

First 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
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
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	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
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	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

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, 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.

Introduction of New Members

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the chief electoral office a letter indicating the election of Jim Maloway as member for the constituency of Elmwood.

I hereby table the notice of the return of the member elected.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of presenting Jim Maloway, member for the constituency of Elmwood, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat here.

Madam Speaker: On behalf of all honourable members, I wish to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and to wish you well in your parliamentary career.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of Bills? Committee Reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the year ending March 31st, 2016. Copies of the report have been placed on members' desks.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

An Honourable Member: I'd like to take this opportunity to bring the members of the Legislature—*[interjection]* Okay, sorry.

Madam Speaker: No, and my mic wasn't on, so I would like to introduce the Minister of Sustainable Development.

Wildland Fire Update

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to take this opportunity to bring members of the Legislature up to date on the fire situation in Manitoba. However, I would first like to acknowledge the wildfires in Fort McMurray. My hearts and prayers go out to those families that were recently evacuated.

I'd also like to thank all the firefighters, ground crews and everyone who worked so hard to protect Fort McMurray and its neighboring communities. It'll be a long process to rebuild this community of Fort McMurray but Canadians have proven to be generous in nature and together we will build on this tragedy.

Unfortunately, in Manitoba, we also have our share of wildfires. There are currently two active fires that have challenged our wildfire program: one near Caddy Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park, and the other near Beresford Lake in Nopiming Provincial Park, and also our neighbours in Ingolf, Ontario.

The fire near Caddy Lake is approximately 5,800 hectares, while the Beresford fire is nearly 75,000. The efforts of our fire management team have been responsible for largely containing these forest fires.

In Manitoba we had 119 evacuations and 174 structures protected with minimal damage. No cottages were lost due to the forest fires, something all the crews involved deserve a lot of credit for.

I am pleased to announce that the evacuees from West Hawk, Caddy Lake as well as those from Ingolf will be returning to their homes and cottages today.

Evacuations for Nora Lake and Florence Lake as well as Beresford and Wallace Lake remain in effect. We are hopeful that they will be able to return to their residence later this week as firefighters are making good progress in suppressing the fire.

During the peak of the fire activity we had over 250 firefighters working the two fires, along with water bombers from Manitoba, Ontario and Northwest Territories.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry for overseeing the management of the Caddy Lake fire, as well as Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories and Minnesota for supplying resources to assist in suppression efforts. The co-operation nationally and internationally exemplifies how the wildfire community works together in times of need.

And this is further exemplified within our own province. Our government would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Manitoba fire service for their quick response and effort to this and support to this effort. In particular, the following groups should be recognized for their efforts: The Southeast Whiteshell Fire Department for their efforts to protect all the cabins in and around the Caddy Lake fire; the Eastman Mutual Aid and Pembina mutual aid districts for their quick response and support to the value protection efforts at Caddy Lake; the South Interlake Mutual Aid and North East Mutual Aid districts for the quick response to support the value protection in Nopiming Provincial Park.

I'd also like to thank the local businesses for their generosity, especially the Nite Hawk Café and Keystone Resort in West Hawk Lake for reaching out to their neighbours during this difficult time. Their generosity is another example of Manitoba's giving nature.

In closing I'd like to encourage all Manitobans to get out and enjoy our great province's long weekend. We are so fortunate to have such a vast array of activities to enjoy in our wonderful province. Whether enjoying our parks, angling in our rivers and lakes or hiking in our trails, please be careful and cautious. Our natural resources are precious to all Manitobans. Let's ensure we preserve them for future generations.

*(13:40)

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I rise today on behalf of our entire caucus to add our heartfelt sympathies and well wishes to everyone who's been negatively affected by these weather events and the many forest fires that are burning not just here in Manitoba but across the country. The health and safety of all of the families involved, whether they're evacuees or the people helping to put out the fires, are the most primary of all of our concerns. We wish them the very best in all of the challenges, and we thank them so very, very much for the sacrifices and risks that they are taking on behalf of all of us.

As mentioned by the minister, we're very pleased to hear that some of the evacuation orders have now been lifted and people are able to return to their properties. They deserve enormous credit for saving so much that was at great risk and—over the past two weeks and not just in Manitoba, of course, but, as mentioned, Manitoba and Ontario working together, along with many other stakeholders, as was practised when we were in office as well. The firefighting community is indeed a community clear across the continent, and when there's a need, people rise to the occasion and help each other out, and it's been very encouraging to see that happen again.

We also want to make it clear that we recognize the whole problem is by no means solved. There are crews still fighting some very significant fires out there, and we're encouraged the government is continuing to focus on that and provide the supports necessary.

We should also mention that while, of course, no single weather event can be traced back to climate change, climate change is setting the context for these types of events. That is something that more and more people are recognizing. And we can reasonably expect more of these fires to happen, for them to become more frequent and larger in scope in the negative impacts that they bring. This is the new reality that all of us, on all sides of the House, inside this building and outside of this building, will have to reconcile, and we will have to transition to a new way of operating to address climate change seriously. We were encouraged to hear this issue mentioned in the government's Throne Speech yesterday, and we will certainly be watching with interest and with encouragement to take very aggressive steps on this truly global issue.

But thanks again to everyone who's been working so well together to address this common

concern and best wishes to everyone who is still being affected.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to reply to the ministerial statement? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I join other members here in extending our concern over the situation at Fort McMurray, the tremendous disruption that that has made to the lives of so many and our heartfelt sympathies and best wishes to people in Alberta.

I want to thank the minister for statement on the condition of fires in Manitoba and the particular two fires, the one near Caddy Lake and one near Beresford Lake. I join other MLAs in thanking all those who helped, from our fire services to those in many other jurisdictions. The effort was clearly a well co-ordinated one, with good co-operation between Manitoba and Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I also want to compliment the Manitoba firefighting team for the quick and effective deployment of the sprinklers to protect cottages. We should be grateful, I think, that there's been no loss of life and to my knowledge, just one cabin which was lost. So, so far, it has been, I think, we can conclude, a pretty successful effort.

Boreal forest fires are not new in Manitoba, and we can see from the pattern in recent years across western Canada, in BC in 2003, in Saskatchewan in 2015 and near Fort McMurray this year, as well as our own fires, that the size and severity of these fires is increasing, likely in part due to climate change. It's important to be prepared for these fires, and it's also important that we prevent these fires and are active in having plans to prevent these fires. With such a large area of boreal forest in Manitoba, we need to recognize the need to look at our current activities and see if they need to be updated and improved in any way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. And I would just like to indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2) in relationship to the ministerial statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Brandon Wheat Kings

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, if I may, on May the 23rd, 2010, the host team of the MasterCard Memorial Cup, the Brandon Wheat Kings, proved to the hockey world that they were hard-working and they could play with the best, making it to the championship final against the OHL's Windsor Spitfires.

Now, Madam Speaker, let's spring forward to May 2016. It was with excitement, enthusiasm and downright hometown pride that I rise today and bring a congratulatory message to the 2016 WHL champions, the Brandon Wheat Kings. Led by an inspiring list of talent from both the coaching staff and the team roster, Wheat Kings owner, general manager and head coach Kelly McCrimmon has put together one of the top, if not one of the best, teams in all of Canada.

Teams are important, Madam Speaker, and with such players as import Ivan Provorov, who is winning the Bill Hunter Memorial Trophy as the WHL's top defenceman, and Brandon's own Tanner Kaspick picking up the WHL scholarship player of the year, it is easy to see why dedication, determination and teamwork are of vital importance.

Madam Speaker, junior hockey players across Canada compete for the excellence in their quest to be successful in their respective leagues. Winning a league championship is certainly an indication that each player has worked hard as an individual and as their own team. The ultimate goal for any team: to make it to the MasterCard Memorial Cup and to be crowned the Canadian Hockey League champions as the best junior hockey team in Canada.

The—pardon me—the road to the Memorial Cup started on September 25th, 2015. Achieving goals along the way such as the division championships, the conference championships and the WHL league championships are certainly a way that the Wheat Kings will now show their embarkment as they head to the ultimate showdown. This Friday, Madam Speaker, marks the start of the 2016 MasterCard Memorial Cup in Red Deer, Alberta.

On behalf of my constituents in Brandon East, I want to again congratulate the Brandon Wheat Kings on winning the WHL championship and wish the entire team the best of luck as they represent Western Hockey League and all of us in Manitoba at the 2016 MasterCard Memorial Cup.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**International Day Against Homophobia,
Transphobia and Biphobia**

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Today is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. It is a global celebration of sexual and gender identities. It is a chance to recognize how far we've come in Manitoba. It is also a day to reflect on how much work is yet to be done.

All over the world, advocates and their allies are fighting for what matters most to them: the right to be free from criminalization, persecution and stigmatization. Sometimes the fight is simply to live; in many countries, people have to fear for their lives simply for being who they are. Even in Manitoba, where we're lucky to have strong partners like the Rainbow Resource Centre, we know that members of the LGBTTQ community suffer elevated risks of violence and have higher rates of suicide.

Madam Speaker, it was an NDP government in Manitoba that created the Human Rights Code to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. It was an NDP government that extended full marriage and adoption rights to same-sex parents. It was an NDP government that extended family law rights to same-sex couples. And it was an NDP government that passed the safe and inclusive schools act to ensure that our schools are safe and inclusive environments for all students. And it was an NDP government that passed legislation to make it easier to change the designation of sex on government documents for people in transition.

Madam Speaker, we can celebrate that today the federal government has followed Manitoba's lead by introducing changes to federal human rights legislation to protect gender identity from discrimination. It is the right thing to do. Last time, a private member's bill, introduced by Randall Garrison, an NDP MP from British Columbia, passed through the House of Commons but was delayed by the Senate. Let us hope that this time the unelected and unaccountable Senate does not delay the advance of human rights.

I hope that this time, all members of this Assembly will raise our voices in support. That would be an authentic way to show our pride.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Brandon Wheat Kings

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I am very pleased to rise in the Legislature today and join my colleague from Brandon East in congratulating the Brandon Wheat Kings on winning the Western Hockey League championship.

* (13:50)

Mr. Kelly McCrimmon built and designed this team and plays multiple roles as owner, general manager and coach. Every time I attend a game, I am struck by the fan support not only from Brandon and area but also from Winnipeg. As I attend events and meet people in Winnipeg, almost everyone asks about the Brandon Wheat Kings.

Madam Speaker, Mr. McCrimmon has been selected as the 2009-10 Canadian Hockey League Executive of the Year. In addition, he was awarded the President's Award for Business Person of the Year in 2011 from the chamber of commerce.

Yes, the Wheat Kings are a business, but they are much more than that. They are a team and a team that is built on hard work and respect. The Brandon Sun has been running articles about past players with an update on where they are today. Without exception, the players talked about their teammates, how they learned to work hard and how they learned about respect.

Madam Speaker, the WHL Champion Brandon Wheat Kings are a team we can all be proud of and we can learn a great deal about teamwork by watching them and listening to them.

They returned to Brandon last Saturday to a room full of over 1,000 fans. Winning the WHL in Seattle was a tremendous success for the young Wheat Kings, but returning home to their fans made it all real.

Madam Speaker, the next step for the Brandon Wheat Kings is the Memorial Cup and they play their first game this Saturday against the Major Junior Hockey League. They are focused on that first game on their path to Memorial Cup. As Kelly McCrimmon said: We wanted to take the next step and we're getting ready for the 10 days of a lifetime with the opportunity to represent our city and to represent the Western Hockey League at the Memorial Cup.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure that all members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba join me in

wishing the Brandon Wheat Kings good luck in their pursuit of the Memorial Cup.

These young men are excellent representatives of Brandon, Manitoba and now, the Western Hockey League.

Madam Speaker, I ask leave to have the names of the players and the coaching staff added to Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have the members' names added to Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Jayce Hawryluk, Caiden Daley, Stelio Mattheos, Ty Lewis, Tanner Kaspick, John Quenneville, Garrett Armour, Nolan Patrick, Tyler Coulter, Jaeger White, Tim McGauley, Connor Gutenberg, Duncan Campbell, Linden McCorrister, Reid Duke, Mitch Wheaton, Schael Higson, Ivan Provorov, Kale Clague, Macoy Erkamps, Mark Matsuba, James Shearer, Jordan Thomson, Logan Thompson, Jordan Papirny, Kelly McCrimmon, Darren Ritchie, David Anning, Matt Cockell, Josh Guenther, Scott Hlady, Jim Frederickson, Dr. Shaun Gauthier, Lyn Shannon, Rick Dillabough, Matt McNish, Chris Falko, Danna Rudniski, Heather Thomson, Shannon Stinton, Candace Bowles, Dr. Scott Blyth, Glenda Zelmer, Trevor Ross, Scott Gurr, Bruce Luebke, Wade Klippenstein, Gary Michalick, Mark Johnston, Frank Harding, Dennis McNish, Garth Mitchell, Derrick Kemp, Robert Fontaine, Mike Fraser, Nestor Chomik, Clint Jones.

Madam Speaker: Further members' statements?

Danica Cuddeford

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, good afternoon.

Every year, the YM-YWCA hosts the Women of Distinction Awards which celebrates and honours Manitoba women who have broken down barriers, made unique and exemplary contributions and inspired the development of others in our community.

This year, 50 remarkable Manitoba women had been nominated and one of these inspiring individuals was a student from Niverville Collegiate located in my own constituency. Too often young people get a bad rap as the me generation, more interested in instant on-demand gratification with eyes and hands glued to their smart phones. While that may be the impression of some, it is wrong as evidenced by grade 12 student Danica Cuddeford who was nominated in the Prairie Award of Promise

category for her, quote, outstanding contributions to her school and community and community. End quote.

Danica is the vice-president of her school's student council and volunteers at the personal care home in Niverville where she works with seniors. She also has a heart for children, volunteering as a Sunday school teacher and child-care worker at her local church. She has been involved in extracurricular activities and initiatives in her school, including an environmental group, anti-tobacco club and volunteering to tutor her peers.

Madam Speaker, Danica has also participated in the Real World Homeless Situation project, where she got a first-hand look at the plight of those who do not have a roof over their head. She was one of six graduating high-school students to be nominated for the award which was presented at a gala event on May 4th, attended by myself and several of my colleagues.

While Danica did not go home with an award that evening, she still left a winner. Her actions and contributions stand as an example for all Manitobans and serve as an inspiration for young women everywhere.

Thank you.

Northern Education Funding

Mrs. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I was a concurrent member of three parent-council advisories in Steinbach. I was always amazed at the Hanover school institutional system, at the social infrastructure and especially how relatively easy it was for these systems to collaborate and gain resources for their students.

Madam Speaker, both my parents attained their respective bachelor of education degrees from Brandon University. In 1980, they chose to teach on my dad's home reserve, St. Theresa Point First Nation. There are many struggles teachers and students alike face in—while working or trying to learn on these northern remote communities. I've read enough reports to know that everyone in this room knows of these devastating situations.

My elder sister followed in my parents' footsteps and attained her bachelor of ed from the same institution. My sister's salary today equates to the same salary she would have made 12 years ago, the same salary my parents made in 1980; that's nearly four decades of the same pay scale. For my sister

to have resources such as an education assistant, desks, even for books, she must forgo a portion of her salary—all teachers collectively forgo a portion of their salary—to help afford these resources.

Parents in Steinbach continuously hound the parent advisory council to reduce class sizes, as promised by Selinger's government, to 16 students per class. Teachers in my riding of Kewatinook ask for access to these same resources so that they can accommodate their 28-plus class sizes.

Our northern teachers are committed, and I want all of us to be mindful of their daily struggles and how direly resources are needed. The time is now to have all our children, no matter their postal code, to have access to the same levels of educational funding.

I dedicate my speech today to my brother who is now fighting for his life at the Health Sciences Centre. Our family members are coming from all areas of the North, and it looks like we will be taking him off his life support system this evening.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to direct your attention to the gallery where we have a number of visiting students here.

And we have seated in the public gallery from Elmdale School 51 grade 4 students under the direction of Bethany Dueck and Mike Martens. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Also seated in the public gallery, we have students from Tec Voc High School. There are six law class students under the direction of Darren Alford, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

And also seated in the public gallery, from St. James-Assiniboia International Student Program we have five grade 9 to 12 students under the direction of Samantha Braun, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher).

And we'd like to welcome all of you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Throne Speech 2016 Recognition of Diversity

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, first I'd like to congratulate you for your election as Speaker. Likewise, I'd like to congratulate the Premier and members of his Cabinet. I sincerely wish they keep the average Manitoban in mind when they make decisions that will affect us all, especially those who are most vulnerable.

And I'd like to state to everyone that each and every member of our opposition party will work hard and will be here to hold this government to account.

Madam Speaker, yesterday we saw an exclusionary Throne Speech that failed to mention so many Manitobans.

Why has our new Premier chosen this path that leaves so many people out?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and if I may, I would like to also offer my congratulations to you on this, on assuming this post. And, too, also I would like to thank the member opposite for letting his name stand for the position as well and giving us the chance to have a vote and decide on the position that is so important to this Chamber.

*(14:00)

You have served the people of this province now, if I'm not mistaken, for 18 years, Madam Speaker, and have done so with dignity and with diligence. You are the 30th Speaker of this hallowed place and the fourth female to take the position, and you have been a leader among women in this world in your parliamentary duties and responsibilities and serve as the chair of the Canadian region of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. And we know that you will have the support of all of us in this Chamber in your responsibilities, and we thank you for assuming those responsibilities.

I and many Manitobans have had experience with being excluded. It is true that in our province we have established a tradition that, I think, is astonishing and should never be taken for granted of putting ourselves out there for worthy causes. We believe in supporting, through our volunteer efforts and our donations, charitable causes and causes that are benevolent to those who are most vulnerable.

That's the kind of people we are; that's the kind of government I plan on leading. Thank you.

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

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier for his response.

Madam Speaker, this Premier has proven to be a polarizing force, failing to see the diversity of our province. His own Cabinet appointments have no minister from the North, no diversity, very few women. It's not representative of today's Manitoba.

Why will the Premier not recognize that this is now 2016?

Mr. Pallister: I was remiss, and I do want to offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to the interim Leader of the Opposition. She has served her constituents—I believe this is her third time being elected for her constituency, so approaching nine years, I expect, of service to her people in her riding, and she has had a commendable record of service also in serving under the Cabinet of the previous premier and I think deserves our thanks for her assuming this leadership.

I also would like to, though, also thank—back to this place—all our table officers, our officials here, our pages, staff in the building. We put them through some difficulties at times, but we do not fail to appreciate the importance of their role and the challenges that they must face here, not least of which is the uncertainty, of course, of elections and their outcomes.

I would mention, however, that we did receive a considerable mandate from the people of Manitoba in reflection of the very real commitments that we've made to protect our front-line services and the people who need those services. And we'll continue to put those obligations foremost in our agenda going forward and I would ask all members of this House to continue to offer their support and encouragement to those less fortunate in our population.

Madam Speaker: The honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, with a final supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier for the response, although I didn't hear any response to the question why there was not enough women and diversity in the Cabinet.

What's striking in the Throne Speech is not what's not in it, just like his Cabinet: excluding the indigenous community and reconciliation, workers, women, LGBTTTQ, immigration and Manitobans living with disability.

Why does this Premier not recognize diversity in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Recognize it? We embody it. This government is the most diverse in the—perhaps in the history of this country, and this—and the fact of the matter is that we have stood for diverse positions, supported diverse positions, continue to. I personally spent a decade of my life advocating—and, finally, successfully, with the support of many—for indigenous women's rights. These are issues that many members here on this side of the House have stood for with diligence and, on occasion, with the support of members opposite.

And I would ask that members opposite understand that diversity is not something to be used as a politically partisan weapon but rather something to be appreciated and celebrated.

This province is a province which celebrates its diversity. This government celebrates it, and we will continue to do so.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Health and Crown Services Privatization Concerns

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Again, Madam Speaker, what's particularly concerning about yesterday's Throne Speech is that there were repeated code words for austerity and privatization.

We all know Conservatives in government try to privatize services like they tried to privatize home care and they did privatize MTS. The Premier has said he's opening the door to privatize health care.

Is he going to privatize any part of health care?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I believe over 35 per cent of current health-care services available to Manitobans are provided by private suppliers. This was expanded under the previous government's mandate. What also was expanded under their mandate was, despite a claim to end hallway medicine, the preponderance of highway medicine, and the use of services for health care

outside of Manitoba's boundaries has expanded tremendously under the previous administration. This is in no small part due to the expansion of wait times that occurred under this administration.

So the reality of providing of services to Manitobans is that Manitobans are frustrated with a lack of access to those same services. This is why we've committed to providing improved service to Manitobans, improved access to them. We are less concerned with ideology and more concerned with better results for Manitobans.

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

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier for the answer, but I believe one's facility with the language is no licence to equivocate.

So I want to ask the Premier a direct question: Does the Premier have any plans to privatize Manitoba Hydro or any part of Manitoba Hydro? Please answer yes or no.

Mr. Pallister: No.

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

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier for that response. Today is May the 17th, at about 2:10 in the afternoon. The Premier said he will not privatize Hydro. Hallelujah.

Another question: Does the Premier have any plans to privatize public insurance or any part of public insurance—Manitoba Public Insurance? Again, please answer yes or no.

Mr. Pallister: What we plan to do and what we aspire to do is to work with all members of this House to make sure that what happened in the past with respect to our public utilities, which belong to all Manitobans, does not happen again.

Madam Speaker, what we do not propose to do is politicize Manitoba Hydro or MPI or other Crown corporations. We propose to have them operate more effectively to provide services to Manitobans, and we'll pursue that goal with the support of Manitobans and, I would hope, with support of members opposite, who would be less concerned, again, with trying to fight old ideological battles and more concerned with providing better services to Manitobans than they have succeeded in demonstrating in past years.

* (14:10)

Conflict of Interest Premier's Asset Disclosure

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'd like to congratulate the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) on her re-election and her appointment as Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Yesterday's Speech from the Throne referenced transparency and accountability in government.

Does this minister believe that members of the Legislature should follow the laws of Manitoba?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and welcome to you to your job. And I want to thank the member for the question and thank him for—and welcome him to his new role as the critic for Justice.

Absolutely, members of the Legislature should follow the law. As a matter of fact, we've been calling on members opposite, when they were in government, to follow the law as well, and we would continue to ask them to do so.

Mr. Swan: Well, I thank the Attorney General for her response.

Madam Speaker, we learned just weeks ago the Premier (Mr. Pallister) failed to disclose, in his MLA conflict of interest disclosure forms required by Manitoba law, at least two corporations in which he owns shares. His ownership of these two corporations is confirmed by his own campaign staffer, Olivia Billson, who is now a member of this Premier's senior staff. A search of his forms in the Clerk's office, which I did this morning, confirms that he has still failed to disclose these corporations.

Will the Attorney General agree today to refer this matter directly to a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench to determine the appropriate remedy for the Premier's failure to follow Manitoba law?

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

It is my understanding and—that the Premier has followed the laws and the rules, and he will continue to do so, as we expect all members of this Legislature to follow the rules and the laws.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, Madam Speaker, I'll encourage the Attorney General and anyone else who's interested, to go across the hall to the Clerk's office and have a look at what's not in the disclosure form provided by this Premier (Mr. Pallister).

I would expect, given the comments of this new Premier and this new government on transparency and accountability, the place to start for the Premier would be to properly disclose assets that he has to disclose in accordance with Manitoba law.

So I will ask again whether this Attorney General will agree today to refer this matter directly to a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, as is set out in the legislation, so we can put this behind us and move on.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—

An Honourable Member: —knows that we have in the Assembly a conflict of interest officer, Madam Speaker. There are certainly—if he has concerns, he knows where he can raise them. And I'm proud that this is a government that committed during the election to not only uphold the current laws but to expand the roles of the conflict of interest officers.

I know that the member has an interest now in dealing with ethical issues, and I appreciate that. I only leave him with two words: Tiger Dams.

LGBTTQ Education Human Rights Curriculum

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the government and commend their Cabinet's decision to have their swearing-in at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which is a site that many Winnipeggers are proud of.

Madam Speaker, given that, and the museum's commitment to carrying out an educational mission, would the honourable Minister for Education agree with section (d) of the preamble to the Human Rights Code of Manitoba, which states that since discrimination is rooted in ignorance, educational programs explaining fundamental human rights and freedoms are necessary for the eradication of discrimination?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you on your election to Speaker. We certainly all benefit from the many years of experience that you've had.

And I would like to thank my critic opposite for the question, the member for Fort Rouge, and welcome him to the House.

Certainly, as the Minister for Education, we're always very supportive of everybody getting a good, well-rounded education, which includes knowledge of any past injustices that have occurred. So I would encourage everyone in this House and outside this House to try and inform themselves as well as possible about any injustices that have occurred here in Manitoba or elsewhere.

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

Mr. Kinew: As we heard earlier, today is the international day for the elimination of homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia.

So I wish to ask a question related to a mother, Michelle McHale whose child was bullied for having same-sex parents. Ms. McHale lobbied the Hanover School Division to teach more about LGBTTQ* issues, but despite the Human Rights Code prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation, the school division refused, saying LGBTTQ* issues are sensitive content.

Does the honourable minister agree that human rights or LGBTTQ—human rights of the LGBTTQ* community are sensitive content?

Mr. Wishart: Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. It is certainly my understanding that the Hanover School Division has followed regulations as have been outlaid and followed the intent of Bill 18, so certainly I leave that in the responsibility of the local school board to make that decision, and if any complaints come forward from that area we will certainly deal with them.

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

Mr. Kinew: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Notwithstanding the complaints that have been made in the media by Ms. McHale, I would like to point out that this is a question of human rights for people in the LGBTTQ* community, and I would like to ask whether the minister will commit to the necessary reforms so that teaching about the LGBTTQ* community is part of the human rights curriculum here in Manitoba.

Mr. Wishart: Well, certainly we would want to make sure that everyone is well informed about the human rights that apply in their case, and certainly the school division has the obligation to make sure that everyone is well informed, and if there is any shortfall in that, we would expect a complaint from that source.

Budget 2016 Public Consultations

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I want to congratulate the Finance Minister, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), on his appointment to his new role. I know that we are going to be able to work together in the spirit of co-operation and collaboration, the kind of thing—work as a team, as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) would say.

Yesterday, the Premier confirmed that the Finance Minister will be tabling a budget on May 31st, a mere 29 days after he became Finance Minister.

Now, media reports indicate that members of the transition team in the Premier's office have done the heavy lifting in preparing the budget, leaving open the question what the Finance Minister has been actually doing.

Could you describe for the House what the budget process has been to date and could he also tell us what public consultations has he held as Finance Minister about the budget?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, congratulations to you on your new role. I know that the Legislature will be well served by you in that seat.

I also congratulate my colleague across the way, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview. He and I are both alumni of the 2011 election and so we have come up in this House and occupied various roles, and I wish him all the best in this new role that he is taking on.

I'm sure that there is a compliment in there somewhere from him to me. I'm still attempting to ascertain where it might lie. I do want to, though, reinforce that it has been a robust process that we have undertaken as a government even in the time that has been given to us. I would outline that the form of the public consultation that we have undertaken has been largely through a general election where we as members have gone out and we

have been given, as a new government, a compelling mandate by Manitobans, one that we humbly receive.

We intend to act, and the budget that we will deliver on the 31st will be a demonstration of the actions that we will undertake.

Mr. Allum: Madam Speaker, I know that he's new to his role, but I am sure the Finance Minister is aware that we have a long, proud tradition of public consultations in this province prior to tabling a budget, and that's because we believe that every voice in Manitoba matters and that there should be an inclusive and broad consultation before any budget is tabled in this House.

* (14:20)

Now, since the Minister of Finance just admitted that he hasn't held any public consultations at all, will he at least table for us who he's met with in private?

Mr. Friesen: First of all, what I'd like to indicate to all my colleagues and in the House is that the activities that we are undertaking to bring a budget on the 31st, it's an incredible process. It's one that is fast tracking. A process that usually takes months and months and months is now being truncated.

We are well served by the department tirelessly working behind the scenes. We are well served by the transitional budget team that has been hard at work for a long time now. I have been very pleased to join those efforts. I assure the member, if he has concerns, that we have been hard at work.

But I would remind him, as well, that while I was the Finance critic, I can remember that that party did a public consultation process that did not result in any budget at all.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Allum: In fact, Madam Speaker, prior to the tabling of the very robust financial outlook that we'd tabled before the election, the then-Finance minister, the former member from Selkirk, did hold broad public consultations on the budget and went to Manitobans and asked them what they wanted to see in the budget.

And what we've heard from the Finance Minister is that he hasn't talked to anyone. He hasn't talked to labour. He hasn't talked to poverty activists. He hasn't talked to people interested in housing, in the environmental movement, in social inclusion

movements. In fact, Madam Speaker, he hasn't spoken to anyone.

Will he just admit today that he's baking an economic pie where he doesn't have the recipe and he certainly doesn't know what the ingredients should be?

Mr. Friesen: I wasn't sure if the member had said a robust plan they brought or a go-bust plan that they brought.

But, Madam Speaker, we're all aware that the citizens of Manitoba have spoken. They have given us a mandate. That mandate is one where we will—we have committed to and we will follow through with growing the economy, with investing in front-line services, with lowering the burden of taxation on Manitobans who are among the most highly taxed citizens in all of Canada.

This is work that we undertake. The actions are well under way. We are speaking with all kinds of groups and dealing with a considerable challenge that has come after years and years of neglect. It is work that is important and work that we undertake with a glad heart, and we will be pleased to bring that budget and provide further information on the 31st of May.

Wildfire Prevention Northern Manitoba

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): We're—our hearts go out to our fellow Canadians who have suffered from the Fort McMurray fire. This fire and the one around Caddy and Beresford Lake have created awareness of the dangers and the need to prevent such fires.

Indeed, the Fort McMurray fire has brought the potential threat to northern communities to a new level. This is likely, in part, because of the impact of climate change and increased dry weather in our boreal forest.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister): What preparations have been made to ensure that everything possible is being done to prevent our northern communities, including Thompson, Cross Lake, Flin Flon, Norway House and many others, from being threatened by fire?

Madam Speaker: The honourable member—or the honourable Minister for Sustainable Development.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): First of all, I'd just like to also

say congratulations to the Speaker on your very important position, trying to maintain order within the House, and I would like to thank the member opposite for his question.

Climate change is an issue that is of great importance to us on this side of the Legislature, as well as all of us within the Legislature.

We've already met with individual from ISD and talked about the importance of climate change, and we will continue to work and engage with all organizations to address this very important issue.

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

Mr. Gerrard: My question, Madam Speaker, relates to the need to make sure that our northern communities are protected from fires like that at Fort McMurray.

Madam Speaker, increasingly, fire boats, boats equipped with high-pressure pumping equipment sufficient to throw large volumes of water up to 450 feet, are demonstrating their capability to protect homes and cottages, and to prevent the spread of fires across water bodies.

I ask the Premier: How many such boats does the government have, what are their capabilities, and how are they currently deployed?

Mrs. Cox: Thank you for that question.

And I'd like to respond by indicating that I think what's happened in Caddy Lake and the success we've had with ensuring that there were no loss of cottages in that area and Ingolf and West Hawk Lake as well provides you with the information that we do, in fact, have enough pumps, hoses and resources available to fight fires.

I think when a fire is something that's happened in Manitoba, you can see that we bring in resources from all across Canada and other provinces. We work together and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, fire boats are part of the armamentarium which we would expect to be—have available in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, former Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon, in reviewing the BC forest fire situation of 2003, said, and I quote, I believe governments have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to implement risk reduction policies and legislation. The Premier has such an opportunity now in Manitoba in the wake of the Fort McMurray fire.

Madam Speaker, will he undertake a full review of current fire protection and firefighting approaches, including the possibility of changes to building standards, land use policies—policies and fire prevention methods, in order to protect all Manitobans' northern communities from fires like that at Fort McMurray?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate the question from the member and congratulate him on his re-election to represent the people of River Heights.

In respect of the opportunities we have, we have a wonderful opportunity now, I think, to work with our allies across the country to encourage the federal government to change a misguided action that was initiated by the previous federal government in respect to tripling the deductible in respect of provincial obligations around disaster assistance. The disaster assistance formula should not be changed. It should revert back to its original premise which was to protect provinces and municipalities in their hour of need.

And I would encourage the member opposite in particular to work with us in support of encouraging his federal friends in the current Liberal federal government to make those changes necessary to restore a proper and fair funding formula to disaster assistance sharing models so that, for example, the province of Alberta is not overburdened as a consequence of a disaster which was not of its doing and Manitoba and other provinces will no longer be facing the threat of further burdens in the future.

I encourage the member and his colleagues to join with us and all colleagues to join with us in fighting for a return to a proper and fair disaster assistance cost-sharing formula.

University College of the North Economic and Education Strategy

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your role as our Speaker for the House, and congratulations to our newly appointed minister for indigenous and municipal affairs.

Madam Speaker, in 2014, the PCs released Northern Lights for—their framework for a northern strategy, which focused on education opportunities in the North. However, the government's current northern program, Yes! North, does not mention an education strategy whatsoever and focuses on—instead on beluga whale watching and aurora borealis tours.

Can the minister please explain why the government does not consider University College of the North and over 2,000 students who chose to study there their vital piece of building economic stability in northern Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I do want to offer my congratulations on your successful election to the Chair, and we look forward to your guidance as we go forward.

And I thank the member for the question and certainly welcome her back to the Legislative Assembly as well.

* (14:30)

And I do look forward to working in partnership and co-operation with all members of our Legislature and particularly those in the North. I think there is tremendous opportunity for further development in northern Manitoba, and we as a government are excited about the potential of economic development not just in northern Manitoba but certainly around the province. So I do look forward to working with her on this particular initiative.

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

Ms. Lathlin: As a former representative workforce co-ordinator at the University College of the North, I know how crucial education is to building a strong North, Madam Speaker. The investments the former government made in expanding the campuses in The Pas and Thompson made high-paying, high-skill jobs accessible for young northerners.

In November of 2015 the former government committed \$14 million to build an industry skills and trades training centre on the UCN's campus in Thompson.

What is the current government's plan for this centre and when could we expect construction to begin?

Mr. Cullen: I do appreciate the question.

I had the opportunity to tour the facility at UCN, and certainly it's a very impressive financial input we have in that facility there, and we want to make sure that that facility is used to its highest potential. We do believe there's more potential at UCN, and not just in Thompson, but certainly across northern Manitoba, so we will certainly open to the suggestions that members opposite have. We will

work with the business community as well in terms to make sure that we are addressing the needs that are out there in northern Manitoba.

So a very important initiative, and we look forward to working with you and moving this initiative forward.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Northern Manitoba has the youngest and fastest growing population of our indigenous people and women. History tells us that when northerners succeed our overall province's economy succeeds as well.

Can the minister tell us the plan to remove barriers that face our young population to access education and training opportunities?

Mr. Cullen: And I do, again, thank the member for the question, and it is a very, very important question.

You know, Madam Speaker, over the last few years under our Premier's (Mr. Pallister) leadership we have been travelling throughout Manitoba in consultation with Manitobans. Certainly job creation is very important and the education leading to job creation is very important, so we've heard some really good initiatives from northern Manitobans. We're going to hear some more good things from us as well as a result of those consultations.

So we will continue to consult with Manitobans, including northern Manitobans, to see what we can do to improve their economic outlook and we look forward to the challenges. Clearly, there's challenges there, but I think if we work in partnership we can achieve some positive things for rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba.

Thank you.

LGBTQT Community Health-Care Funding

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) in his appointment as Minister for Health, Seniors and Active Living, and I look forward to working with him, maybe not so much as a team, but certainly together for the betterment of all Manitobans, and I believe we can accomplish that here in this House.

Madam Speaker, LGBTQT Manitobans are looking for safe and accessible health care and they

can't always find that in a mainstream health-care system.

Although significant strides have been made, including increasing funding for the transgendered health program, for instance, at Klinik community health-care centre, we know that the work is far from finished.

Will this minister commit to continued funding specific to LGBTQT health care?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I want to thank my friend for the question.

I'm more optimistic than he is. I believe that we can work as a team on a number of different issues. I've always believed that nobody has a monopoly on a good idea, and I want to hear any good ideas that are coming from any members regardless of which side they come from, Madam Speaker. Certainly, we know that all Manitobans, they deserve to be safe in our communities; they deserve to have access to quality health care and timely health care. That includes members of the LGTBQ community, and absolutely, I look forward to working with those members to ensure that they have quality health care like all Manitobans deserve to have that care.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, health care for those individuals in the LGBTQT community often is more than just the physical health. It also includes mental health. It also sometimes includes counselling services and a whole spectrum, really, of care, and not only here in Winnipeg, but I think it needs to be applied across the province to all Manitobans.

Can the Minister of Health commit to increasing funding for resources for LGBTQT health care, including mental health and counselling services?

Mr. Goertzen: I also again thank my friend for the question. He's absolutely right. The issue of mental health is something that is critical. And we know that it is a growing concern for Manitobans in Winnipeg, in Brandon, in the North and throughout rural Manitoba.

Our government has already committed to having a mental health strategy put into place. I've talked to officials in my department, and I want an assurance that a specific strategy within that is dealt with for LGTBQ community.

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

Mr. Wiebe: In addition to providing these health-care services, it's important to remember that our health-care professionals need the training and need the assistance and support in order to provide these properly to the community.

Will the minister commit today to increasing the training and funding for health-care professionals as they learn to better support those individuals in the LGBTTQ community?

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the member for the question.

And certainly we have talked about the importance of ensuring that health-care professionals are protected and they're respected in our health-care field. We know that they are the front-line workers. They are delivering the care to Manitobans most directly. And we want to support them in every way that we can.

I've been clear, in every health-care professional that I've met in the short time that I've been the minister, that we appreciate the work that they're doing, that we want to hear their ideas. We want to reach out to them and hear their ideas from the front lines because we believe that the best ideas are going to come from them. And we'll continue to support them in every way that we can.

Crown Corporations Privatization Concerns

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate you for your job. It's one of those that are thankless, and I thank you for putting your name in.

Madam Speaker, as our Opposition Leader has stated, members from this side are deeply concerned about the government plans for Manitoba Crown corporations.

And I'll give the Minister responsible for Crown Services a chance to stand up and say, without any doubt: Will the Minister for Crown Services assure this House that Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Public Insurance and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries will not be privatized?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): First of all, Madam Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I congratulate you on becoming Speaker. And I know you're going to be a fantastic Speaker. We look

forward to you keeping order in this House, which we all know is necessary.

I also would like to thank my critic for a great question.

I want to be very clear that when I was approached by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to take on this role, the first thing he said to me, that a lot of the problems within the Crown corporations had to do with political meddling from this building into the Crown corporations. And he was very clear that we weren't going to solve the problems with the Crown corporations with political meddling from this building in the Crown corporations.

We are going to break that mould, Madam Speaker. We are going to ensure that there will be no political interference from this Legislature into the Crown corporations. And, like the Premier said, Manitoba Hydro will stay with the people, and it will stay public.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Marcelino: Will that answer stand the test of time? Will that be the answer three months from now?

* (14:40)

Mr. Schuler: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon—oh, excuse me. Sorry. Apparently, question period is over.

Petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (First Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Consideration of the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer), that the following address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor: We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this First Session of the 41st Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Reyes: I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital, that the following address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor—*[interjection]*

Je propose, appuyé par la députée de St. Vital, que l'adresse suivante soit présentée à Son Honneur, la lieutenant gouverneur. Nous, les députés de l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba, remercions Son Honneur pour le discours gracieux adressé à nous à cette première session du 41^e Assemblée législative du Manitoba.

Translation

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital, that the following address be presented to Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor. We, the members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, thank Her Honour for her gracious speech at this First Session of the 41st Legislature of Manitoba.

English

I want to express my appreciation to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her words yesterday. She has reminded us of the serious issues facing this province and of the careful measures that our government will soon be taking to improve the situation.

I also want to express my love and thanks to my family who encouraged me to seek my party's nomination in St. Norbert, worked so hard on my election campaign and whose support I rely upon in order to fill my duties as the MLA for St. Norbert.

Madam Speaker, volunteers are the unsung heroes of political campaigns. Each honourable member of this Assembly is here, thanks to the hard work of many volunteers who selflessly contributed their time, energy and finances for the betterment of our democracy. We can never thank them enough. Thank you.

And so I must express my gratitude to the many men and women who worked so hard for so long to represent me in the riding of St. Norbert. It was a campaign that many said I could not win, but the hard work of my team of volunteers is the reason I am here today.

I'm also proud to say that my campaign in St. Norbert, indeed, our government's campaign throughout the province, always took the high road. We conducted ourselves with dignity, respect

and honour, the way campaigns should always be conducted.

As a former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who has served this country and as a special envoy for military affairs, I am honoured to now serve my St. Norbert riding. Indeed, I must express my greatest and most sincere appreciation to the residents of St. Norbert for choosing me as their MLA. You have placed your trust and your hopes in me; it is such a great honour and duty that I will not let you down, and our government will not let Manitobans down.

Madam Speaker, I'm also honoured to acknowledge that this building, and indeed this Chamber, are on Treaty 1 land. I am so proud to serve in this Chamber with members of Manitoba's indigenous community.

I also acknowledge that Manitoba is the homeland of the Metis, the founders of Manitoba.

Je reconnais aussi que le Manitoba est la patrie du peuple métis, les fondateurs du Manitoba.

Translation

I recognize also that Manitoba is the homeland of the Metis, the founders of Manitoba.

English

Madam Speaker, I'm also honoured to serve with other members who, like me, represent the diversity of this province. In my own case, there are tens and thousands of Filipinos living throughout Manitoba, and it was Manitoba that elected the first Filipino city councillor, the first MLA, the first member of Parliament, the first provincial Cabinet minister and first federal Cabinet minister.

Madam Speaker, our experience reminds all Manitobans, especially our children, of our rich cultural mosaic of the tolerance and spirit of co-operation and respect that we share, and most importantly, of the opportunities that all Manitobans share irrespective of the race, religion or gender. We are a collection of communities; we are all one community as Manitobans. We support and encourage each other, working together to build a better province and a brighter future for our children.

Indeed, during the campaign, I recall one street where I was door knocking. When the constituents opened the doors, I was able to greet them in their language. I spoke six languages on that street on that day, and that tells us how the face of St. Norbert, and

indeed all of Manitoba, has changed for the better and for a better Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor has reminded us of the severity of the challenges we face as a province: a deficit far larger than we were told about, a fiscal hole that is far deeper than the former government led us to believe. It is a very serious problem that threatens the ability of the province to deliver the vital services so that—many Manitobans rely upon each day. Harsh austerity measures won't work. What is needed is a careful, sensitive approach that will restore the province to fiscal balance without doing harm to the most vulnerable members of our society. That is the approach our government will be taking.

Reducing the size of Cabinet will save taxpayers millions of dollars annually. We will soon move to abolish the vote tax that has taken millions of dollars from taxpayers to subsidize political parties, initiate a value-for-money review to identify savings throughout all government departments.

By joining the New West Partnership, we will eliminate barriers to trade throughout western Canada that will create export opportunities for Manitoba businesses and stimulating job creation here at home.

The Premier's enterprise team, composed of leaders drawn from across Manitoba's diverse business community, will work with our government to create new jobs and economic growth in every corner of the province. Capitalizing on our strength as a creator of renewable energy, we will partner with business to make Manitoba a world leader in green technology innovation.

Madam Speaker, our government will invest heavily in infrastructure improvement and give all municipalities a strong voice in the process. We are going to take a team-Manitoba approach to business development working as an honest reliable partner with the business sector and other important stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor has reminded us that the future of this province and of our children relies upon the quality of education they receive in our schools, colleges and universities. Literacy is the crucial first step in educational success, and that is why our government will move quickly to develop and implement a long-term strategy to improve our kid's ability to read, write and communicate effectively.

* (14:50)

For years our province has invested millions of dollars in education only to see our best and brightest leave Manitoba for better jobs elsewhere, building the economies of other jurisdictions. Our government will make the necessary investments in education and work with business to create opportunities that will give our kids every reason to stay in Manitoba and be part of building this province.

Madam Speaker, our government will work hard to address many challenges facing our health-care system. We are going to reduce wait times for surgical procedures and in emergency rooms. We will reduce ambulance fees. We are going to improve the quality of mental health and addictions treatment throughout this province.

None of this work will be easy, Madam Speaker, but it is work that must be done in order to restore our finances to balance, to care for our most vulnerable and to secure our future. That is what Manitobans voted for on April 19th. They believe in this government, and we believe in them.

By working together as Manitobans, by working as a team, we are going to accomplish our goals. We are stronger together. We are going to make this province better together.

Salamat, miigwech, merci beaucoup, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): It's my very great honour to follow the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes) and seconding this motion. I also want to express my appreciation to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her words yesterday. I agree that she has reminded us of the serious issues facing this province and of the measures that our government will soon be taking to improve the situation.

As a new member of this Assembly, I also want to thank the Lieutenant Governor for her wisdom and guidance contained in her speech. I will expand on this later, but she has carefully laid out the significant challenges facing this province and the important steps that our government will be taking to begin addressing those challenges.

Madam Speaker, this journey has been long for me, but it's for one I would not have traded for anything. I grew up in Fisher Branch, Manitoba as an only child for 15 years. During this time, I learned about the strength that you draw from community,

especially from a community that cares for one another like my hometown does. This larger community demonstrated and reinforced the core values I was taught at home. I have worked hard, but I am where I am today because of family and community. I owe them so much, and now is my turn to give back.

My journey here has been one of opportunity and growth, starting with the Windsor Community Centre Board and the Old St. Vital Business Improvement Zone. From there I moved to city hall, where my work helping the St. Vital ward ignited my passion for public service and my desire to make St. Vital better.

My time as a trustee in the Louis Riel School Division was so rewarding. I grew to love serving the public, and my time there allowed for personal and professional growth. Thank you to the board and administration for their continued support.

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to superintendent Duane Brothers and former assistant superintendent Neill Johnson for their mentorship.

Madam Speaker, I especially want to thank my family who stood beside my decision to be a candidate in the recent election. They encouraged me during the many long hours and days of campaigning and are now my solid foundation as I begin my duties as the MLA for St. Vital. Their love and commitment means everything to me, and there are a few special people that I would like to mention.

To my parents, John and Connie, I thank you for raising me with a superior work ethic and the resilience to always move forward. To my sister Candice, you've been the one that I've turned to so often and used as a sounding board throughout the past year. Your words and your patience have given me focus and strength. To my in-laws and my step-parents, I have a deep appreciation for everything you have done and everything you will continue to do for Cory, me and the boys.

To my sons Quinn and Ethan, I promise to lead by example and support you unconditionally as you find your own path in life. You are the biggest reason I rise to this challenge to make this province a brighter Manitoba for their future.

And, finally, to my husband, Cory, words could never fully express what your unwavering commitment means to me. This has never and will never go unnoticed, and I thank you for being my partner on this fantastic journey.

I also echo the comments of the member of St. Norbert regarding the importance of volunteers in an election campaign. We can never say enough thank-yous for the hours of work they put in, knocking on doors, talking to constituents, answering phones and doing all the other things that campaigns require.

To each and every one of you, and you know who you are, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

We all know that you're only as good as the people you surround yourself with, and my core campaign team—Pat, Jeanine, Sandra, Amy and Lea—stood beside me all the way and to the finish line. And what a finish it was. Your commitment to me was vital to my success.

I must, of course, thank the people of St. Vital for placing their trust in me, a Metis woman. You have given me the honour of representing you. It is truly humbling and I make the following promise to you: I will never take the faith you have shown in me for granted. I will work hard every day to represent you, and I will do my best to protect your interests in this Chamber and throughout Manitoba.

I also wish to thank the many St. Vital organizations that I have had the privilege of working with over the past several years. The three community centers in my riding—Windsor, Glenwood, and Norberry-Glenlee, the Marlene Street Resource Centre, the St. Vital Parent-Child Coalition, and the St. Vital Community Action Network. You make St. Vital stronger for all who call it home.

Madam Speaker, we have inherited a serious fiscal challenge from the previous government that was not fully disclosed to Manitobans. We were misled and apparently for a very long time. The enormity of the problem will become clear in the coming days and weeks, but it is now even more urgent that we restore sound fiscal management to Manitoba's finances. That will begin immediately with a value-for-money review to identifying savings throughout all government departments, and it will continue when our budget is introduced in a few days from now.

The fiscal challenge we face is enormous, but we will approach it in a manner that respects and protects the interests of those who rely upon our government to provide the critical services they depend on.

We are committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. We are going to do that by building a strong partnership with businesses and communities throughout the province. We're going to do that by giving municipalities, including the cities of Winnipeg and Brandon, a fair say on strategic infrastructure investments.

We're also going to do that through the creation of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) enterprise team and by building a framework for ongoing consultations with indigenous leaders.

Our government is going to build strong, productive relationships built on trust. The business community, municipalities and First Nations will have an honest partner they can rely on.

Membership in the New West Partnership will end Manitoba's isolation and will reduce trade barriers between the four western provinces. It will generate new opportunities for Manitoba businesses and create procurement and investment opportunities here at home.

* (15:00)

Our government will soon move to abolish the vote tax that has taken millions of dollars from taxpayers to subsidize political parties, and we'll restore the public's right to vote on tax increases.

We will also establish a red tape reduction task force to eliminate the needless impediments that frustrate business owners and individual citizens.

Madam Speaker, education is key to long-term economic growth and to Manitoba's future. We will work with teachers to develop a long-term literacy plan for our children and will make investments in education to create employment opportunities that will enable young Manitobans to remain in this province after they graduate.

Our government has a solemn obligation to provide the best possible health care to children, seniors and families. The wait-times reduction task force will work to shorten the time Manitobans must wait for surgical procedures. Reducing ambulance fees will end the inhumane practice of penalizing Manitobans who require urgent medical attention.

Our government will improve the quality of mental health care with a new approach that better co-ordinates mental health and addiction services.

We are going to protect victimized and at-youth-at-risk children by making it easier for government

departments, law enforcement agencies, Child and Family Services and community service providers to work together and share information. That's so important, Madam Speaker, and it will make a positive difference in the lives of so many kids.

Madam Speaker, climate change is real. Our government will be taking meaningful measures to reduce its impact. With that in mind, we will create a made-in-Manitoba approach that will include carbon pricing and targets for reduced emissions. We want Manitoba to be a world leader in green technology, and we'll encourage and promote innovative ideas in that sector that will create jobs and strengthen our economy.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans will never again be kept in the dark by their government. Our government will end the secrecy, dishonesty and deception that were practised by the previous administration. We will become the most open, transparent and accountability provincial government in Canada.

We will accomplish that objective by setting higher standards for open-contracting procedures, creating an open data portal that will enable Manitobans to obtain government-collected data in an accessible format by implementing a proactive disclosure system, by providing regular reports that enable Manitobans to monitor our progress in addressing the fiscal challenges we have inherited, and by easing access to information that is currently only available through the freedom of information process.

Madam Speaker, on April 19th, Manitobans voted for change. They voted for a clean government that will always be open and honest with them. They voted for a government that will repair the harm caused by more than 16 years of economic mismanagement and cronyism. They voted for a government that will better deliver education for our children and will provide the quality of health care that all Manitobans deserve when they need it.

Accomplishing these objectives will not be easy. Like all Manitobans, however, our government is not afraid of hard work.

So, once again, I ask that all honourable members thank the Lieutenant Governor for her gracious speech.

I also ask that we then begin the work of providing Manitobans with a quality of government

they expect and they deserve. Madam Speaker, we owe it to them.

Thank you.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that today's debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe there may be agreement in the House to call it 5 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The House is now adjourned and will stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

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