure why CFS never gave her a chance to be a mother, a clear system failure if the mother doesn't even know why specifically. How can she fix something if they don't tell her the why? CFS had months to act. They should've supported that mother while she was carrying instead of waiting for the baby to come.

Madam Speaker, can this minister tell us how many babies have been apprehended immediately after birth like this baby was, and, more importantly, when will they enact legislation to stop this inhumane practice?

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question.

And, of course, the apprehension of a child is the absolute last resort that is used, Madam Speaker, and we want to ensure that children remain in

the hands of their loved ones and of those communities to the extent that they are—and we always have to, obviously, look at the safety of the child first, Madam Speaker, and we will continue to do that in our child-welfare system.

We have introduced our social impact bond, which is a doula initiative that we're going to be working with those mothers. The doulas will be working with those mothers to try and reduce that apprehension rate at birth. So we are taking steps and measures, Madam Speaker, in that direction.

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

Ms. Klassen: Minister, the department had apprehended 337 babies under a month old last year.

This government spends millions on children in care, but many communities feel as though they are not receiving the support they desperately need. Many note the ridiculousness of the one child, one bedroom regulation used against our First Nations.

Minister, would it be so hard to build homes in communities with the \$550-million apprehension budget, or since I know this Province loves to keep the kids' money, simply pick up any federal funding they left sitting?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I thank the member for the question.

And we are taking steps to ensure that children—to reduce the number of apprehensions of children. We will always put the safety of our children first, Madam Speaker, but we want to try and reduce that, the number of children who are apprehended at birth.

That's why we have taken initiatives like the doula initiative, and we're working in those areas. We have also done a very comprehensive—the most comprehensive review of our child and family services system in Manitoba in 15 years. We received feedback from communities about this.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to work with stakeholders in the community to ensure that we reduce the number of apprehensions of children in our province.

Curriculum Support Centre Elimination of Library Services

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It was less than two weeks ago that educators were blindsided by this minister's announcement that the curriculum resource

library would be closed by the end of the month. In the face of widespread condemnation from educators across the province, the minister has unbelievably moved up the closure timetable. The centre is now closed to the public.

The minister knows full well that educators across this province use the resources of the curriculum resource library. Almost 10,000 teachers were using the library every year, and that number was growing. Nearly half of the library's users are from rural or northern Manitoba. The centre lent over 100,000 resources last year. That works out to 500 books, maps, models sourced to teachers all across this province every single day.

Will the minister simply step back from this cut and—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, as I indicated already, the resources remain in the system and more resources will be available online.

But we saw the priorities of the member yesterday, Madam Speaker. He had the opportunity to vote for a budget that has record investment in health; he chose not to support that. He could have had the opportunity to vote for a budget that has record investment in education, and he chose not to support that.

But more than that, Madam Speaker, he had, yesterday, the opportunity to reverse the record that he had when he increased the PST and voted to increase the PST after promising not to do it. He could have come back; he could have said I'm sorry, I made a mistake, and voted to decrease the PST.

He doubled down again, Madam Speaker, and wouldn't reduce taxes for Manitobans. That's his record. We'll stand by ours.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Daylight Saving Time

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

The loss of sleep associated with the beginning of daylight savings time has serious consequences

for physical and mental health and has been linked to increases in traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by Kayla Elias, Leah Elias, Les Wieler and many more fine Manitobans.

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

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) The budget of the northern regional health authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

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

(5) On November 6, 2018, the northern regional health authority announced that obstetric delivery services at the Flin Flon General Hospital would be suspended, with no discussion regarding when they will be reinstated.

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

(7) The people of Flin Flon are concerned for the health and safety of mothers-to-be and their babies, including the extra physical and financial stress that will be placed upon them by this decision of the provincial government.

(8) There has been no commitment from the provincial government that mothers and their escorts who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

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

* (14:40)

(10) Because this provincial government has refused to invest in much-needed health-care services in The Pas, the hospital in The Pas may not be able to handle the extra workload created by this decision.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Kevan Schiltroth, Michael Anderson, Clarke Funk and many other Manitobans.

Dog Overpopulation in Northern Communities

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Many Manitobans are deeply concerned about the safety of northern, isolated communities in

the province owing to an exploding overpopulation rate of dogs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government, in partnership with animal welfare agencies, the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association, the MVMA, front-line rescues and the federal

government to immediately develop a provincial strategy to spay and neuter dogs, while providing access to veterinarian services for owned dogs in northern communities, ensuring the safety of communities and their citizens.

Signed by Colin Shaw, David Michaelson and Josef Neufeld.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I move, seconded by the MLA for River Heights that, under section 38(1), the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely: the operation of Child and Family Services and the urgent issue of a child from a mother in Bloodvein being taken away from the mother by Child and Family Services and then dying while in care at four months.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for Kewatinook, I should remind all members that, under rule 38(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of 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.

Ms. Klassen: Madam Speaker, I have brought this issue forward several times since I have been elected to this House and still we see no movement towards addressing this critical issue, and again I will have to bury a young member—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Klassen: —from my constituency.

On November 6th, 2018, Daralyn and Reggie welcomed their beautiful little girl, Vanatasia Unique Emerald Green, into this world. Vanatasia was their firstborn.

On November 11, Vanatasia was apprehended. Newborn apprehensions are quite traumatic for all

involved. Daralyn disclosed to me as to why she thought her baby was apprehended.

There's one key failure right there. Where is the natural justice? Why doesn't Daralyn know specifically why her newborn was taken? Why was there no offer of resources to help her be the best mom possible?

If the community had been invested into properly, the apprehension would have never taken place. Indeed, many apprehensions would have never taken place.

Stop apprehending newborns. This young, 21-year-old First Nation mother should have had the access to the resources any other non-First Nation member in this western society has.

Madam Speaker, we just had the privilege of seeing some of my beautiful children from Miskooseepi First Nation. In their eyes, I see hope and potential. I am so tired of this government writing off my children.

When our leaderships meet with this government, they don't realize that my leaders carry these children with them into meetings, into their daily actions, to try and make a better future for all our children.

Miskooseepi has been wrought with struggle after struggle for decades and this is due directly to the multiple system failures of the people that are in this House and in the federal House of Parliament.

I am a testament, as are the leader for the official opposition, as well as the members for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that the government's plans to eradicate the indigenous nation from Turtle Island will fail and will always fail.

Collectively, we demonstrate that we not only overcame the surmounting obstacles thrown at us, we have succeeded and now sit in this House designed to eradicate us.

I have asked this PC team to help me with educating the general public as to why my people are in the situations they are currently in.

Knowledge is key, so, once again, for the members here and the general public, there were multiple laws and policies, both federally and provincially, such as starvation policies, residential school policies, reservation policies, and enfranchisement policies. I could continue

but the list is quite extensive. All these policies were designed to extinguish my people and our culture.

My nation, St. Theresa Point, is only third-generation contact. Miskooseepi has a longer period of contact, and it shows. And I want to take the time—this time—to give kudos to the small group of women in Bloodvein who are reintroducing our culture, customs and practices of traditional life there.

*(14:50)

When our great-grandparents were fleeing into the bush, trying to hide their children from the—and I quote—Indian agents, all too soon the Indian agents started outright killing parents who hid their children. Their bodies hung from trees as displays as a warning to other parents.

We are working against decades of us being treated as wards of the government, as opposed to human beings in our own right. When were we ever given the chance to learn how to be good parents again?

We had our ways of communicating, and so word got out to our people that this was happening. Our leaders then tried to come together to discuss the issues. Of course, this was put to a stop right away, as policies that disallowed our leaders to have meetings came into effect.

Our leaders were also murdered or jailed simply for trying to come together and organize. Soon enough, no one could leave the reservations without an Indian agent's approval and pass. At the same time, starvation policies were in effect. Yet we were hunter-gatherers; hence the dependency on, and I quote, white man's food, was born. The concept of whole dependency was born.

Kewatinook, formerly the riding of Rupert's Land, has been always held by the NDP. I am the first Liberal to ever hold the seat. I believe in my people and I know that how that party operated and allowed for our communities to continue on a trajectory of failure, but I have hope.

I have utter and complete faith in my people. Our leaders know what they need. They don't need to be treated like children. Every issue we face within our First Nation can be directly traced to being the result of a federal or provincial policy, as well as the fact that governments have never treated us as capable human beings. We are exactly that.

The public needs to know why my people are in these disgusting situations. I know the governments

in this House live off the status quo, and it is scary for them to face change, yet it—really easy for them to impose change upon others. But trust me, knowledge is power. An educated public will always prove to be better for all of us here in Manitoba in the long term.

Madam Speaker, we need to be given the opportunity to share our ideas regarding this MUPI today. It is a matter of life and death.

Vanatasia Unique Emerald Green, a newborn, has passed away while under CFS. We cannot wait for yet another medical examiner report. I ask for a full debate today.

Megwetch, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to put just a few comments on the record about this request for a matter of urgent public importance, and I thank the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) for her words as well. I've often found in listening to her, she is not only a passionate advocate for those that she represents, but brings a unique perspective that many of us learn from when she brings her words here to the Legislature and her experiences, and I appreciate her doing that—doing this.

As you acknowledged prior to asking members for their comments on this MUPI, this is more than whether or not the issue is important. I don't think there's any member in the House who would say that this isn't an important issue.

CFS, Child and Family Services, the provision of care for children who may not otherwise have alternatives or turns at the moment that are not suitable for them, are—is always an important issue, is—was an important issue, I think, under the previous NDP government, and previous administrations even before that.

It's always been one of the most important issues, if not the most important issue, that any government can deal with, because it is so critical to the lives of young Manitobans, of children, Madam Speaker. So this is not, I don't think, a debate about whether this is an important issue. Clearly it is.

The issue is whether this is the only opportunity to debate this issue. Of course we deal with many important issues here in the Legislature, and we are provided, as legislators, that time to do that. The most notable being question period, which we've just

gone through, and members opposite were able to ask questions about this matter. The minister of Child and Family Services eloquently answered those questions under what is clearly a very difficult situation, Madam Speaker.

So the opportunity does exist to question government, as opposition should, and to have an important matter debated. The member opposite, the member for Kewatinook, acknowledged herself that she had brought this forward to the Legislature many times, proving that there are numerous opportunities to bring forward these issues not limited to question period but could also be part of private members' hours, a debate on other issues that touch on the same subject, Madam Speaker.

So there are many opportunities for this member and all members to discuss the Child and Family Services, and I would encourage them to continue to do so because it is important. And all of us are better for the debate when it is done respectfully and when it's done in the way that honours the circumstances, Madam Speaker.

So, no quarrel with the issue of it being an important issue—it certainly is—but there are many opportunities within the context of our day and the Legislature that would allow this to be debated, and I don't believe it needs to be debated at this particular moment, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Allow me just to put a couple of words on the record today in respect of the member for Kewatinook's matter of urgent public importance.

First and foremost, Madam Speaker, I just want to lift up the member for Kewatinook for bringing this forward and reflect on, a little bit, in respect of the member's comments about this House and the policies and the legislation that comes, and has come, historically from this House in respect of situating indigenous peoples as really second-class citizens in our own territories.

And it's not lost on me with the member for Kewatinook when she referred to the fact that both, you know, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), myself, the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and obviously herself, were in many respects, in all respects, not meant to be in this space. This space was not meant for indigenous peoples, and so it is an honour to be here. It's an honour to have the opportunity to speak to issues that fundamentally and tragically impact on our communities, but, more importantly, to stand up in

the House and to stand for our children, no matter which communities they come from.

So I think that that's very important, and I want to lift up the member for doing that and allowing us to stand up in the House today to bring forward what, you know, I would suggest to the House is a matter of urgent public importance.

It is obviously an absolute tragedy and heart-breaking news that Vanatasia Unique Emerald Green died in the care of CFS and B & L agency on Sunday.

I think any of—any one of us can reflect back, if we have children, can reflect back on our own moments with our babies, when they were four months old. And I, as I was listening to the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen), I was going back to when my boys were both four months old and how small they were. I think when your children get older, you forget how small and fragile and wholly, wholly in—dependent they are on you for their very survival.

* (15:00)

And so I was reflecting on my two boys at that—at those months, and I can't even imagine what the parents are going through right now. I can't even imagine what it must be like for a mom to have her baby apprehended and not have any sense of control or agency over the life and protection of your baby at a moment when any of us who have had children, and I, you know, dare I say—and I suggest, you know, moms who just, you know, who carried, who created life and carried their babies for nine months and then birthed that life into the world, and then who have the sacred responsibility and opportunity to nurse that baby, if you so chose to nurse.

I can't even imagine what it would be like not to have your baby with you and to know that that baby is somewhere else and you're not able to offer protection of that baby. You're not able to offer, you know, a mom's, you know, cuddles and love and strength and kisses and hugs to that newborn as that newborn starts to discover this world.

So I cannot even imagine, and I just want to—I want to say to Vanatasia's mom and dad how deeply sorry I am, personally, and, obviously, how deeply sorry we are on this side of the House in respect of the death of their little baby.

By all accounts, the little baby was healthy, Madam Speaker. She was a happy little girl. Her

mom had just seen her on Friday and didn't know that would be the last time she would be seeing her baby.

We have raised concerns in this House about B & L agency dozens of times in this House, Madam Speaker, and often, it seems, without the understanding or the listening of members opposite.

I would suggest to you, and it's been written, that the minister didn't previously take action when—and found out that the authorities had dragged their feet.

And I quote: dragged their feet big time in dealing with the abuse at B & L agency. And then it took an investigation for the minister to call a review.

So for months, I know that on this side of the House, we've been, you know, demanding for clarity and transparency.

And, you know, I think about—Madam Speaker, I don't know if the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself have ever shared in this House that the previous cases that were brought up in this House with those children who were left in B & L who were sexually abused, that we had the mom reach out.

And to—and we have many parents that reach out to us every day in respect of CFS. And to, you know, to sit down and to listen and to navigate through what moms are sharing about their concerns and their experiences of their children in the supposed care of B & L services, it is absolutely heartbreaking and it certainly takes its toll.

It takes its toll on your spirit and your—in your heart, and in the sense that it feels that we are so powerless to do anything. And so, in that powerlessness, there is an absolute despair and a frantic urgency to be able to protect children.

And, you know, reflecting on or drawing upon what the member for Kewatinook spoke about in her 10 minutes previous to this, we know that, you know, the vast majority of children who end up in CFS care are indigenous children.

And we know that the vast majority of children who end up in CFS care are not in care because they're not loved. They're not in care because there's nobody that cares about them or that there's whole communities or families or relatives that don't care about them.

We know that, fundamentally, indigenous children end up in care because of that historical

continuum of intergenerational trauma that affects our families.

I've lived with that. The member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) has lived with that. The member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) has lived with that intergenerational trauma. The member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) has lived with that intergenerational trauma. The member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) has lived with that intergenerational trauma.

So it is—I don't know, Madam Speaker, if it's particularly acute for us, as indigenous members of this House, to hear these stories, but I want to unequivocally stand up in this House and say definitively that if there was ever a matter of urgent public importance, it is the care and safety of our children.

And I know, and I've been told by one of the clerks, many times, that there's never been a judgment in favour of a matter of urban—urgent public importance, never. *[interjection]* Well, in the last I think it was 16 or 17 years, I don't think that there's been. The other clerk is saying no. I'm not sure.

But I would suggest that today is a day that—today is a day where we could rule in favour of the member for Kewatinook's MUPI, and have a robust and comprehensive discussion on the protection and safety of children here in Manitoba, and in particular, indigenous children in Manitoba.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia's indicating that he would like to speak to this.

Does the honourable member for Assiniboia have leave to offer comments regarding the urgency of the motion and other opportunities for debate?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I would like to thank all the members for allowing me to speak, and I'll speak briefly, I won't use the full time. And I'd like to thank the member from Kewatinook for bringing this issue.

As the House leader has said, this is—every member agrees that this is of public importance and of urgency. To hear the eloquent words of the House Leader of the Official Opposition, it is obviously a very emotional and scary situation, when

healthy babies die under government supervision, or supposedly.

The member from Kewatinook mentioned Bloodvein. You know, I've canoed the Bloodvein many times, and seen the pictographs on Artery Lake and other places which I won't disclose because we want to preserve that as part of our heritage, a part of the heritage that the member from Kewatinook has so eloquently raised in her matter of urgent public importance.

The member also talked about St. Theresa Point, and only three generations from contact, like, that is extraordinary. I learned something just now, and I think we all need to learn more about the issues around CFS.

Now, my humble suggestion is that if, on one hand, that we do move forward and discuss this, I certainly would be in favour of it, but as the opposition House leader has pointed out, that is probably not going to happen, given the track record of MUIs in the past.

* (15:10)

Perhaps what I can suggest is—there is other members in this House that also have a deep, profound understanding in—about CFS. I'm thinking of the member from Dawson Trail, the member from The Pas, the member from Point Douglas. It would be an interesting opportunity to have a all-party committee.

And it doesn't have to be done by the government; it can be an ad hoc committee from people who just care about CFS.

Bring their knowledge together and bring some suggestions forward so these types of things don't come forward, and in this way, it empowers MLAs to focus on one issue or—and associated issues, bring forward recommendations, and since there's buy in, or advocates, in each caucus, I think that would be a way to even do it through unanimous consent, you know, that's definitely constructive, proactive, deal with—get—actually deal with this.

Yet the problem with dealing with urgent things in this place, Madam Speaker, and I think everyone would agree, nothing happens urgently. Perhaps the—this alternative path of an ad hoc committee with MLAs who have a knowledge of this would be a way to fast track some constructive comments and suggestions, and certainly these MLAs can

educate us all about issues around CFS and First Nations and indigenous people.

So, obviously, we all need to learn a lot more so we can help provide the solutions.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen).

The notice required by rule 38(1) was provided. 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. The death of an infant in foster care is a tragic situation for the family of that child and for society in general. We can only imagine the pain, the loss and the sorrow experienced, and our hearts go out to the family with much compassion.

Although no one would argue that this is not a sad and tragic situation, as Speaker I am compelled to look at the procedural aspects of whether the emotion—pardon me—aspects of whether the motion for a matter of urgent public importance is in order.

Unfortunately, this motion does not fit the criteria as a matter of urgent public importance as there are other opportunities that can be used to raise this issue, including oral questions, members' statements, petitions, grievances, as well as opportunities to raise questions during the Interim Supply and Estimates processes.

It gives me no pleasure to say this, but the motion is out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, for government business—

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Sorry, Madam Speaker. We would like to consider Interim Supply, so I ask that you resolve the House into the Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Interim Supply this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Interim Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have before us the consideration of two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The first resolution in respect of—respecting the operating expenditures for the Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that the sum not exceeding \$4,917,428,000, being 35 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set forth on part A, Operating Expenditure, of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2020.

Does the Minister of Finance have any opening comments?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister—okay, the honourable minister has no comments.

Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments? No comments?

Does the second opposition Finance critic have any opening comments? No?

Does the honourable members have—sorry, okay.

The floor is open for any questions. Any questions? No, there's no questions.

Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass?
[Agreed]

The second resolution respecting Capital Investments and Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that the sum exceeding 479—
RESOLVED that the sum not exceeding \$479,909,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investments, of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2020.

Does the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) have any opening comments? No?

Does the official opposition financial critic have any opening comments? No?

Does the honourable member for—like, does the second opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

Is the floor open for any questions? No? Do you have any questions, the honourable opposition leader? *[interjection]*

Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

This concludes the business before the committee.

The committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (15:20)

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered the—and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Interim Supply Motion

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires), that there be granted Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of four billion, nine hundred seventeen, four hundred twenty-eight, being 35 per cent of the total amount to be voted as—*[interjection]* \$4,917,428,000 being 35 per cent of the total amount being voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditures, and \$479,909,000 being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investments, of the Estimates, laid before the House at the present session of Legislature.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister for Sustainable Development, that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of \$4,917,428,000 being approximately 35 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditure, and \$479,909,000 being approximately 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the Estimates, laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature. *[interjection]*

Due to a difference in my notes versus what the minister said, I will re-read what the minister actually said in his motion: that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of \$4,917,428,000 being 35 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditure, and \$479,909,000 being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the Estimates, laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Sustainable Development, that Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, be now read a first time and ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House staff will not—will now distribute the bill.

Madam Speaker: Before we proceed, we will revert to the Chair's report as his seconder was not in his seat at the time.

Committee Report

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply. I move, and seconded by the honourable

member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires), that Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, be now read a second time and referred to the committee as a whole.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: Is the minister wishing to speak to the second reading?

Mr. Fielding: Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, provides interim spending and commitment authority for the 2019-20 year—fiscal year, pending approval of the 2019 appropriation act.

* (15:30)

Madam Speaker, the amount of party operating expenditure—spending authority really—requests for \$4,917,428,000. This authority represents 35 per cent of the total sums to be voted of \$13,957,866,000, as set out in part A of the Estimates of Operating Expenditures in the 2019-20 Estimates of Expenditures.

The amount of capital investment authority requested is \$479,909,000. This authority represents 75 per cent of the total sums to be voted of \$639,879,000, Madam Speaker, as set out in part B, Estimates for Capital Expenditures for the 2019-20 Estimates of Expenditures.

Madam Speaker, the amount of the future commitment authority included in this Interim Supply bill is \$410 million. This authority provides for a commitment of part A and part B expenditures to ensure completion of projects or fulfilling of contracts initiated but not completed during the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: Do members have questions on the bill?

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. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It is important that we take our time here to consider this particular Interim Supply bill simply because we are at a critical time in Manitoba, in terms of flooding and the flooding situation. We've had additional reports about what may be coming down; potentially worse than 2011 is some of the talk that's out there right now.

So I'd just simply like to ask the minister: How can the government justify cutting the budget for flood protection and maintenance in such a critical year?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I can say that our government's very proud of the fact that we are making important investments in infrastructure: close to one point—over \$1.4 billion as an organization.

We also take pride in the fact that we are able to put more money away in the rainy day fund, as well as more money appropriated—\$49 million more—in emergency expenditures, as well as a healthy increase in terms of our contingency budgets.

So, overall, we are making important investments: making investments in things like schools, about a 38 per cent increase in our investments in building schools; more money for the City of Winnipeg infrastructures; as well as more money in heavy construction for road repairs.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, those sorts of answers might fly in, you know, budget debate or in the back and forth that happens during question period, but here we are speaking about a very specific bill and some very specific cuts that this government has to be held accountable for.

So this year there were \$700,000 cut to maintenance for water-related assets in this year's budget. Why did the minister make this cut when Manitobans are faced with the prospect of a major flood event in this province?

Mr. Fielding: That just simply isn't true. Under part A of subsection 2.1, 100 per cent of emergency expenditures of \$49 million are included, as well as 35 per cent of internal service adjustments contingency at \$64 million, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the minister wants to conflate money that's being spent on infrastructure across government as being specific to flood fighting, and this is where I think we need to be extremely clear.

There was a \$700,000 cut for maintenance for water-related assets in this year's budget. There's a \$38-million reduction in capital investments in water-related infrastructure in this year's budget.

Why is the minister making these cuts on such a critical year for flooding in Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: That is just completely inaccurate, Madam Speaker. Our government is investing money. In fact, we're investing \$322 million in budget for internal service adjustments, which is more than a 35 per cent increase than last year. Emergency expenditures is going up by over \$49.5 million, which is 174 per cent increase.

The rainy day fund: the member opposite probably knows what that is because they drained it when they were in office. We've increased the rainy day fund to over \$265 million. It was around \$110 million when we came to office, Madam Speaker.

We're making appropriate investments to protect against the flood.

Mr. Wiebe: Is the minister suggesting that he's willing to empty out the rainy day fund if the flood happens to be as significant as is being predicted right now? That's a startling admission here in this House, that the minister's own budget really isn't accurate, because he's saying that the rainy day fund is his slush fund for paying for the flood this year, instead of actually budgeting for a flood that all of our flood forecasters are saying potentially could happen.

Again, why is this minister not being straight with Manitobans about the significance of his cuts in relation to the flood that's coming down?

Mr. Fielding: Two figures are important for Manitobans: \$864 million and \$115 million.

Madam Speaker, \$864 million is what was in the rainy day fund under the NDP, and it dropped to about \$115 million. In terms of flood protection, that's a—seventy—\$750-million drop that the NDP took away from the rainy day fund.

Our government is making important investments and contingencies. There's \$322 million in internal service adjustments; that's a 35 per cent

increase over last year, Madam Speaker. We're also making a \$49.5-million enhanced investment in emergency expenditures—over 174 per cent increase over last year.

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Madam Speaker, what—I'm hearing the minister say that he believes that the rainy day fund is there to make up for his budget shortfalls, which is just a startling admission that this budget that we're debating here, this Interim Supply bill that we're considering here today is not accurate and, in fact, he sees that money as being available to be used this year.

Maybe I'll try to get at this issue in a different way. Did this government consult with people who would be affected by floods—the farmers, the municipalities—when determining how much to cut from their budget, or did he just go to the Premier's office and get a number from him?

Mr. Fielding: Well, you know what the NDP thought of consulting. In fact, I was at one of their budget consultations before I was in government, Madam Speaker, and it was a farce. It was a complete farce.

We went across the province consulting with thousands and thousands of Manitobans to make sure their priorities are acted upon in this budget. This budget is important because it provides some taxes—reduction in taxes, putting more money in the pockets of Manitobans. I know the NDP don't want to talk about that because all they talk about is increased taxes for Manitobans.

We want to put more money in the pockets of Manitobans and improve the services that were degraded under their government.

Mr. Wiebe: So, if the minister consulted, then I would ask him to put on the record here today which community in southern Manitoba called for the \$38-million reduction in water-related capital investments this year. Put on the record which municipality came to him and said we want to see that cut to the important infrastructure that our community relies on, especially in a year where we know that flooding is going to be happening in this province.

Mr. Fielding: I know the member opposite is out of practice of asking finance questions because, quite frankly, I haven't had any finance questions since the budget came out.

That's because we're meeting the needs of Manitobans, Madam Speaker, and that's why we

made important investments. We make important investments to protect Manitobans in terms of flood protection.

Madam Speaker, there's been over \$1 billion spent since '97 in terms of flood protection. We're putting more money in terms of contingencies to protect against that—35 per cent more in internal service adjustments, \$322 million. We're putting \$49.5 million in emergency expenditures, a 174 per cent increase.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I don't—does the minister not understand this—these are the questions. I'm asking them right now, you're not answering them. So—my apologies, Madam Speaker. The minister is not answering these questions when being asked directly. He wants more questions, but he can't answer the ones that he has here to deal with this afternoon.

What I want to know is: Is the minister contemplating a hard cap on emergency funding and any spending that would come from any kind of flood event that might hit communities in Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: Madam Speaker, Manitobans would expect us to be ready for a flood. That happens on a yearly basis in Manitoba because of the nature—where we live.

We are ready. We are going to take action if need be. We've got moneys set aside—appropriate investments in terms of flood protection, as I just mentioned, in contingencies. That is an answer that—it was clearly answered about three or four times.

* (15:40)

We also know, in terms of flood protection, the federal Liberals, in terms of the delays that are happening, in terms of protecting Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, and that's a part of it. It's been delays and delays and delays by the federal government to get that infrastructure dollars in place for environmental as well as consulting.

That needs to be protected to ensure that Manitobans are protected from a flood.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, once again, Madam Speaker, you know, this minister refuses to answer these simple questions that are put in front of him.

Manitobans do expect this government to be ready for the flood, but what they're not—they're not seeing this government be ready. And in fact, they're seeing a government that has chosen to cut flood-fighting and flood-mitigation measures in a year when it is so very critical.

So, once again, I am simply asking, will the minister commit that he is—if he is, indeed, considering a hard cap on emergency funding for spending in this important flood year?

Mr. Fielding: You know, it's important to review documents. That's what's in the budget, Madam Speaker. I've identified two different areas where there's a massive amount of contingencies to fight against floods that are part of it.

Again—I'll review it again for the member. In internal service adjustments, there's \$322 million budgeted from internal services adjustments for unseen expenditures. That is a 35 per cent increase from last year, Madam Speaker. We think that's important to protect Manitobans. Emergency expenditures: we have budgeted \$49.5 million in emergency expenditures, which is 174 per cent increase over last year.

We know what the opposition did in terms of the rainy day fund. They drained it. We're replenishing it.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Every year this government presents a budget that over-presents what they actually intend to spend. In their third quarter reports of 2017-18 and 2018-19, they underspent by \$150 million, then \$240 million.

Why does this government continue to mislead Manitobans and cut the critical health-care services and infrastructure?

Mr. Fielding: This government is proud of the fact that we're investing more than \$414 million on an annual basis in the health-care field. When you compare where we're projected to spend, versus what we're spending this year, that's over \$118 million.

And you know what's more important about the spending of the money? It's the results that we're getting. And that's what's being showed. Manitoba's bucking a trend where we're showing reductions in wait times. There's more doctors, there's more nurses, less time waiting to transition into personal-care-home beds.

We're getting results for Manitobans. They just spent money, wasteful money, and got poor results.

Mr. Lindsey: The minister can stand up with his speaking points that aren't quite accurate, because we know from the documents—this minister's own documents—that for 2017-18, yes, they budgeted a certain amount of money, but then they underspent that budgeted amount by \$150 million. And then

again in 2018-19, they've set another number in their budget, but then they underspent that by \$240 million.

So, again, will the government quit misleading Manitobans with the numbers they throw out there, and actually talk about the real numbers that they've spent on things like health care—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Fielding: Our numbers—the \$414 million more we're spending on health care—is the restated 15, the last budget that the NDP introduced. The restated numbers, the actual numbers, Madam Speaker, versus the numbers we're spending in our budget: \$414 million.

The member also talks about the fact that we're underspending like that's a bad thing. We're keeping within our budgets. I think that's probably a good thing. That's probably why—the reason why the NDP got thrown out of office, because every year, Madam Speaker, come spring, come fall, what would happen is the budgets were well overspent.

In fact, the last year before we came into office, they overspent their budget by over \$400 million. How is that even possible, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): This—the government was warned in a couple of—sorry—by S&P and a number of other rating agencies that if they were to go ahead with a tax cut and not have a revenue, it'd actually would put the government at risk of having another—having a further credit rating downgrade.

So I was wondering, because we're actually running a deficit and we're choosing to run a deficit for much longer because of the PST cut, how much is cutting the PST going to add, with interest and everything calculated over the years, to the Manitoba deficit and debt?

Mr. Fielding: Madam Speaker, when we first came to office, we heard from Treasury Board officials that the deficit under the former NDP, if nothing had been implemented, would have been \$1.7 billion. We've dropped that by 80 per cent. We're at over \$360-million deficit. That, by all means, when you're in the glue by over \$360 million, there's much, much—more work needs to happen.

What we've done is restrained our spending while getting better results for Manitobans. Our spending is going up by 0.3 per cent or \$57 million. But you know what, Madam Speaker? We're getting

better results for Manitobans in things like health care, people moving to the province, things like private sector capital investment, where businesses are showing that Manitoba's a place to invest.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, in the budget, health-care spending is going up 0.5 per cent. The Province's share of that is surprisingly small because the Canada health transfer is going up \$101 million. I know that if you compare Health, which is a 0.5 increase, Executive Council is seeing an increase of 4.8 per cent, which is a multiple many times what the percentage is for the entire government. And executive support is up 2 per cent.

So could the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) please explain why it is that Executive Council is seeing a nearly 5 per cent increase in its budget, when everyone else is seeing much less?

Mr. Fielding: Our government is extremely proud of the fact that we're keeping spending in check while we're getting better results for Manitobans, while providing some tax relief—much 'releted' tax relief.

We know what's going on in Ottawa with the carbon tax. We know what's going on with municipalities, where governments are at everyone's pockets. We want to put a little bit more money in the pockets of Manitobans and we're at 0.5–0.3 per cent increase of \$57 million increase. We're handling the people's money effectively, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period is over.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Are there any members wishing to debate the bill?

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I do relish the opportunity to rise here in the Legislature to debate the Interim Supply bill and partly that's because, of course, these issues are of concern to me and to my constituents, I would say—but also because it gives us an opportunity to sort of grab the—this process and make sure that we get all of the information that we possibly can on the record about what this government has brought forward in their budget this year and in the Interim Supply bill.

Now, on day one if—after the introduction of the budget here in the province, you know, I know members of this side of the House came ready to go, ready to debate and ready to talk about this particular budget.

And they—you know, we all had our notes ready to go. Everybody had their half-hour budget speech ready to deliver and all of a sudden there was a bit of a change that day.

There was a change that was, I think, out of the ordinary. I said, at the time, as—at least in my time here which, you know, granted, hasn't been that long but as far back as I can remember, certainly there has never been a situation where the budget implementation and tax statutes act was brought forward on that first day for debate, rather than the budget itself.

Now, again, you know, this was great. Members on this side of the House were happy to debate that, were more than happy to put their thoughts on the record with regards to the BITSA bill. And, of course, at that time, I mentioned, well, you know, in the past we've tried to get this government to introduce it earlier. Where is the BITSA, where's the BITSA, is what the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) asked over and over and over again, day after day as we held this Legislature into the summer and held this government to account to find out that information. And so we asked for that information. Of course, it wasn't forthcoming at that time until we stood up as an opposition on behalf of Manitobans to find out what this government was hiding in that document and we did so.

But so, you know, this year, as I said, this year was totally different. This year, day one, the BITSA was introduced and ready to go and ready to be debated by this government.

* (15:50)

So why am I raising this concern again here, Madam Speaker? It is simply because this government has shown at every step in the process that they want to ram through this budget and all of the procedures and bills that are associated with it. Now, why would they want to do that? Why would they want to do that? A budget is usually a very—it's a document that sets out the government's priorities. It's something that, you know, MLAs, you know, backbenchers, ministers should be standing up and proud to talk about, should be going door to door with a copy of and saying, look, this is what our government is doing; this is what we're proud of.

Now, why would this government want to ram through these—the budget and these discussions and debates that are happening in this House? Well, it doesn't take very much debate to start understanding why they don't want to debate and discuss this

budget. Because, you know, for most Manitobans, when they, you know, heard the government's budget and, you know, the members opposite were—I think they rose in their seats and they applauded this budget with great fanfare and they were so excited here within the confines of this Chamber to say, yes, this is the greatest thing that's ever happened for Manitobans, the best—*[interjection]*—sorry, okay, if the member—the best budget ever, I think, is what he said maybe—is what the members inside the Chamber said.

However—however—when they took that document and they walked out the front doors of this Legislature, when they went to their constituents in Rossmere and went to their constituents in Radisson and in Transcona, and went all over the city, in fact, Madam Speaker, all over the province, I would say, and they said, hello, I'm your local MLA, here's our fantastic budget. And the friendly face at the other side of the door said, wait a minute, are you still cutting my emergency room? Are you honestly cutting \$120 million in health from my—from this province? Are you honestly cutting in education, cutting in housing, cutting across the board?

The members opposite had no answer for that. They had no answer at all. They said, well, well, but, but, but, but, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) says this is the best budget ever. The Premier told me that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Wiebe: And like seals, they clap, Madam Speaker.

This is what—where the disconnect lies, Madam Speaker, because in the Premier's office, when he comes up with his arbitrary budget based on his agenda that is completely divorced from the real lives and the real experiences of Manitobans, boy, that sounds really good. It sounds great to all of the consultants that he has gathered around him and all the yes-men. They are happy to say this is the best budget ever.

But you know what's supposed to happen in this process, Madam Speaker, is what is supposed to happen is that budget document is supposed to filter down through the levels and come through the Cabinet and to the caucus. And the caucus is supposed to stand up and go, wait a minute, this doesn't represent the priorities of my community.

My community's talking about emergency rooms. My community's talking about education. My community is talking about the things—

about affordability, affordability for the average Manitoban. That's what they're talking about, and this document does not address that at all. In fact, it's more of the same.

So, you know, I see my time here is not very long, and I do want to just address some of the concerns that we have, Madam Speaker. But I just wanted to preface what I had to say by saying that, you know, every member on this side of the Chamber is relishing the opportunity to give 30 minutes on this particular Interim Supply bill, is just champing at the bit to represent their constituents, to talk about the real issues and to hold this government to account.

And this government, this minister, can try to ram this through and try to jam anything through that he wants, whether it be, you know, debate in this House on the budget, whether it be important matters of privilege that are brought forward.

This side of the House, we are very happy to make sure that the process is followed, that we have an opportunity to debate it, that Manitobans have an opportunity to understand what this government is actually up to. And we will at every opportunity remind this government of how—just how out of touch they are and how out of touch they are with their Premier (Mr. Pallister).

So, as I said, Madam Speaker, I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the specifics, and I mentioned it just a few times but, education—you know, we know that the government is undertaking an education review. This review's being undertaken at a—without any kind of investments in education. In fact, coming off of three years of frozen or cut funding to our school divisions and to our schools, we know that they've brought in now a consultant who, you know, has been used by other Conservative governments in other places with a predetermined outcome. They're not coming to this process in an honest way.

And this is from a government that went around in the last election saying, you know what, small class sizes are important. Class size—small class sizes are what experts say are important. That was not our words—well, it was definitely our words—but it was they—it was also their words because they agreed.

You can't disagree with the science; you can't disagree with what front-line educators are telling us, and yet this government came in and froze and cut education in a way that hadn't been done in a

generation in this province, and Manitobans are certainly pushing back against that.

You know, special needs funding, Madam Speaker—an important part of any modern classroom—you know, any teacher will tell you: special needs supports and supports in general for teachers in the classroom are so very, very important.

And then on top of all of that, on top of the K-to-12 system, this government is cutting, once again, at the post-secondary level. Universities and colleges are needing—are being required to balance their books in the face of cuts from this government and they're doing that in the only way that they are given an opportunity to do that, and that is by this government allowing for tuition and fees to rise.

And that is a clear, direct line from this government's, from this minister's, budget document, down to the backs of students here in this province. And it is getting harder for students and for all Manitobans.

We know, Madam Speaker, as I said, three emergency rooms in the city—they've already, you know, axed the urgent care centre at Misericordia, something the community begged and pleaded, pointed to the evidence, said this is such a well-used and well-respected facility in our community; it is so necessary for us. That was cut.

And, you know, at that point, Manitobans, I think, were a little bit shell-shocked, but every community across the city and across the province said: not us next. Stop the cuts. Can't you see the damage that's being done? And yet here they are, only months away from the closure of an emergency room in my community, and they have no intention to stop and to roll that back.

And, in fact, those cuts go a lot deeper and a lot wider than just those emergency rooms. You know, it's \$120 million. This—again, this minister's happy and proud to stand up to say, we cut \$250 million from health care last year. That is unprecedented at a time when health care is so very important.

The federal government is giving us transfer payments, equalization payments, that have only gone up, and yet this government is saying no, no, no, we'll take that money, we'll put it right here in our pockets, but we won't give any to the people in this province in the form of health-care supports and, in fact, are cutting, and yet they tout that as being proud.

I suggest, Madam Speaker, again, that sort of attitude only holds up in this place in the Premier's office, in their caucus room, in their Cabinet table, but it doesn't hold up in—on the doorsteps of Manitobans, and I want them to go out there. I want them to proudly say, we cut \$250 million last year from your health care and we're cutting another \$120 million this year; I'm proud of that and, yes, you're losing an ER, but guess what, we're saving money.

Come on, Madam Speaker, that's unbelievable. That is so divorced from the reality that Manitobans are facing.

Madam Speaker, I have pages and pages and pages of notes that, unfortunately, I won't have the opportunity to present, but don't worry. If this minister will give me time, if he'll give me an opportunity, I will absolutely continue to bring these issues forward on the behalf of my constituents, on behalf of all constituents, because apparently there are some ridings where their members want to grunt and groan in this Legislature rather than putting any words on the record about the issues that of concern to them.

* (16:00)

I may be wrong. The member for Morris (Mr. Martin) may be standing up next to say that health care is a priority of his constituents. I would love to hear him say that and I'd love to hear him justify a \$250 million cut last year, \$120 million in this very budget that we are debating today. I hope that he gets on the record and tells his constituents why he was willing to say yes to the Premier and say no to the priorities of Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, I am again—once again pleased to put some words on the record in respect of this bill, Bill 28. Miigwech. Sorry, I'm just trying to get myself organized here, Madam Speaker. I apologize. I've taken off my heels and we're ready to roll.

So, Madam Speaker, I think that in my limited time today I'm just going to discuss in respect of—and follow up in respect of the questions that I posed today based on the meeting that we had yesterday. I think it's important.

Of course, everybody knows in the Chamber that you're not offered a heck of a lot of time during question periods to really capture everything that you want to capture in your questions, and certainly, I'm sure, you know, members opposite feel that there's

not enough time to capture everything that you want to capture in answers. So I'm sure that we can both agree on that.

So I will use my limited time just to discuss and share with the House and put it on the official record the meeting that the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself had yesterday with community members and how the budget, well, affects the families that we met with and, in particular, their loved ones.

And so I just want to backtrack just a little bit and just share with the House that we did have a woman by the name of Lisa Strong reach out to both myself and the member for Point Douglas. And the member for Point Douglas and I have known Lisa for many years. Obviously, as I'm sure you're well aware, Madam Speaker, the indigenous community in Manitoba—everybody knows everybody. In fact, most of the time we're all related. I know that the Fontaines are—there's a lot of Fontaines, so you're all related. And in general in the community, everybody knows everybody and considers folks for the most part relatives in the truest sense.

And so we've known Lisa for many years. And she reached out to us because she had come to this point where she was just so frustrated. She was so—she was—and, actually, to use her words, she was at her wit's end at trying to navigate the system on behalf of her daughter. And so the member for Point Douglas and I, you know, encouraged her to—that we were willing to meet and that we encouraged her to organize a community meeting because she had shared that there were other families that wanted to talk with us. And so she did set up the community meeting last night, so we left here after House duties at 5.

And there were several family members there, and they were trying to meet with us to be able to kind of look at and understand what they need to do, but actually we began by asking them just to share their particular stories and where they are right now in respect of their loved ones.

And so, like I said, I did share a little bit during the question period, but I want to just—because these relatives, these community members, these Manitobans actually opened themselves up to share with the member for Point Douglas and myself, I want to put, you know, some of what they shared on the record.

So I'll speak about Lisa Strong and what she shared about right now that she's been going through

for several years now. Her daughter—her young daughter is addicted to meth. And I think what's important to recognize is that, you know, people don't just start off with meth, right? You don't just start from meth. I think that a lot of times in trying to attempt to deal with our traumas—and myself included, I've said it many times in the House and publicly that I dealt with addictions as well when I was younger—in fact, much, much younger.

I actually started doing—I would actually steal my dad's weed when I was 12, and I started doing drugs at the age of 12. And that was my way of coping with, you know, the physical abuse that I had been through, the sexual abuse that I had faced as a child, as a young girl.

And so people don't just start off, you know, starting with meth. Often, I think that people start with other ones in an attempt to deal with the trauma or to experiment. But we find ourselves now in this situation where meth is so readily available, right? And in many respects, meth, the ability to purchase meth, is actually cheaper than it is to purchase alcohol. So you will see that many individuals, instead of drinking, will do meth because it is so cheap on the streets.

And so, like many of us, her daughter, in an attempt to deal with some of the trauma that she had gone through, had started to drink, and then eventually started to do meth and quickly, you know, became addicted.

And what I find is really interesting as well is that—the connection between meth and then either the beginning of mental health issues or that mental health issue it was predicated upon, then starting to do other drugs, including meth. And so she talked about her daughter having some mental health issues, but that those mental health issues have actually only grown exponentially with the introduction of meth and meth use in her life.

And so her daughter is—has been homeless. Her daughter, you know, was living in cars and sleeping under bridges in an attempt to, you know, just find somewhere to stay. And she's reached out to her mom, and her mom, for the last six months, has attempted to get her into treatment.

But she shared with us, in a frantic way, actually, I would suggest, what she went through trying to access treatment or any support services.

And so she shared with us that, you know, she was told that she would have to get a toxicology

report in respect of what her daughter was doing, from the doctor from the hospital. Then other people would tell her that, no, she didn't need that.

She would try to get into treatment right away, but she couldn't get into treatment because this particular treatment would say, well, she's got to be, you know, detoxed for 20 days, but she couldn't get into detox. And then in order to access any other services she was told, well, she can only get those services if her daughter's been diagnosed with, you know, schizophrenia or bipolar.

And so the mother has spent the last six months literally going all over, right. So, going all over to, you know, different hospitals in the city, but also trying to, you know, engage First Nation communities.

And, you know, she was very adamant that, you know, a lot of the First Nation communities—and we know this obviously on—you know, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself know that First Nation communities don't have the infrastructure to deal with this, right.

So we know that there are First Nation communities, not only in Manitoba but across Canada, that have no infrastructure to deal with mental health issues or any infrastructure to deal with addictions. And so they're trying to navigate as well for their members that may be in the city.

So it's just a really—a bad cocktail of miscommunication, lack of information, but a willingness to support a loved one. And so she—her daughter is actually in a hospital. She was actually finally able to get a bed in one of the hospitals. And so she's trying to see now what, because the hospital is saying that they're going to release her daughter, but her daughter has nowhere to go.

She still has these addictions issues. And one of the things that ends up happening is when people are, you know, either they've been—they've got a bed or they don't get a bed, often they're just left out onto their own devices with no supports.

Another family shared with us—and so why I share that story is I think it's really important to put on the record that—and we put it on the record many, many times in this House—about the Pallister government leaving on the table \$400 million over 10 years to deal with mental health issues and addictions.

Nobody knows where that money is. Nobody knows if there's a plan to get that money. But,

certainly, I would suggest to the House and to members opposite that that money is desperately, desperately needed to be able to put in place those infrastructures and those supports to deal with mental health issues and addictions.

We spoke with a young woman, a sister, a daughter, whose—who shared about her brother who was actually an entrepreneur. I can't remember what he was—

An Honourable Member: Roofing.

*(16:10)

Ms. Fontaine: Roofing. He owned his own roofing company. And only about three years ago, for whatever reasons, he became addicted to meth, and the sister was sharing with us that prior to that he was an 'enpreneur'; he had his own company. He had no mental health issues.

But in the span of three years he has—obviously he's lost everything. The family has made multiple attempts to try and get him into treatment, and only this past December he's been in and out of jail since he started doing meth and he's tried to attack different members of the family. But this past December he attacked his mum and his dad. His mum and his dad are in their 60s and the attack was so bad that both of them ended up in the hospital.

He's charged with attempted murder, so he's in jail right now, and the attack, in particular on his mother, was so bad that she had multiple injuries but including a fractured pelvis. And she was just released from the hospital on February 9th or February 8th, and the daughter has been trying to access services.

So she doesn't qualify for home care. Apparently the parents don't qualify for home care, even though they are actually not physically able to take care of themselves since the attack. She has to cook for them; she has to do, you know, get them—do their chores, get them dressed—everything, but they're not able to access home care.

And I would put on the record that that's what home care was created and established for, is to be able to help people, to keep them in their homes, and when they need help to be able to have those supports.

They're being told constantly—she's being told constantly that they do not qualify for home care, so she's now, a young woman who is a co-ordinator in—at the Merchants Corner, the new facility there which

is just beautiful and I'm so proud to be a part of a government that undertook that renewal there which has been so amazing for the community. She's had to take leave to be able to take care of her parents.

So it is—it's affecting her personally in the family dynamics but it's also affecting her now financially because now she has to take leave and take care of her family.

They tried multiple times to get their brother into treatment, and they could not find any, as well, so here, you know, you have a daughter who, you know, was homeless and is, you know, looking for those services. You have a son who almost killed his parents, and as horrible as these things sound, I want people to know and, you know, put it definitively on the record, that, you know, nobody intends to do these things. You know, he was, he is, a good son. They had a good relationship and, unfortunately, because of meth, that is all gone.

And then we had a father who shared his four children and he was sharing about his daughters and his daughters are, as I said in my—in question period, his daughters are, like—I actually said that they were 17 and 21, but I actually think that's when they started, so I think that was, like, two years ago, so they're probably 19 and 23 now, so I actually think I got the ages wrong during question period.

Anyways, about two years ago they started doing meth and the daughters are now sexually exploited on the streets in an attempt to get dollars to—for their meth addiction. He was very—he was hurting for his kids and he shared with us kind of the whole history of his life, who, again, like many of us, were dealing with our own traumas, and him as a father was dealing with his own traumas.

So you can imagine when you have these traumas and you're dealing with them in the ways that you knew or you understood and then the consequences for your children. So he was really hurting as well and having a lot of guilt and a lot of shame for his daughters.

We heard from other residents about how, you know, residents are stalked by meth users, how people are scared to go outside just because of the nature of meth psychosis and what it does. So children are scared to go outside. This woman—one woman was sharing with us how she lives on the ground floor of those new apartments for the old Merchants, and she was saying that sometimes she'll have people standing at her—what is that thing called—patio—or what's that called—balcony—

whatever—balcony or patio. They'll actually just be standing there, staring into her apartment. And I don't know if they realize it, but you can imagine as a single woman, having, you know, somebody staring in your apartment is actually quite scary.

We also had an elder there who was talking about how she was in her car just recently, and somebody was trying to bang into her car and tried to break the passenger window, and we know that a lot of cars are getting broken into.

So why I share all of this, is because again, I want to be able to honour the families that we met with, and not only the families that we met with yesterday, but the family members and community members that have reached out to the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself for months and months. And in particular since, I believe, last summer, you almost, by the amount of people that reach out to us, you can kind of see, you know, exponentially, this growth in meth use and its effect in the communities and in families.

So I think it's important that when Manitobans share with you what they're going through and the struggles that they're going through and their fears and their frustrations, I think it's important to bring those voices in this House, because ultimately, we are all responsible for what goes on in Manitoba under our watch.

And more so the members opposite, because members opposite are in government and they have the ability to affect change, to make change, to put measures in place in respect of developing strategies or policies or legislation that affects and helps and, ultimately, helps Manitoba families.

It's important that, whether or not the members opposite are actually listening to me, it—you know, you would hope—but that's neither here nor there in some respects. It's important to put it on the official record of Hansard for this House, for generations to come to see—when people look back and they look back at this time in respect of the meth crisis and they say well, what was done? Did anybody do anything, did anybody raise, you know, the—sound the alarm, what were the actions of the government in the—of the day?

So you know, I just want to take a moment to honour each and every one of the families yesterday, honour each and one—each and every one of the family members who have reached out to us in the last couple of years. And certainly, I want to—I have a really good friend, Madam Speaker, who is a nurse,

and who shares with me, you know, what they're seeing every day now, and how it is just growing exponentially worse.

And what they share with me is how they're seeing children as young as 12 who are addicted to meth, and I don't know if there is this sense of being divorced from the fact that these are mere children. And somehow there's this narrative of placing blame on individuals for partaking in drugs or you know, doing drugs, but this—my friend who's a nurse has said that they've never seen this in the last couple of years. They've never seen children as young as 11 or 12 addicted to meth.

They receive so many calls from family members, and from all over, not only—you know, our meeting yesterday was obviously in the North End, but actually what this nurse is seeing is cases from parents. Again, as young as 12, 15, 16, 17—you know, they were on the hockey team, all of these things and then just like this, they're addicted to meth.

* (16:20)

And they were sharing with me that they're seeing this in all parts of the city, all parts of the city. Right? So I think that that's really important to understand. You may be able to, you know, try to not care about certain citizens, but I would suggest to you what we're seeing is a crisis that affects every area of the city, and it demands attention. And I would suggest to the House and members opposite that some areas of the city, I would—I suggest, deserve and demand even more attention.

If we don't do anything about this—if, you know, we're talking about Interim Supply and we could—and Madam Speaker, I could go through all of these notes. I could talk about health, the cuts to health. I could talk about, you know, women's health—obviously, I have done that a lot—education, infrastructure, the environment, daycare, all of these different things, and there literally wouldn't be enough time to get through any of this.

But, as we're discussing the budget, the Interim Supply, and what the government deems to be priorities and where they're going to invest money and where they're going to cut money, it's important to realize that if you don't invest in this issue now—i.e., go get the \$400 million that's on the table—\$40 million per year for 10 years—if you don't address this issue now, it's only going to continue to get worse.

And the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) brought up today, in this member statement, in respect of the rise in crime rates, there's a direct correlation, Madam Speaker, with the rise of meth use to the rise in what we're seeing in the increasing crime rates. And you don't have to believe the member for St. Johns or the member for Minto but, certainly, I think that when the chief of police, Danny Smyth, repeatedly brings up how his officers are having to go from call to call to call to call to call, and the vast majority of them are dealing with meth, maybe believe him. I would suggest he is an expert in that. He is—he's sounding the alarm. You know, we know that health-care providers in our hospitals are sounding the alarm. So you don't have to believe any of us on this side of the House. That's fine. You don't have to believe the family members and the community members that we met with yesterday. That's fine.

But people are saying and those that are on the front lines are saying this is a crisis; there are not nearly enough supports and services and prevention in place right now. And if you don't deal with this, if the government of the day refuses to and continues to kick the can down the street to God-knows-when, I don't know when, this will only grow exponentially.

And so, I will leave it with this, Madam Speaker, that in the context of what we're seeing in Winnipeg or what we're seeing in Manitoba, that if we don't have supports, if we don't have a system where families and community can actually navigate and actually can understand, if we don't have an immediate response to individuals who are ready, right then and there, to go to treatment, instead of saying, well, you're going to have to wait, you know, seven days or 10 days 'til we can get you into detox and then go into treatment—if we don't have that infrastructure in place, I fear that it leaves open Manitobans to what we saw just a couple of weeks ago with the death—with the murder of a young boy.

And, if there's anybody in this province that has responsibility to prevent that, to prevent another family of grieving a loved one, it is us in this Chamber. We're not elected in this Chamber so that we can sit in the back row and, you know, heckle or growl. I don't know what some of the members do every time we get up. I don't know what they do. I don't know what you would call that when they grrr. I don't know what that's called, but it's certainly not to do that, Madam Speaker.

You know, we're paid—some of us are paid more than others in this room, obviously—we're paid a really good salary to be able to work on behalf of Manitobans. That's our job. Our job is not simply to just go to events, to events, to events and post it on Twitter and Facebook, like we all do. We all do that; it's a measure of accountability for our constituents. But, actually, that's secondary to what our job is.

Our job is to ensure that we have a healthy, a safe province, that Manitobans are safe. And, when they're not safe, that we put those measures in place to ensure that Manitobans are safe, to ensure that Manitobans are healthy, to ensure that we're taking care of the most vulnerable and marginalized.

And it will forever be on the record of this government that, in the midst of always blaming the NDP and blaming the NDP, it will be forever on the record that the meth crisis started in the last couple of years and we have seen little, if any, real action on this file. And that is tragic.

I'm glad that while this is going on, that that won't be on my conscience. That's not on my head. That's on members opposite's conscience and on their head, and that's on their shoulders that when people go back and look to see what this government did, they have done nothing.

And so, with that, Madam Speaker, I say miigwech.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): It's a pleasure to stand and speak to the bill of Interim Supply.

I did ask a question of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) earlier. One was about the impact of reducing the PST on our deficit and on our long-term debt. The challenge with the PST—and this is extremely important, frankly—we have been warned by S&P and our—the Province's credit rating was actually reduced which, as a result, we're paying more income—interest on all of our debt—because this government essentially sent a message saying that they were either going to be unwilling or unable to pay their debt should it come due because of their refusal—essentially—to ensure that revenue was in place.

This is a criticism that was made by the Business Council of Manitoba, which said, it's one thing to balance your books and straighten out your books simply through reductions, but unless there's actually revenue coming in and there are investments in growth, it is not going to be adequate. That was

the recommendation of the Business Council of Manitoba to the 'miniteres' of—Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) in this budget.

But one of the most important issues in our province in and around the world is the issue of the concentration of income, the concentration of wealth and how wealth, income and tax cuts are all distributed, because we often make a very serious mistake in talking about people as if they are average, as if everyone is equal when we all know that is not the case. So, when we bring in tax cuts or we bring in various—either bring in tax cuts or we bring in service cuts, they fall very—the impact and harm in—that falls on people from—or, the benefits of those cuts fall on people's shoulders very differently.

And that's one of the things that's really critical to understand, and it's one of the reasons why I've been saying for a number of years that this government's approach to austerity is risky. I've been saying it long since before I was the Leader of the Second Opposition, before I was an MLA. And it's not simply a question of ideology. The fact is that, since 2008, every single jurisdiction where austerity has been implied, it—has been applied, it has not worked; it has made things worse. And the idea that we can fire people and freeze their wages as a way of growing the economy is—fundamentally doesn't make sense. And, again, there's evidence—since 2008, this has been evidence that—it's everywhere.

And one of the challenges—we've heard it with the PST ads, and there are a couple of statements even in the budget speech where it says little—that by raising the PST, it took \$300 million annually off kitchen tables all over the province. Again, this is one of these ways of saying, well, everybody is—that only individuals pay these taxes, which is not true. The PST was also paid by businesses. So it's only actually a fraction of households who are paying that—a share of the PST. And then it all depends on how much they actually spend.

* (16:30)

So the idea, which are—which is happening right now in the PST ads that are running, saying that it'll save an average family of four more than \$3,000 has to be challenged, Madam Speaker, because the idea of an average family is extremely difficult.

There's a saying—there's an example that if Bill Gates walks into a bar, all of sudden, on average, everybody in that bar is a billionaire and if he walks out again, it's over again.

That's—the issue here is that it's—that is a big difference between saying the average family, which is an imaginary statistical creation, as opposed to a typical family. And a typical family is a completely different story because, the Premier has said it and I've said it as well, we have a very, very serious problem with—for people in Manitoba, across Canada, about 45 per cent of people are \$200 a month away from insolvency but in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, it's 55 per cent.

So, \$200 a month away from insolvency, and the distribution of benefits of the PST is not going to make a significant difference to them because one of the things that the—that's being advertised in these ads is that the people go out and buy a big truck or if they spend a whole bunch of money on a kitchen renovation or something else, that they'll be able to save lots and lots of money on the PST.

Well, the fact is they—because they're only \$200 a month from insolvency, there's no possible way that they can actually benefit from huge amounts of spending because they're already almost broke. There's no way that fit—that's—that rules at 55 per cent of Manitobans from being able to access the major benefits from this because the more you spend, the more you save.

There—I have expressed concern about the fact that the PST is a regressive tax, that because it hits people who are—it takes a greater share of the incomes of people at the lower end but, at the same time, the absolute savings tend to accrue to people who are higher income because they're able to have—they have more disposable income to be able to spend. And that is a shrinking part of the population, Madam Speaker.

And, again, the economic—the supposed economic impact, when it says that labour income will grow by \$50 million per year and Manitoba's GDP will increase by \$90 million. This is a 300—we're giving up \$300 million in revenue at a time, and borrowing money to pay for it, in order to get a return on investment that appears to be far less than what we're getting.

There's also a challenge when it says—when the speech says others are taking more money off the kitchen table all over the province with higher municipal property taxes, higher NDP hydro rates to name two examples. Well, the higher municipal property tax rates are often directly a consequence of this government's policies.

I had letters from municipalities across the province: Portage la Prairie, Rosburn, Lac du Bonnet, where there are individuals, who are seeing tax increases because the education tax credit was eliminated. So they are now seeing \$250-\$500 increases on their homes.

So the idea, and this is a direct consequence of last year's provincial budget, it is—it was not a decision on the part of municipalities to raise people's taxes. And the other is that there are two areas in which this government is—one is that they seem to be obstructing federal funds. There is \$1.9 billion. We don't know if this government has signed the health-care accord. We don't know if they've signed the cannabis revenue sharing accord or housing and there are a whole bunch of other—they're over a billion dollars worth of investments, which are productive investments.

And the difference between productive investments and a tax cut mostly geared around consuming is that productive investments will ultimately pay back more than we put in. So, if we put in \$1.9 billion into projects that may pay back 5, 10 or 15 per cent, we actually end up having a multiplier effect, to say nothing of other spinoff effects.

The issue with the PST is that it's—and this is technical—but it's a consumption tax in many ways. So the fact is that we're giving people—we're actually borrowing to pay.

We're putting—we're borrowing hundreds and millions of dollars, with interest, that we're adding to the provincial debt, in order to pay for a politically motivated tax cut at a time which is going to help people consume things, which, ultimately, they will not—which will not have any kind of multiplier effect. If they're not an investment, they're not paying back.

So this is one of the—and it's a—fundamentally, this is a—it's a huge—it's unfortunate also because one of the things that I argued three years ago was that ultimately, austerity will slow the economy. And having traveled all over the province, I've seen that in action. The Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade has been gutted. They—the Province has struck down offices in Thompson where people—so people cannot even get a business licence, so they can't start a business if they want.

The cuts to Hydro have resulted in—there are businesses in southern Manitoba who have to wait months for hydro to be hooked up because Hydro

doesn't have enough people to hook them up, and that, as I mentioned in the House earlier, that in Thompson and across the North—Flin Flon—people are unable to get—prospectors are unable to get permits because it takes 12 months, two years, in order just to get a permit with the result that if it—at the current rate, it'll take 250 years for us to have a sustainable mining industry in this province.

And it's a result, ultimately, because there are important things that can only be done sometimes; there are things that can be—the private sector is absolutely fantastic at; there are things that the public sector is great at, but there are things, sometimes, that the public sector ultimately has to do, and one of those things is fund infrastructure.

And some of this is a fundamentally different world view on our part, as opposed to the government in power, that about what it takes to make a society competitive and to make—or to make a province competitive, and I've said that there—what we really need to be competitive is to have really good education, really good health care and really good infrastructure, and we don't have either—any of those things in part because of inadequate investments but also because Manitoba's finances weren't just hampered by the NDP, though they had their challenges, but by the fact that for more than half a decade, transfer payments to Manitoba were frozen by the federal Conservative government.

So the great accomplishments in terms of balancing the budget have mostly been that on the part of this government, have not been, you know, have been partly due to budget restraint, but it's largely due to a very large amount of money that's been flowing in from the federal government.

I'd also note that one of the things the government says, you know, they're blaming the NDP for higher Hydro rates. This is something that the government has not, as far as I know, objected to. They haven't—they didn't say that there was any problem with higher Hydro rates, but one of the major reasons for those higher Hydro rates is that this government refused to invest or to help recapitalize Hydro and refused to stop taking money out of Hydro, like the water rental fees, the capital tax, and debt fee, all of which are weakening Hydro's position.

I'm not sure—we are very close to the one-year anniversary of Hydro—of the Hydro board quitting last year. I'm going to be speaking tomorrow at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and last year I

spoke—when I spoke the day before the entire Hydro board had quit, and it's important to note then is that it was not, while the government has blamed it on payments to the MMF, that was never really a major issue as far as the board was concerned. The board was far more concerned about what they considered—but whether Hydro would even be able to continue to exist or not in the future because of—because it was—it faced a debt crunch which ultimately could take down the Province's finances, and that is still a problem that remains.

The other frustration—frustrating thing about the budget as a document generally is that this government has continually done a bait and switch which makes it hard to believe the numbers they provide at the beginning of the year simply because they'll make a promise and then by the end of the year it will be \$247 million less, or if it's in the case of infrastructure, it'll be \$450 million less.

And the challenge about this is that these are—it isn't simply a question of money that's flowing to—as highly paid—the stereotype of highly paid public servants or bureaucrats or—the fact is when it comes to, especially, the infrastructure budget, there are private companies in Manitoba who depend on regular work. Their employees depend on regular work and they are being seriously harmed by the failure to invest, and the frustration there is also because this government makes an initial commitment in its budget which, by the end of the year, doesn't actually materialize.

* (16:40)

I did want to—and the challenge about this is also that in focusing on a very narrow point of view of saying well, it's—is that the indicator of the government's finances as being a representation, necessarily, of—that that's a symbol of how the province as a whole is doing, is a mistake. It's quite possible to have a perfectly balanced budget and to have tons of people living in poverty, to have a terrible health-care system, to have an inadequate education system.

The fact is, is that we have to be concerned not just with the political appearances or the symbolic appearances of a budget, in—but we actually have to be concerned about the welfare and well-being of all Manitobans.

And one of the things that happens is that a lot of the expenses that have to be taken care of are things that have to happen. They are not something that can be—and they're going to happen one way or another.

So the result is that—what's happening is that this government isn't so much cutting as shifting 'everring'—every—it's expenses to everybody else's tab.

So we'll see the government boast, for example, about their Pharmacare program. Well, a year ago they cancelled the essential drugs program—the special drugs program, which used to be called the Life-Saving Drug Program—which has had some really terrible effects and huge challenges for people who used to have life-saving drugs covered on a guaranteed basis by this government for decades.

And there are all sorts of other costs that have been dumped onto municipalities, which means it goes onto ratepayers; it goes onto students, transit 'uners', municipalities, seniors, workers, women.

And I just wanted to mention that in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) speech yesterday he talked about the ideas that taxes are punishment, that taxes are a kind of punishment for success. And I found that to be—I think it said a lot about the Premier's world view, because punishment, I suppose, is something to be avoided.

And the idea of punishing success, however, is a social Darwinian idea, that—which completely ignores all the ways in which people who are—that there are many people within our society who have—people, there are people with disabilities, that through the circumstances of the lives and accidents of their birth, of which—over which they had no control, that they are somehow to blame if they are not—if they haven't done as well as the Premier.

And, frankly, I recently spoke to a very senior supporter of the—former supporter of the Conservative Party, former supporter of the PC Party. I was a major donor, and he actually said he thought that taxes, paying taxes are a privilege, which I was—I thought it was refreshing to hear from him. And it is ultimately the price we pay for a society in which people can live in dignity, and people can live safely, and where people can fulfill their—can really fulfill their full potential.

And, frankly, that's something that it takes everyone to be engaged to do. It isn't simply a question of where we leave people on their own. And, again, I just—I'd—to return briefly to the fact that we've got—I don't—it's very difficult for me to understand why this government is refusing \$1.9 billion in funding.

But, in a more, in a larger, more philosophical point, when we talk about people as taxpayers, I think it actually—it sells people short in terms of what they are. Like—we—there's something, a higher calling for all of us—here as well—because there are many people who are citizens who are not taxpayers. Children are citizens; there are people who don't pay taxes who are—for a variety of reasons—who are still citizens, and who deserve to be treated with dignity, and who are a part of—who are part of our work and what we have to be—why we have to consider.

And, fundamentally, treating people only as citizens, or reducing them simply to that role, reduces their relationship to government as being something where they are—perhaps that they are more important, the more taxes they pay, and less important, the fewer taxes they pay. And I think that's a violation of the entire idea on which this province was founded, which was fundamentally an idea of equality, and the fundamental commitment in democracy that will—though we aren't always equal in life, we are at least equal at the ballot box, and we have deserved to be treated that way.

I will just add one—forgive me—for one, this may seem pompous, but I'm going to quote—a quote about Rousseau, which is: The more that a country asks of its citizens, the greater devotion to it. In a well-ordered city, every man flies to the assemblies. Under a bad government, no one participates in public life, because no one is interested in what happens there, and domestic cares are all-absorbing. However, civic virtue is built up, not spent down, by strenuous citizenship.

Use it or lose it, Rousseau says in effect. As soon as public service ceases to be the chief business of the citizens, and they would rather serve with their money than with their persons, the state is not far from its fall.

Madam Speaker, I have not—there is—there are a few minor elements in this budget which are worth praising, which I think I've already spoke those before, but, ultimately, I believe that I'm quite sincere and it's not simply a political statement that I—that unless we have adequate investment, we are going to lose a huge amount of opportunity. And it's also been said the only—that we cannot really leave a debt. We cannot really leave—that our—in terms of leaving a debt to the future or cheating the future, the great—the worst way we can do that is not by borrowing the present, but by failing to invest in the productive capacity of the economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Now, okay, there are so many issues, such as health care, education, housing, daycare, immigration, arts and culture, job creation, poverty reduction, to name a few, that this government has missed or overlooked to address and provide meaningful supports to in Budget 2019.

Let's see what are the pressing social issues not addressed in Budget 2019. One that can easily come to mind is the fight to eliminate poverty. Pallister government's only plan to get to fiscal balance is by cutting programs and services which help struggling Manitobans make life bearable. Over 100,000 people in Manitoba live in poverty. While on this topic, I would like to thank Make Poverty History Manitoba's persistent advocacy for a provincial poverty reduction plan, which includes a livable basic needs benefit, housing, child care, mental health supports, a \$15 minimum wage and more. Michael Barkman, chairperson of Make Poverty History, stated, and I quote: We are not seeing the kind of new investments that needed to become—needed to accomplish the goals they have set out. End quote.

When social housing projects are vigorously pursued with the end goal of ending homelessness, just imagine how many social ills can be eradicated. Just imagine the improvement in health outcomes for people if they have a decent roof above their heads. People will have less need to see a doctor often or less need to be hospitalized or require maintenance prescription drugs to fight infections or chronic diseases. Those will be huge savings in health-care costs for this government.

I remember, during the NDP's time in government, the former Grace Hospital in the Wolseley area, on Evanson Street, was converted as social housing: 59 units, with up to 30 government subsidized affordable housing units. The complex will consist of three buildings assembled in a U-shape with a central courtyard. It will include a mix of one, two, three and four-bedroom apartments. Six fully accessible units are planned for the homeless.

I have a story that I've read. One of the people who were given a suite in the housing for the homeless used to be a regular client at Siloam Mission. He ate meals at Siloam Mission or Salvation Army and just roamed around the city doing nothing in between mealtime and sleeping time. When he was provided a suite in the former

Grace Hospital, he availed of skills training in the job creation program in place at that time and, in due time, applied for work and was accepted.

* (16:50)

Madam Speaker, having a home address makes a lot of difference—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —in obtaining a decent employment. Who is an employer in his or her right mind would employ someone with no fixed address? How can a worker consistently arrive at his or her workplace on time when there are evenings that that person did not find a place to sleep?

Likewise, very important for a daily worker is hygiene routines. Would an employer or co-workers allow a stinky, smelly fellow worker in their work area? With a place to call home, hygiene challenges can be overcome.

I remember some years ago when there were several women who randomly attended Sunday worship services at our church on Home Street. I remember the few occasions when they came. Right away, an overpowering stench filled the air. Sadly, some church members have—left the pew they were sitting on when these folks sat beside them.

One time, one courageous church member approached one of the women and told her to take a shower before coming to church. The woman responded: How can I shower when I'm homeless? So she was told she can use the bathroom at the church basement. She did not return to the church after that.

I remember engaging one of the women in conversation over coffee before that incident of someone asking her to take a shower. We had discussions while having coffee, tea or biscuits after church service, and in some cases, there were also occasions when they were welcome guests at our potluck lunches.

I have asked one of the women how old she was, and she said a figure in the early 30s. I could not believe my eyes, because she looked so old. That is what happens when one is homeless, unable to eat healthy and be exposed to the harsh weather elements all year round.

So it makes sense, Madam Speaker, to pursue affordable social housing. And this government will realize savings in health care, among many other social benefits.

I also remember, now, back to my recollection of the old Grace Hospital, I remember there were figures given on incarceration versus providing affordable housing. The savings to taxpayers are enormous.

The average annual cost per prisoner in provincial jails in 2011-2012 was about \$67,000 per annum per prisoner. The cost per student per year in post-secondary education in Canada at that time was a little over \$20,000.

Listen to this cost-analysis of homelessness as of 2013: homelessness costs the Canadian economy \$7.05 billion annually, up from 4.5 to 6 billion dollars in 2007. This includes provision of emergency shelters and community supports, but also accounts for the increased costs of emergency services, including fire, police and EMS, health care, the criminal justice system, et cetera.

Significant research has been done that explores the cost of housing someone in jail, hospitals or the shelter system, compared to housing them in social or supportive housing, and the difference is quite shocking.

In a 2005 study by Pomeroy which looked at costs in four Canadian cities, institutional responses such as jails, hospitals, et cetera, cost \$66,000 to \$120,000 annually per person. Emergency shelter costs: thirteen to \$42,000 annually per person, whereas supportive and transitional housing costs: \$13,000 to \$18,000 per person annually, and affordable housing without supports was a mere \$5,000 to \$8,000 annually.

I hope the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his policy advisers and all members of the government caucus are listening. They have a mantra: Value for money.

Madam Speaker, affordable housing is value for money if implemented by this government. The issue of unsafe communities and the crimes that are being committed, the cost to justice, policing and health care can be much, much lower.

The loss of precious life, just like that of Jaime Adao Jr., the 17-year-old graduating student, a very nice, loving son, would have been avoided. The grief the family is now experiencing, the friends and the community grieving, and it's still not over yet. I hope and pray none of this will be experienced by anyone ever again.

Now, what is happening in health care? Oh, before health care, let me go to immigration.

On April 1st, 2017, this government began to collect a \$5,000 fee from newcomers immigrating to Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program.

Since it began in 1998, over 20 years ago, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program is credited with attracting over 130,000 people to Manitoba. Ninety per cent of those people get jobs in under a year and nearly that amount end up staying in Manitoba permanently because of the opportunity and diversity that exists here in Manitoba.

At that time, in the early 2000s, I know of at least 10 families who moved to Steinbach. We visited them and those 10 families, if I recall, have already helped three times the number of families when they first started, and the member from Steinbach will attest to it that the Filipino community in Steinbach is growing and growing big because of the Provincial Nominee Program started in 1998.

And then the NDP government improved on it until 2016, so Manitoba is richer in culture. Manitoba's economic prosperity has been increased because of the Provincial Nominee Program.

Sadly, the Premier denigrated the feeless Provincial Nominee Program, stating that some newcomers were not able to get jobs after they arrived, but we know that is not the case.

Arrivals under the nominee program almost always obtain work shortly after they get to Manitoba, thanks to the communities who supported them, the family members and friends who helped them come over—helped them come and immigrate to Manitoba. Even if they are overqualified, Madam Speaker, they take on whatever job for a start. So very, very few of them are unemployed.

Madam Speaker, people who want to come to Manitoba already face a number of costly qualifications in order to access the Provincial Nominee Program. The people who come to Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program form a vital part of—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 16 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

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