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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 9, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19—The Efficiency Manitoba Act

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox), that Bill 19, The Efficiency Manitoba Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 19, The Efficiency Manitoba Act, which will provide the authority to establish a stand-alone Crown corporation for demand-side management, DSM, in the province of Manitoba.

Demand-side management in this context refers to initiatives that encourage energy conservation and efficiency both for electricity and natural gas.

The overall objectives of this bill are to reduce the impact of future rate increases, the further need for expensive new energy construction, can create new employment and business opportunities, and improve the competitiveness of Manitoba business.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Bill 20—The Crown Corporations
Governance and Accountability Act**

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 20, The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, as part of our government's commitment to improving the province of Manitoba, restoring prudent fiscal management and increasing openness and transparency of our Crown corporations, I am pleased to introduce

Bill 20, The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act.

This bill will strengthen the oversight of these entities while respecting the responsibility of the boards and professionals to govern and manage. The new act will improve transparency and clearly define a governance model that will clarify the accountability relationship and understanding of the respective roles of minister, boards, executive offices and officials of our Crown corporations.

This new legislation furthers our government's pledge to eliminate overlap and duplication within government, find efficiencies and savings and allow our Crown corporations to deliver effective essential services to all Manitobans.

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

**Bill 213—The Gift of Life Act
(Human Tissue Gift Act Amended)**

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I move, seconded by the member from Kewatinook, that Bill 213, The Gift of Life Act (Human Tissue Gift Act Amended); Loi sur le don de la vie (modification de la Loi sur les dons de tissus humains), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fletcher: Thank you to the member from Kewatinook.

The bill amends The Human Tissue Gift Act. This bill—at present, the direction for organ donation is assumed only after someone puts their name on the list. This bill changes that so you are assumed to be on the list until your name is removed. It's very easy to remove the name off the list of organ donations, and there is no assumption when it comes to scientific research. This only applies to organs that can be available for donation.

And I'd like to just mention the bipartisan support for this bill and recognize the Manitobans, like the presumed consent association who is with us today in the gallery, for their hard work on this very important issue.

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

**Bill 214—The Missing Persons Amendment Act
(Silver Alert)**

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I move, seconded by the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton), that Bill 214, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert), be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Isleifson: It is truly an honour to rise in the House today and prevent my first private member's bill.

It is a fact that thousands of Manitobans live with Alzheimer's disease, other forms of dementia and cognitive impairment. Bill 214 will provide additional tools that will strengthen and enhance The Missing Persons Act by permitting the police in our province to work with broadcasters and others in alerting the public when a vulnerable person or another adult with a cognitive impairment goes missing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister—the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable First Minister please proceed with his statement.

Response to Refugee Claimants

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of all Manitobans to express our appreciation for the incredible manner in which so many of our fellow citizens have responded to the recent influx of people coming to Canada in search of hope.

We have all seen a dramatic rise in the number of individuals who have crossed into Canada from the United States at the Manitoba border. Since January 1st of this year, more than 200 individuals have made this irregular journey, travelling great distances in harrowing conditions and at great personal risk to themselves in order to come to Canada. Manitoba has seen the largest influx of any province on a per capita basis, and Manitobans have,

as we have always done, welcomed these newcomers with open arms and with open hearts.

Our province has been the home of hope for more than two centuries, and those on the front lines deserve our appreciation and our respect for their compassion and their generosity. I'm standing today to thank local communities, front-line workers and the organizations that are ensuring the safety and well-being of those individuals seeking refuge in our province. Communities along the border, like Emerson, are—and the reeve, I believe, is here today, and council members as well. The public safety personnel and emergency providers have been working non-stop, since this trend began, to ensure the safety and security of both those coming to Canada and also of those living in their communities.

* (13:40)

And organizations like Manitoba Interfaith and Immigration partnership, the Welcome Place, Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations members, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, Manitoba Start, Red River College, Opportunities for Employment, Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, Paramedic Association of Canada, the Salvation Army—representatives of many of those organizations are here with us today in the gallery. We thank them and we thank all their associates for everything they are doing to assist these people.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans have responded generously and compassionately to this crisis, so has our government. We recognize that there are significant pressures on front-line services. We have added transitional funding supports including health-care coverage, temporary housing, employment income assistance, direct employment and labour market support, legal-aid assistance and child protection placement for legal minors crossing on their own without family.

I must emphasize that the challenges associated with this current situation are significant and they continue to grow, particularly as asylum seekers demonstrate a willingness to seek the safety of Canada at great risk to themselves and their families.

As we approach a potential spring flood, and on the heels of 19 border crossings during an almost-unprecedented blizzard in its duration just two days ago, we must again call for a truly national response to this issue in order to address the

wide-spread impacts on social-service delivery being experienced.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans have always been a compassionate, tolerant and welcoming society. We consistently lead the nation on a per capita basis in welcoming and accommodating refugee claimants, but our capacity to address this alone is limited, and this is a national challenge that demands a national response. The demands emerging each day from the situation require an expedited and broad national approach.

Two days ago, I wrote to our Prime Minister advising him of the situation and seeking additional support from the federal government in order to address the needs of this situation. We are requesting additional support for housing along with reimbursement of health-care costs, employment income assistance payments and labour market training costs. We are seeking a comprehensive bilateral partnership agreement, similar to the existing model for government-assisted refugees.

Madam Speaker, we have requested a two-year extension of the existing support arrangements in place with the federal government as regards government-assisted refugees and we are asking the federal government to revisit the recently announced reductions and redeployment in funding support levels for English language assistance through post-secondary institutions in Manitoba.

I would ask all parties to join with us in this effort to make sure that this comes to pass. We are waiting to receive the federal government's response to these requests. We hope they will be responded to quickly and with generosity.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba will continue to be a refuge for hope and opportunity. We embrace our well-deserved leadership reputation for compassion. Like our guests today with us in the gallery, we will never turn our back on those in need.

Thank you.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for his statement.

Madam Speaker, more refugees are coming—moving across international borders today than ever before. Nearly 34,000 people are forcibly displaced from their homes every day as a result of conflict or persecution. This is a crisis that has recently hit home for us in Manitoba.

Because of the uncertainty and fear caused by the US ban on immigrants and refugees, hundreds of people are crossing our border in dangerously cold weather. This has caused extreme hardship for refugees and has placed a burden on residents of Emerson and the surrounding area.

Manitobans know how important it is for government to act to help the most vulnerable in their time of need, to protect the safety and security of Canadians and to ensure that Canada is an open and welcoming place for all newcomers.

Today we called on the Premier to work with Ottawa to suspend the Safe Third Country Agreement and to immediately remove the cap on privately sponsored refugees. I thank my colleague from St. John's for introducing this morning a very important private members' resolution. This resolution laid out concrete measures to help the hundreds of refugees who are coming to our province. It is critical that we act in order to protect refugee asylum seekers and support residents all along our border so that we can continue our proud history of diversity, acceptance and tolerance in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the Premier's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Today it's -28° with the wind chill. At this temperature exposed skin can freeze in as little as 10 minutes. Now, imagine walking for hours through an open field only with the hope of finding your family a safe place to call home. Madam Speaker and members of this House, we know this is the reality for many people right now. I am encouraged that the government, at both the federal level and here at the provincial level, are so willing and able to come together on a humanitarian issue such as this.

Manitobans should be proud of the organizations involved such as Welcome Place, Manitoba's largest refugee settlement agency; MANSO, Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations; and the Salvation Army, who have offered beds. Those are just to name a few.

And I'd also like to thank everyone in the gallery here today.

We should also be very proud of our neighbours and our friends who go above and beyond by opening up their homes, donating clothing and doing all that they can to help new refugees transition and adapt. Manitobans have certainly proved their generosity and their compassion.

Let's continue to do so, and let's support the call for a national response. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, even though the required 90-minute notice was not given, I'd like to ask if there's leave to allow a ministerial statement by the Minister for Sport, Heritage and Culture on the topic of the death of Master Corporal Alfred Barr.

Madam Speaker: Is there the leave of the House to allow another ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Remembering Master Corporal Barr

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise in this House today to mark a tragic event.

Master Corporal Alfred Barr, 31 years old, died yesterday as a result of a training accident near Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Master Corporal Barr was a search and rescue technician with the Canadian Air Force. He was part of 435 Transport and Rescue Squadron and based here in Winnipeg.

Master Corporal Barr's tragic death is a reminder to a grateful nation of the sacrifice and dedication of our brave women and men in uniform. Their jobs are challenging, and they risk their lives to keep us safe. They face risks we cannot fathom, and they do so in service to others.

I know all members will join me in extending our condolences and respect to the family of Master Corporal Barr. His service to Canada is to be commended. We hope that his loved ones can find comfort in knowing that a thankful province and nation stand shoulder to shoulder with them and with the heroes serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The search and rescue technician motto is: That Others May Live. Rest in peace, Master Corporal Barr.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I thank the minister for her statement today.

We are all saddened to learn of the death of Master Corporal Alfred Barr in Saskatchewan yesterday, and it's an honour to commemorate his service and his life.

As we know, Master Corporal Barr was a search and rescue technician based at 17 Wing, here in Winnipeg. The SAR Tech trade is one of the most elite occupations in the Canadian Armed Forces. On any given day, at any given time, they can be called upon to face the deadliest forces that nature has to offer. If a fishing vessel capsizes in rough seas, if a hiker is trapped on the side of a mountain or if an airplane goes down in the frozen tundra, SAR Techs spring into action, putting the lives of the people they're called to save before their own. As a member of this tight-knit team, Master Corporal Barr possessed indefatigable courage and unflinching resilience.

Master Corporal Barr was part of a team that saved a family of four, adrift overnight in Hudson Bay last summer. A man, a woman and two teen boys from Baker Lake in Nunavut were saved because SAR Techs, including Master Corporal Barr, answered the call that day.

*(13:50)

SAR Techs don't just take anyone into the ranks. Master Corporal Barr possessed a sense of determination and drive that few people could match.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of our NDP caucus, we offer our deepest condolences to Master Corporal Alfred Barr, his fiancée, his family and his squadron. Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, Manitoba Liberal MLAs today join our fellow MLAs in mourning the tragic death of Master Corporal Alfred Barr.

Master Corporal Barr was a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force Transport and Rescue Squadron and an important member of the search and rescue team, a team which has done so much for so many, searching for, finding and rescuing individuals who are missing or lost.

This heartbreaking tragedy, which occurred near Yorkton, we have heard, may be the result of a

parachute which didn't open, and if so, it's one of the very worst nightmares of every parent who has a son or a daughter who parachutes.

We offer our deepest 'consolences' to the family, the fiancée—I understand he was soon to be married—and to the friends of Master Corporal Barr. We also want to recognize the important and valiant work that he and other members of the search and rescue team perform on behalf of all of us every day.

Madam Speaker: Is there a willing of the House to have a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

Please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Humanitarian Work in Emerson

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Today it gives me great pleasure to honour the people of Emerson for the humanitarian work that they have been doing with the recent influx of refugee claimants seeking asylum in Manitoba.

Manitoba has always done more than their share when it comes to helping refugees from war-torn countries. So many Manitobans are descendants from immigrants who fled oppression. They came with their heads down and their sleeves rolled up ready to work and to build a new life for themselves and their families.

Generations of brave Canadians have fought in different wars to free other people from oppression and defend the rights and freedoms that make this the best country in the world. Our province has stepped up to help those in need time and time again, and will continue to do so well into the future. The good people of Manitoba have sponsored many refugee families and have welcomed them into our communities.

It must be noted, however, that the current influx of refugee claimants is a unique circumstance that demands a better response from the federal government. It is time for Ottawa to fulfill its responsibilities to all concerned. The new normal in Emerson and other border communities is certainly a change from the norm in those quiet small towns. The morning chat at the coffee shop or a knock at the door are now quite different than they used to be.

The people of Emerson have made us all proud as Manitobans. They've answered the call for help in this unique situation, and so has our provincial

government. My constituents have earned the respect of people around the world. It's time for Ottawa to show them the same respect.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I ask leave to enter the names of the people from Emerson that—with it today in the gallery.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have the names listed in Hansard? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Graydon: Fire Chief Jeff French; volunteer firefighters, Jay and Lori Ihme; Reeve Greg Janzen; Councillors Doug Johnson and Brenda Lange.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Organizations that Support Refugees

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): It's clear today's increasing global refugee crisis is a definitive issue of our time, with millions of desperate peoples forced to flee their countries owing to persecution, war and violence. Indeed, in recent months, we've witnessed this global crisis at our very own doors, with over 200 asylum seekers crossing into Emerson in dangerously cold conditions since the beginning of this year.

Over the past couple of days, 19 people, including a pregnant woman and a child, risked their lives to make a refugee claim here in Manitoba. It has never been clearer to me Manitoba is a province of people who value diversity, acceptance and tolerance, witnessing the many Manitobans, including those in Emerson, who have opened their doors and with shows of generosity and love.

As well, our province is home to several incredible organizations who unfailingly work at providing settlement services and other desperately needed supports for refugees: organizations like Welcome Place, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, No One Is Illegal—Winnipeg, Canadian Muslim Women's Institute, the Islamic Social Services Association and many, many others.

These organizations have been providing critical settlement and advocacy services for years, recognizing that refugees make up a critical component of Manitoba's newcomer population and that they are an integral part of our socio-economic fabric. These organizations meet the needs of refugees by providing accommodations, health, legal, advocacy, awareness-building and educational services.

We know NGOs work with limited resources, but, despite this, they go above and beyond the call of duty. It is clear that they will need additional supports with what could be over 1,000 newcomers in this coming year.

Please join me in thanking Hani Al-U Batey, Abdi Ahmed, Krishna Lalbiharie with Immigration Partnership Winnipeg; Laurel Martin from the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute; with Emita, Adams, Aziz and Ahmed, who, if I may, Madam Speaker, are actually some of the first refugees who crossed over from Ghana in Emerson; and Shahina Siddiqui from the Islamic Social Services Association for their dedication in helping refugees and newcomers and enshrining Manitoba as a welcoming province.

L'Arche Tova Café

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Delicious, quaint, Transcona's hidden gem—these are all adjectives used to describe a diamond of downtown Transcona, L'Arche Tova Café.

In April of 2012, a group of individuals had a dream of opening a café to support L'Arche Winnipeg in their mandate of assisting those with mental disabilities to live to their full potential by providing meaningful employment for them and to foster a more compassionate society. As the founder of L'Arche, Jean Vanier, said, we must do what we can to diminish walls.

Today, L'Arche Tova Café is a place where participants can work, learn skills and build relationships with customers who become friends, customers who always want to return for a visit and customers who are there to see Ross, or Albert, or Stacey or other L'Arche participants. They are always greeted with a smile, perhaps a hug and a menu, and then, thanks to Nick and the attentive staff, you are treated to a terrific home-cooked meal, which never disappoints.

Next month, L'Arche Tova Café celebrates five years of being the place that all Transcona is proud to call their own. The little café that means so much to the people who planted the seed of this idea also means so much to those whose lives are enriched by everyone they come in contact with there.

Thank you to those who brought this vision to fruition and who continue to work to ensure the gifts of those participants to make it a special place in our neighbourhood.

L'Arche has done much to break down barriers for individuals with developmental disabilities, a place where they are accepted, appreciated and able to show the skills they have learned, a place of hope and gratitude. Not only do you receive great food with heart, you're helping the café change lives, one cup of coffee at a time.

* (14:00)

Special thanks to Larry Vickar and his wife Tova, after whom the café is named, for their commitment and continued support to this venture that benefits our community and helps us become a better community.

Please join me in thanking the Vickars, as well as Jim Lapp, Dianne Truderung and all the volunteers at the café and in the L'Arche office.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Provincial Nominee Program

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): You know, I'm happy to stand today because I have felt 'fustrated' over the last number of months, which ultimately led me to having a 33-hour sit-in outside of the Minister of Education's office, urging him to prioritize the Provincial Nominee Program. The sit-in was a clear success, as over the last two weeks, the minister has taken action.

All of the answers I received are on my website; however, to briefly highlight a few: As of April 1st, 2017, the minister has committed to a higher standard of service, including expedited responses to MLAs on behalf of their constituents, and no applicant will wait more than two weeks to hear back. In addition to this, the minister committed that, as of April 1st, 2017, all completed applications will be processed within six months of submission day.

Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the minister. I appreciate that he took the time, even though it was kind of forced, to make some changes. I am sincerely looking forward to working with him moving forward.

I also wanted to thank my caucus colleagues and staff for standing strong beside me. I'd like to thank the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) for supporting the cause and even bringing us treats during our sit-in, the guards for their great stories about paranormal activity here at the Legislative Building and the time spent with us in the southwest hallway.

And lastly, most importantly, I'd like to thank all of the hard-working Manitobans for showing their support. I believe that we, as provincial elected officials, have taken a positive step towards depoliticizing the Provincial Nominee Program, and I can honestly say that I'm looking forward to what is to come.

Thank you.

Sex Trafficking

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): She's a daughter. She's a sister. She's a mother. She's someone you pass on the street or see at a bus stop or even sit next to on a plane. She is a victim of human trafficking, and she needs our help.

There are an estimated 45 million people in slavery today in the world, and 80 per cent of those victims are women and girls. In Canada, over 90 per cent of sex-trafficking victims come from Canada, not from other countries. Over half of them are indigenous, and most of those in Manitoba are past or present wards of CFS.

Sex trafficking exists because there is a demand for it. Men are willing to pay for sex. Teenagers growing up today have free and ready access to massive amounts of violent, degrading, sexually explicit material. So should we be surprised when we find out teenage girls are sending naked pictures of themselves to boys, not because they want to, but because they feel pressured to? Should we be surprised when we hear that teenage girls are being pressured to perform sex acts before they even go on a first date or even before a first kiss? Should we be surprised when these boys grow up to be men who have no concept of true intimacy or—and are willing to pay for sex, even though they know the girl or woman might be a victim of human trafficking?

It's time we changed our mindset. It's incumbent on us to defend the dignity of all women and of all girls. Today is stop child sexual exploitation day in Manitoba. Next Tuesday morning, this House will have an opportunity to discuss how we, together, can protect children and youth from viewing violent, sexually explicit material online. I believe it's an important conversation for us all to have.

And yesterday we celebrated International Women's Day. But I'm telling you that if we can take action and we can bring an end to sexual harassment, exploitation and violence against women, that will really be worth celebrating. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: There are some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you all.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from L'Arche Tova Café: Jim Lapp, Larry and Tova Vickar, Kadian McAnuff, Sabrina Morier, Michael O'Connor, who are the guests of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski).

And also in the gallery today we have with us from the Emerson constituency: Jeff French, fire chief; Lori Ihme, firefighter; Jay Ihme, firefighter; Greg Janzen, reeve; Doug Johnson, councillor, ward 6; Brenda Lange, councillor, ward 6; Ken Walford, who are the guests of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

On behalf of all of us here, we'd like to welcome all our guests here to the Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Infrastructure Budget Funding Concerns

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Every day we learn something new about how this government is turning back the clock for Manitoba families: cuts to health care, cuts to education, cuts to infrastructure. The Premier is simply out of touch to challenges he's making for Manitoba families, and he is really out of touch with an eight-week vacation in Costa Rica without emails.

It's simply unfair that the Premier would take a 20 per cent pay raise and freeze and cut the services that Manitobans rely on. Over \$100 million has been cut from the coming roads and infrastructure budget.

How, Madam Speaker, does the Premier think he can build for the future with more cuts and less services?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): First of all, Madam Speaker, if I could, I would like to add to the great words of my colleague the Minister of Culture, and my colleagues the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), in offering our sincere condolences to the family of Corporal Barr, and say that we will never forget the service that those who don the uniform of service to our country provide to us and the security that they give us, which we must never take for granted and we must recognize every day that they put their lives

at risk in the service of others, and we thank them for that.

And we thank the people in this gallery today who are here to represent not only themselves, but the many other colleagues who work with them and beside them on behalf of those who need our support and help.

I'm honoured to lead a government that has as its first concern the betterment of life for those less fortunate, and we'll continue to stand for those people.

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

Ms. Marcelino: This government seems to think the best way to build infrastructure in Manitoba is by making cuts. In fact, they are planning over a \$100-million cut to our infrastructure budget on roads, bridges and highways, and they plan to lock the cut in for the next four years.

We know that the minister has locked in his 20 per cent salary increase, but will he realize the harm he's doing and stop making cuts to the infrastructure budget?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, this is just dull repetition of talking points that the NDP perpetrated on the people of Manitoba to try to mislead them over the last number of years, in fact, and, again, there are so many misrepresentations of fact in the preamble that it defies the time I'm allotted to respond. So I will choose not to respond, but rather to put the truth on the record.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, that in this year's budget we will make a record commitment on behalf of the people of Canada—of Manitoba using their tax dollars, of course, as the source of funding to health care in this province, but we will do it by focusing on getting better results.

* (14:10)

The previous administration took us to record spending levels in their term, that's true. But, Madam Speaker, in the process they grew the organizations that deliver health care at the top not at the front line. And they extended our wait times to record lengths so that we lead the country in people waiting in emergency rooms for services and in record growth in the number of people who simply get up and walk out and give up at the hope of even getting health-care services.

Madam Speaker, that's not good enough. We're on the road to recovery in health care and in every other aspect of delivering government to the people of Manitoba.

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

Ms. Marcelino: This government will not acknowledge the damage they are causing. That's because we have an out-of-touch Premier who is more interested in taking pay increases for himself and jetting off to Costa Rica than actually working for Manitobans.

Will the Premier acknowledge that stopping and delaying critical and strategic infrastructure projects will cause substantial costs and economic harm down the road?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the incredible mismanagement of the previous administration has its costs, nor are they more evident, than in respect of Manitoba Hydro, where this week alone we learned that the costs of the mismanagement of the previous administration are added to by over \$2 billion, an unbelievable sum. And we're very concerned about that, and trying to undo the damage of the previous administration is an onerous challenge, but one we undertake with enthusiasm.

So, Madam Speaker, I say to the member opposite, the failed plan that the NDP foisted on Manitobans of designing Manitoba Hydro for Americans to benefit from it at the expense of Manitobans is one that they should be ashamed of and should apologize for, because it is driving hydro rates up and is going to hurt our economic growth potential as we move forward.

We'll do everything we can to address the challenges of making Manitoba Hydro work, not for Americans, as the NDP pursued, Madam Speaker, but for Manitobans, the real owners of Manitoba Hydro.

Manitobans Receiving Health Care in the US Request to Table the Altru Agreement

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, the story of Robin Milne has transfixed and touched people from across this province. Unconscious, at death's door and waiting for over an hour and a half for transportation to Winnipeg, Robin's doctor ordered him to be transferred immediately to receive life-saving treatment in the United States.

But this government has since left him and his family in the lurch by refusing to cover their massive costs incurred from the medical bills.

This government claims the 'altruist' agreement excludes cases like Mr. Milne's: Will the minister table the complete copy of this agreement in the House today?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The member will know that, under The Health Services Insurance Act, ministers of Health—and it was true for the previous ministers of Health under the NDP—are legally not able to direct payment under The Health Services Insurance Act.

However, there is significant concern around the Altru agreement and confusion that's been caused over the last many years.

I did, recently, I will inform the House, have the opportunity to be in Roseau, Minnesota to meet with representatives of Altru and LifeCare to have discussions about the agreement, and those discussions will continue, Madam Speaker.

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

Purchase of General Liability Insurance

Mr. Wiebe: In fact, Madam Speaker, this government has refused to release the complete text of the Altru agreement, even when a freedom of information request was submitted by local officials.

Instead, this minister suggested citizens like Mr. Milne simply—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —buy private insurance to cover the possibility of a heart attack or other health ailment that may require transfer to the US.

This shameless abdication of responsibility by this government—and it's also incompetent, because companies like Great-West Life and Blue Cross don't even offer insurance of this kind.

Would the minister share with this House where Manitobans in southeastern Manitoba, today, are expected to purchase such general liability insurance?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member will know that for 17 years under the NDP they never released the Altru agreement, and he'll know

the reasons why they never released the Altru agreement.

I was pleased, though, to meet with representatives of Altru and LifeCare in Roseau, Minnesota, to discuss the operation of the contract and whether or not the contract is actually being applied the way it was intended to.

While I don't like to speak specifically about individual cases in the House, I can advise, according to my discussions with Altru, that there are no outstanding hospital and medical bills for Mr. Milne.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's clear, and the minister has now stated, that the reciprocal agreement is broken for those people in southeastern Manitoba.

But instead of being transparent with Manitobans, this minister thinks there should be, quote, more checks and balances in the system. And he doesn't even think that procedures such as births should be covered by the agreement.

The minister seems to think that a birth is always a planned procedure. And, the day after International Women's Day, I find that to be, frankly, insulting.

It is really—is it really the minister's position that if a woman goes into labour near Sprague and is transferred to US facility for life-saving treatment, that she should have to pay out of pocket for that treatment?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, that is simply not true.

And the member opposite knows that for 17 years, the previous government never released the Altru agreement. He knows why. When I met with representatives of Altru and LifeCare in Roseau, Minnesota, they'd never had a minister of Health come and visit them, despite the—all the problems that happened under the agreement.

As I've indicated, as a result of the discussions that I was able to have, very respectful discussions with Altru in Roseau recently, there are no longer any hospital and medical bills for Mr. Milne, Madam Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

**Medical Expenses Case Concern
Request for Meeting with Health Minister**

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): The stress of recovering from a major heart attack compounded by crippling medical bills has been wearing down Mr. Milne and his family for months.

It's, quite frankly—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Wiebe: — a strain unimaginable for many of us.

Mr. Milne has written to the minister. He dutifully shared all of his medical files with his office months ago. And he requested a simple face-to-face meeting with this minister.

In the national and international media that followed this story, the Health Minister indicated he was eager to connect with Mr. Milne.

Mr. Milne travelled all the way here today to be with us in the gallery.

Will the minister himself agree to meet, immediately following question period, with Mr. Milne to resolve this case?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I spent a fair bit of time in opposition. I know what it's like to have a question already written and you want it delivered.

As I indicated to the member opposite, I went to Roseau, Minnesota. I met with the representatives of Altru and LifeCare. We had a discussion, not simply about Mr. Milne's case, but about the agreement generally and other cases under it.

As a result of those discussions, I'm advised from Altru and advised from LifeCare that there are no longer any hospital and medical bills for Mr. Milne, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate the answer from the minister opposite, but what I, in fact, asked was whether he was willing to meet with Mr. Milne.

And so I ask that question again: Will he meet with Mr. Milne?

The minister's actions in this case have just put an 'unamount'—unimaginable amount of uncertainty and fear for the people who live in that region.

I table correspondence here today, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker, letters to this minister, letters to their local MLA and letters to the government from area councillors. These letters recount how some seniors would rather be left to die rather than be transferred to the US so they won't burden their families with medical bills.

* (14:20)

Will he meet with Mr. Milne, put this case to rest and make sure no one—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I have indicated to the member that I travelled to Minnesota. I met with representatives who had never been met with by an NDP minister, despite the fact that a number of these cases had happened. They've advised me that there are not medical or hospital bills on their side outstanding as a result of those discussions.

And let me say, clearly, that there is no member in this House who has advocated more strongly than the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) to ensure that issues are dealt with, and I give him full credit, Madam Speaker.

**Women's Reproductive Health
Abortifacient Funding Coverage**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): We learned yesterday that even in the face of this government's inaction, local organizations, doctors and interested individuals are taking action on women's reproductive health.

The abortion pill is now available at HSC through the Women's Hospital at an outpatient clinic. But it seems patients will still have to pay for this drug. Surgical abortions are covered by Manitoba health insurance. They are provided in the hospital.

If the Minister of Health will cover the cost of surgical abortions, why will he not cover the cost of the abortion pill?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): As members opposite know full well, our government is waiting for Health Canada's Common Drug Review recommendations.

And I'd also like to point out, Madam Speaker, that putting Manitoba back on track after 17 years of

debt, decay and decline from members opposite, is a full-time, all-hands-on-deck job, and I am pleased to work with our Minister of Health in improving health services for women throughout the province of Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, women's reproductive health is being treated like a political football by this government.

The Minister of Health, the individual that's actually responsible for the issue, refuses to answer any of my questions on the abortion pill and, instead, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), or whoever, has a different minister stand up and also refuse to provide any real answers to Manitoba women.

Manitoba women deserve an answer.

Will the Minister of Health fully cover the abortion pill currently being offered and dispensed at the HSC?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, I'll take no lessons from members opposite on how to stand up for women in the province of Manitoba. It took them nearly a year to decide how they would—how they felt about sexual harassment allegations and several hours behind a closed door caucus meeting to come out and say that they do not support sexual harassment allegations.

So I will not take lessons from members opposite on how to deal with women's issues in the province of Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: That is such an unfortunate and disrespectful response. To be able to publicly talk about something that members opposite have absolutely no clue of the details is so egregious and abominable.

The Premier can't have it both ways, Madam Speaker. He can't say that he stands with women in asserting our—in respecting our rights and, yet refuse to answer basic questions. Either you are for women's rights and all of those rights, however they manifest themselves, and including the right for full control of our reproductive health.

So, again: Will the Minister for Health truly stand and support women's rights and fully cover the abortion pill?

Ms. Squires: In speaking—listening to women throughout the province talk about the issues that are important to them—I just recently returned from north Manitoba, and I had several women say to me that it was the first time that they had a female minister go up to the northern part of our province to talk face to face with the women up there about the concerns facing them.

And another thing that was brought to my attention was how important they are looking for us to pass the Children's Advocate so that we can give the powers to the Children's Advocate to look at issues regarding child exploitation and sexual—give victims support for—victims of sexual assault support.

And so I would ask members opposite, if they're concerned in standing up for women, that they would stop filibustering and support the Children's Advocate bill.

Hanover School Division Small Class Size Funding Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): As trustees from the Brandon School Division have said, they were not the only division left in the dark about this year's small class size funding. The Hanover School Division, like the Brandon School Division, had to approve their budget, quote, conditional upon the continuation of existing provincial funding for the smaller class sizes initiative, because they aren't clear on whether provincial funding is coming to keep class sizes small for kindergarten to grade 3 classes.

Madam Speaker, the government's dragging their feet, and that can impact the services that Manitobans rely on. Families want their kids to get more individual attention for teachers. That's true in Steinbach, Brandon and across the province.

Will the minister tell the House whether he intends to provide funding for the small class sizes initiative in the Hanover School Division?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Yes, Hanover is aware that we will continue funding for the 20K3 initiative in the coming year—or the year that we're in, I'm sorry, and certainly the coming year as well.

We are very pleased to have put in evaluations for the 20K3 initiative because the previous government had never bothered to study whether it would be effective or not.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, it seems that what we have here is a failure to communicate.

School divisions—*[interjection]*—have had to make decisions based on unofficial or unclear messages from the minister regarding government funding.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: The school divisions have a March 15th deadline to announce their budgets, and they're still waiting on the minister to tell them if they will be receiving the small class size money.

Will the minister explain to the House today why he has struggled to clearly communicate with school divisions about provincial funding this year?

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

Clearly, if there is confusion, we will have to re-touch the base again with all the school divisions to make sure that they're very clear. But they have been informed as to our intentions on the 20K3 initiative. I'm sure they would—and they're also participating very avidly in terms of the evaluation of the success of the program, because they too want to know whether the much-ballyhooed NDP initiative on smaller class 'sive' is actually effective.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, we are just days away from the budget deadlines that school divisions in Manitoba have to comply with, and the minister has made this process more complicated and slower than it should be.

You know, the government has not provided school divisions with a clear signal of whether or not provincial funding for the much-ballyhooed NDP small class sizes initiative will continue.

So will the minister set the record straight today? Will he go along with what the evidence shows is a strong program, increasing the amount of contact directly with students, and will this funding exist for all school divisions across the province in the upcoming year?

* (14:30)

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

We're certainly interested in working with all the school divisions in terms of evaluating the success of the 20K3 initiative, and we will certainly be happy to share with this House and the member opposite when the evaluation is complete.

So we look forward to that, and I hope they do too.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Keeyask Dam Cost Overruns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Wednesday it was revealed that building the Keeyask dam is now expected to have a very large cost overrun, additionally, of \$2.2 billion—not only a cost overrun, but apparently a delay of 21 months. This is very troubling news.

Can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) tell us his approach to dealing with the very large cost overrun on the Keeyask dam?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): The member across the way is absolutely right. After 17 years of NDP mismanagement, there is a price that has to be paid, and that price has to be paid today and tomorrow.

We now have a \$2.2 billion cost overrun because the NDP would not send Keeyask to the Public Utilities Board before construction started. They did it halfway through the construction project.

Madam Speaker, yes, we have something in place that is going to address that. It is called Bill 19, the efficiency act for Manitoba. *[interjection]*

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

Manitoba Hydro Debt Projections

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the efficiency act doesn't address the cost overruns.

Madam Speaker, as a result of the increased costs of the Keeyask dam, it is now projected, under the current PC government's watch, there will be a dramatic increase in the debt of Manitoba Hydro before the latest increase in the cost of the Keeyask dam. The debt was projected to increase to \$25 billion in the next three or four years.

Can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or the minister tell us today: What is the latest projection on the increase of Manitoba Hydro's debt, and how is the government planning to deal with the dramatically increased debt of our largest Crown corporation?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): We recognize that some political parties in this House are concerned about the mismanagement that took place under the NDP.

And we know that the NDP had the opportunity to take the Keeyask project and send it to the Public Utilities Board, but chose to do it after the construction project had started.

But even more egregious is Bipole III was not just allowed, it was forbidden to be part of the review.

Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Manitobans and Manitoba Hydro are going to be struggling with a lot of debt. And that is why, today, we believe this is an amazingly good announcement for Manitoba.

Bill 19, The Efficiency Manitoba Act, will start putting our province back on track.

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

Manitoba Hydro Debt Impact on Ratepayers

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the efficiency Manitoba may save some electricity costs, but on days like today when there is a -28° wind chill, having heat in our homes is pretty important. And right now people are already having to make decisions whether to buy food or pay the rent.

What happens when the Premier and his government raise hydro rates to pay for the cost overruns and Manitobans simply can't afford to heat their homes anymore?

Can the Premier tell Manitoba taxpayers today what his plan is to ensure that Manitobans are not carrying their own large debts as a result of the unreasonable rate increases under their watch?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): The member opposite will know that under the previous NDP, the last 17 years of mismanagement, the NDP felt that Manitoba Hydro was their corporation, and the first thing that we did is we

made it very clear that Manitoba Hydro is actually the people's company.

So what we're going to do—and the member is correct that there are going to be submissions to the Public Utilities Board, but what we're going to do, and we'd like to say this to the Liberal Party, we will respect the process, unlike the last 17 years under the NDP, who disrespected the process by sending Keeyask to the Public Utilities Board after the construction started and by not even allowing the Public Utilities Board to even look at the Bipole III.

We will respect the process and allow these issues to go in front of the Public Utilities Board.

Newcomers to Manitoba Skills Training Programs

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): As we've seen in recent months, there is a growing need to provide support for refugees in a variety of ways, including direct employment and labour market programming.

Can the Minister of Education and Training, before someone else in this House takes credit for his positive actions, explain to the House what is currently being done in Manitoba to ensure skills training for refugees and newcomers?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I'm very happy today to announce a partnership with Red River College: a new program that will link newcomers with employment opportunities and allow them to develop the skills they need to succeed in Manitoba's workforce.

The first intake of participants included newcomers from Syria, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. A second intake is planned for September with similar opportunities in Manitoba's construction sector.

We would like to commend Red River College, the Winnipeg Construction Association, Alpha Masonry, Allied Roofing, Eco Wall and Ceilings, and the Immigrant Centre, Manitoba Start and the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations for their vision and partnership in developing this important new program.

This is one of four new programs developed as part of government of Manitoba's \$1.1 million Refugee Employment Development Initiative—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

**Charges Under The Wildlife Act
Release of Information Authorization**

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Young indigenous men, a preponderance of them are offenders with criminal records, are going off shooting guns in the middle of the night. It doesn't make sense.

These were the words of the Premier, as reported in Maclean's magazine on January 26. On January 27, in damage-control mode, the Premier's political staff released the names and home communities of Manitobans charged in 2016 with a certain offence under The Wildlife Act to the media.

Can the Minister of Sustainable Development confirm in this House today that this information, and only this information, about those charged was released to the Premier's political staff by her department?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

The government on this side of the House takes the protection and safety of Manitobans, you know, as a priority. We, in fact, on this side of the House, are certain that Manitobans are protected, unlike the government previously who didn't care about Manitobans and their safety out in the community.

It's deplorable, actually, the fact that you failed and you don't support us in our efforts to protect Manitobans, shame.

Madam Speaker: Order.

I would just like to remind the minister and all members that when responding to questions that they be done through the Chair and do it as a third party manner. Thank you.

The honourable member for Minto, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Swan: The Minister of Sustainable Development talks about safety, but the Premier's political staff released the names and communities of 27 Manitobans charged in 2016 with a certain offence under The Wildlife Act to the media, and this was done just hours after the 'porting' of this Premier's unfortunate comments.

How does giving the Premier political cover count as safety?

* (14:40)

Mrs. Cox: I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

I've been out talking to community members, you know, from Churchill all the way to Dauphin, to the Whiteshell, and I've talked to conservation officers and they tell us that they're proud of the job that we're doing in enforcing unsafe hunting practices.

We've had more conservation officers redirected into those areas where we know that unsafe hunting practices have taken place. We've increased blitzes and aerial surveillance to ensure that Manitobans are safe in their communities. We'll continue to do more than the former government has ever done. In less than a year we've had more charges against unsafe hunting practices than they've had in 17 years.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, the list provided to the media by the Premier's political staff contained the names of 27 Manitobans charged, not convicted, with a wildlife offence.

Now, the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) has denied that she authorized the release of this information. The Minister of Sustainable Development, for reasons I can't understand, won't answer a very clear question.

So the question I have to ask based on the Premier's comments is this: Did the Attorney General or her department advise the Premier that most indigenous people charged were offenders and had criminal records, or was the Premier just making it up?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): And the member is very good at making false assertions about people. He did it to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) when he was his leader, organized a rebellion to try to take him out of power, called him a dictator, called him arrogant, called him incompetent, would spare no words, no adjectives to describe his own colleague, so I expect that he would make similar accusations of me on this side.

But that doesn't make them factual, Madam Speaker. Here are the facts: Two men are dead in the last two years because of night hunting. There have

been bullet holes reported put into houses, and the previous administration, with closed eyes and no attempt whatsoever to address this problem, ignored it and it's been getting worse. Now we have people around the province threatening vigilante behaviour and that's in no one's best interests.

So this government is standing up for the protection of people in this province, standing up for the safety of people in this province. Hunters, as well, deserve to be protected. Residents deserve to be protected. The people of Manitoba deserve to be protected. We'll protect them and won't try to score cheap points and false attacks, Madam Speaker, such as the member opposite chooses to do in this House.

Sustainable Development Round Table Member for Wolseley's Involvement

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, a fairly short opening question to start with today.

I'm wondering if I'm still a member of the Manitoba Round Table on Sustainable Development?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): Okay, thank you—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Cox: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question. I'd also like to congratulate him on his recent marriage and wish him well in that effort.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cox: Yes, I would like to thank the members opposite for that question.

As the member opposite knows that we are a new government and we are a government that looks at listening and listening to all Manitobans, and as part of that effort we are looking at the—that particular board as well as many other boards, and we have made some changes as well.

But, you know, I'd like to thank the member opposite for his participation and, you know, he's always welcome to participate on this side of the House.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

Frequency of Meetings

Mr. Altemeyer: You can appreciate my earlier question as to whether or not I'm a member of the Manitoba round table, because in the annual report, which was provided not long ago I am listed, but, you know, there's a piece of legislation called, you know, Manitoba sustainability act, and under section 4(9) meetings for the Manitoba round table: it shall meet at least three times each year.

Unless I missed a whole lot of emails and unless the other members of the round table I've spoken to missed their emails, there's been no meeting and we're three weeks away from the end of the year.

What is the minister doing when she claims that she's listening to Manitobans and she's not even paying attention to her own legislation?

Mrs. Cox: I'd like to thank the minister opposite for that question, the member opposite.

I'd also like to respond to the member from Minto and indicate to him that the information that was released to the media outlets is information that's routinely collected by conservation officers in the province of Manitoba. I would like to tell you that, you know, under the former government there was no information to release.

You know, we're working hard to ensure that Manitobans are protected and safe in this—on this side of the House. We're proud of the efforts of conservation officers, and we will continue to ensure that Manitobans are protected in this province.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations Funding

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Since 2001, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program has supported stronger neighbourhoods and communities in Manitoba.

(2) Neighbourhoods Alive! uses a community-led development model that partners with neighbourhood renewal corporations to fund projects that aim to revitalize communities and build local capacity.

(3) Neighbourhoods Alive! and the neighbourhood renewal corporations it supports

have played a vital and important role in revitalizing many neighbourhoods in Manitoba through community-driven solutions, including employment and training, education and recreation, safety and crime prevention and housing and physical improvement.

(4) Neighbourhoods Alive! now serves 13 neighbourhood renewal corporations across Manitoba which have developed expertise in engaging with their local residents and determining the priorities of their communities.

(5) The provincial government's previous investments into Neighbourhoods Alive! have been bolstered by community and corporate donations as well as essential support from community volunteers—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Swan:—small businesses and local agencies.

Six—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Go ahead.

Mr. Swan: Late in 2016, the minister responsible for the Neighbourhoods Alive! program said that new funding for initiatives was paused and that the future of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program was being reviewed, bringing hundreds of community projects to a standstill.

(7) Neighbourhood renewal corporations and their communities are concerned this funding freeze is the first step in a slow phase-out of the Neighbourhoods Alive! grant program, which would have severe negative impacts on communities and the families that live in them.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support the Neighbourhoods Alive! program and the communities served by neighbourhood renewal corporations by continuing to provide consistent core funding for existing neighbourhood renewal corporations and enhancing the public funding available for specific projects and initiatives.

This petition is signed by many, many caring Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

* (14:50)

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

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, pursuant to rule 33(8), I'm announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). The title of the resolution is Protecting Health Care for Seniors and Families.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that the private members' resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia. The title of the resolution is Protecting Health Care for Seniors and Families.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): We'd like to continue with Interim Supply this afternoon.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the House will consider resuming debate on second reading of Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, standing in the name of the honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, who has three minutes remaining.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Continuing the few words from yesterday's debate, I would like to put a few statements with regards to our record on education.

Manitoba students and teachers matter to our NDP team. That's why, under our former NDP government, we made strategic, targeted investments in things like breakfast programs and early reading and math supports to support indigenous, refugee and inner-city students succeed in school. We created new supports for students with special needs so that more time and resources can go into helping

the students. We've committed to building new schools in north Winnipeg and in the south end of Brandon and to building more classroom additions to support smaller class sizes.

This Education Minister, unfortunately, has not made any commitment to building new schools in these areas of need. This will only cause problems in the short term and lead to an increased cost in the long term. Students will be hurt by this minister's delays and cuts. We committed to building new shops and science labs so students have access to industry-leading equipment and training so they can get university and college credit while they are still in high school.

With regards to health, if essential services like education aren't safe under this government, neither is a service like health care. This government's cancellation of important health-care projects puts Manitoba families at risk. These include a personal care home in Lac du Bonnet, estimated cost, \$32 million; the Northern Consultation Clinic in Thompson, \$9 million; the St. Vital primary care ACCESS clinic, \$4.7 million; The Pas primary care clinic, \$5.3 million; CancerCare Manitoba facility, \$300 million.

In addition, their shutdown of St. Boniface QuickCare clinic, which was providing important French language health-care services to the community's residents, shows Manitobans where this government's priorities really are, which is taking 20 per cent pay raises and jetting off to Costa Rica for two months.

Now we've learned the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has ordered the WRHA to cut \$83 million from their budget within the span of six weeks. Other cuts the Premier has ordered for the RHAs: Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, \$83 million; Prairie Mountain Health, 70–

Madam Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm glad to be able to put a couple of words on the record in respect of this bill that we're discussing today.

I know that we've talked about it quite often here, and I know that members opposite kind of get a giggle out of it every time we talk about the fact that this Premier, who is, in my mind, has such a sacred responsibility to actually govern on behalf of all of Manitobans. I know that he—they think that it's really, really funny that he's here—he's not here two months

out of the year, and somehow that seems to be acceptable with members opposite.

I can tell members opposite, just in case they are curious, that, you know, everywhere I go, it doesn't matter where I go, when I happen to, you know, meet people and talk to people, actually it's brought up quite a bit how Manitobans don't really appreciate that the individual who is supposed to be governing on their behalf and their families' behalf and their children's behalf, you know, doesn't even see fit to be here, you know, a full 12 months.

As well, I mean, I think that people are even more offended when they've come to learn that the Premier took a 20 per cent pay increase. So here you have individuals in the province of Manitoba that work really hard, that are struggling, sometimes working two or three jobs, making minimum wage, raising their families, going to school on top of these jobs that they have, and this Premier didn't even see fit to raise the minimum wage.

And, you know, I know that when we—the new government took over, we started talking about raising the minimum wage because, of course, October 1st was around the corner, and I think at that time we were even just talking about, even imploring the Premier to raise the minimum wage even just by 50 cents and what that would do for the lives of Manitobans. We haven't even really begun to have the conversation in Manitoba in respect of a living wage.

And so there are a couple of numbers out there in respect of what would be a living wage for Manitoba, and it's anywhere between \$14 to \$16 an hour that would be able to provide individuals with a living wage so that individuals, you know, maybe could have one job and not be forced to work two or three jobs. And, you know, I think it's—we—certainly it's a discussion that we need to start having in this province. But I mean, I'm not even sure if, how we can even begin to have this discussion when we can't even convince the Premier to give people a 50-cent increase. So how do you go from a 50-cent increase to begin talking about a living wage which is so important in the lives of Manitobans?

And, again, I know that, again, members opposite get, think it's, you know, so funny every time we bring up this 20 per cent increase or, you know, just laugh so much every time we bring up the fact that the Premier isn't here two months of the year. I think that what's particularly egregious and offensive about that is the narrative surrounding

the Premier (Mr. Pallister) not being here, or the Premier taking a 20 per cent pay increase. Somehow, the narrative that we use in respect of justifying the Premier being away two months out of the year from a province that he is supposed to be governing on behalf of everybody, the narrative is that somehow he deserves it because he works so hard but the rest of us don't. And, more importantly, individuals that are making minimum wage maybe don't work as hard as him. That's kind of the undercurrent of the narrative, right.

And then again, you know, well, you know, the Premier deserves to have some time to spend with his children. Well, you know what? Everybody wants to spend time with their children. I would personally love to have more time with my children. And I have to acknowledge that, of course, if you're sitting in this space, we are in a privileged space, and, you know, I have perhaps a little bit more opportunity to spend time with my two sons, but imagine the folks, Manitobans, that are working two or three jobs or, you know, students that are working or going to school full-time and working full-time and, you know, rushing in the morning to get their children to daycare, picking up their children with even limited resources that we have, they also deserve to have time with their children. But we don't hear anybody really fighting for these particular individuals' right to spend time with their children.

* (15:00)

And so, you know, I want to put on the record, then, how come it's okay and how can we support and justify the Premier taking two months off to spend time with his children, but we're not committing to or not justifying other Manitobans' opportunities to spend time with their children.

Certainly, there is a double standard, and now is the double standard based in, you know, people's socio-economic status? I would argue that it is. There seems to be this narrative that somehow the Premier's worked harder than everybody else. I don't believe that that's true. I would actually suggest that the Premier works hard as every other Manitoban, and deserves—every other Manitoban deserves the same benefits that the Premier has.

However, the Premier actually has more of a responsibility to actually work harder, in my mind, like, I don't know how the Premier thinks that he has—as the Premier of Manitoba, he has the ability to take two months out of the year and not be here.

Now, I know everybody thinks that's funny. It's not funny, and it's certainly not funny in the lives of Manitobans that are struggling.

And so then, on top of not being here two months of the year, on top of not raising the minimum wage, which really does affect the lives of individuals, so on top of all of that we have a Premier that has added to it cuts—these enormous cuts in a variety of different ways, and, you know, maybe cuts that aren't necessarily going to affect him—I'm not sure. It seems that he lives in a more privileged space than most of us, so I don't know if these cuts are going to really affect him in any substantial way or—certainly, these cuts have already affected Manitobans. And we know that we can imagine—and I would suggest to you that we would anticipate more cuts that are coming.

So, you know, while the Premier's in Costa Rica, in the hot, on the beach, which I'm sure everyone of us would love to be there, while he's there, Manitobans are actually dealing with the consequences of his cuts. And, actually, Manitobans are the ones that are struggling to meet their needs, and Manitobans are the ones that are trying to keep their children and give their children all of the opportunities that maybe they didn't have, or give their children all of the opportunities that they want to be able to give to them.

Unfortunately, our dealing with trying to do those things with very limited means and maybe even more limited means after these cuts—so, while we're all dealing with these cuts, including, I want to point out, you know, cuts to programs like Neighbourhoods Alive! and Community Places, you know, which rely on the funding that they get from the government, which, you know, if you've had the opportunity, you know, to work with or even just to see some of these programs in action, we know that they play a fundamental role in the lives of communities and youth and children and families, and actually that those results are actually exponential. They're exponential when you see how transformative these programs can be in the lives of Manitobans.

And, really, if you understand it or think about it, it's transformative; it has the potential to be transformative inter-generationally. So, when you support these programs that work with families and youth and children, it has real consequences and transformative effects in their lives and in their children's lives. But this government, this

Premier (Mr. Pallister), while in Costa Rica, cut those programs, and—but, I mean, of course, still took his 20 per cent increase.

So, you know, I want to talk a little bit more about some of the cuts, because I know—you know, I don't know if members opposite really kind of understand what this is going to do in the lives of their constituents, and—maybe they do. I mean, I would imagine that probably some of them do. I would imagine that, you know, members opposite, when they see that their boss issued cuts to, like, CancerCare in Winnipeg, they would understand what that's going to do in the lives of families and individuals, because all of us—I would imagine that all of us have had, you know, some family member or friend or extended family who have, unfortunately, dealt with cancer. And, you know, if you've gone through that and you've lived through that, of course I think that it really does change your perspective on life, but certainly you would know and you would hope that you have the best possible services.

And, you know, I'm so proud to be part of a legacy that was so committed and dedicated to having the best services in respect of cancer care for Manitobans. And anybody that's been to that space, that hospital, knows that it is top—it is world-class. In fact, my son's—my youngest son's grandmother had cancer, and so we spent a little bit of time there supporting her, and she really, really did appreciate all of the warmth and expertise and guidance and care that she got at CancerCare Manitoba. And I think that if you ask—if you were to ask the majority of individuals that go and, you know, have to utilize that space, the vast majority of them would say that they appreciate the care that they got there and that it was top line.

So I'm sure some of the members opposite would also know that their boss, you know, have made cuts to personal-care homes in Winnipeg and in Lac du Bonnet. We know that, certainly, these are, you know, very essential services in respect of the health for Manitobans. And we know that, you know, these services, you know, will increase as well, and so instead of investing in it, you know, members opposite boss decided that he was actually going to just cut those, because—I'm not sure why—you know, what makes him think that these are kind of on the chopping block.

And we heard that all the time, that everything was on the table. But I guess in some respects, you

kind of can't imagine that somebody, a premier, would actually make these cuts, but I suppose I'm naive in that respect to think that somebody would make such huge, detrimental cuts in health care—health care—which I know that every single person in this room, every single member in this room heard, when they went door to door, is one of the most important issues to people and one of the most important issues, you know, to families or to adult caregivers of parents, and it is one of the quintessential issues that face Manitoba—Manitobans.

So, on top of the cuts to the personal-care homes and to CancerCare, we have cuts to clinics in The Pas and Thompson. So, I mean, I find that particularly interesting when we know that this Premier, you know, has had not much interest in the North, doesn't even seem to, in some respect, even know that the North is there, except if maybe he's trying to disseminate some information.

But, yes, I mean, I'm not sure if he even knows that the North is there. And when you have the opportunity and the privilege—and I know that people that have travelled to the North understand what a privilege it is to be able to go into those territories. You also know, though, that the issues are so complex and that there are a variety of different needs that the North have that we don't necessarily face here in the city.

So logic would say that because there's these very unique circumstances and issues in the North, that you would actually invest in the North instead of cutting in the North. But this Premier, members opposite boss, while he was in Costa Rica, decided that he was going to cut community clinics in The Pas and Thompson.

And I think that—and, I mean, I don't know why the Health Minister would think—or agree with his boss to do this. I mean, in the same way that the Premier has such a sacred responsibility to govern on behalf of all of Manitobans, I would suggest to the House that each and every minister also has a sacred responsibility to govern in the best way.

* (15:10)

So I'm not really sure why the Minister of Health would just sit by and actually agree and execute, really, this egregious direction from his boss, the Premier, in respect of all these cuts to the health-care system. And of all cuts, why would you cut community clinics in The Pas and Thompson when you understand that there is a correlation

between, you know, ensuring that people's health is taken care of and actually decreasing cost to the overall health-care system. So it just makes no sense to me.

So we know that there's cuts to community clinics in St. Vital and St. Boniface, so again the same thing. Here was the Minister of Health that just sat by and let—and, you know, executed what his boss said. And so, you know, I wonder if, you know, I wonder who's going to be to blame when all of these cuts start to have very detrimental effects on the lives of Manitobans and their families. Like, is it going to be the Premier's fault or is it going to be the Minister of Health's fault, or is it going to be both of their faults? I don't know.

So, you know, I think that it is, it seems to be that this government doesn't kind of quite understand what it means to be in government and what it means to actually govern. And that to govern means to govern on behalf of everyone.

I do want to add some cost to this and some of the cancellation of important health-care projects. So as I said earlier, the personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet, those costs that they're cutting are \$32 million, \$9 million that they're cutting for the clinic in Thompson, \$4.7 million for the cancellation of the St. Vital primary care, \$5.3 million for The Pas primary clinic, and \$300 million for cancer care, for the CancerCare Manitoba facility which, again, I mean, it is literally just mind blowing that you would not invest in our health-care system.

And so on top of that, we see that the Premier, you know, advised or directed the Health Minister to make even more additional cuts. And so now we know that the Health Minister directed, the Health Minister or the Premier, whoever, directed the WRHA to cut an additional \$83 million from their budget. So we know that the Health Minister said \$83 million from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, \$17.5 million to be cut from the Prairie Mountain Health, \$8 million from the Interlake-Eastern Region Health Authority, \$6 million from the Northern Regional Health Authority, and the Southern Health, 11 million. That is a huge amount of money to be able to cut from our health-care system when we know that the needs are so diverse and that there's just so many Manitobans that we need to service.

And again, I want to point out here that, you know, I don't know why the Minister of Health

would actually agree to be, to kind of listen to this misdirection from the Premier, particularly when his boss isn't even in the city and isn't around to be able to take, you know, deal with some of the consequences of this.

So, you know, I would also argue that we know that there's been about, I don't even know, 11 or 14,000 jobs, full-time jobs that have already been lost in Manitoba. And I don't know what we're at, like, maybe, 10 months so far that government has been in power. And so they have clearly indicated not being interested in serving for all Manitobans, in respect of no minimum wage increase, all of these cuts to the health-care system.

And then we can start talking about education and all of the cuts that have been coming for education. And so we know that, again, this government doesn't seem to see the problem or the consequences of cutting or reducing funding for 20 out of 37 school divisions, and, I mean, I think that that's incredibly worrisome, particularly as a mom for somebody who's still in school, and I would imagine that once Manitobans fully understand and fully appreciate the cuts that the Premier has directed the Minister of Education to make on his behalf, which affects their children's future and their children's education, which, I'm sure, everyone in the House would understand is so important that we have the best education system that we can. And here, you know, we always hear the Minister of Education or the Premier talk about, you know, criticizing the NDP for things that they perceive that we did, but I can tell you that the NDP were committed to education, committed to Manitoba children, and invested in the school divisions and partnered with school divisions in order to, you know, deal with many of the education issues that we have to deal with.

We also know that our population is growing, so, you know, to be able to reduce funding for, you know, 20 out of 37 school divisions is going to have quite an impact on the lives of children, particularly as we get more and more children, or people are having more and more children, or we also have newcomers into our communities.

So the Premier's cuts also mean that school boards have to—are forced to actually make do with less and shift tax hikes to property owners. School divisions already have proposals in these tax increases. So the St. James-Assiniboia School Division actually proposed a 5.6 tax increase, or

\$84 more for the average home. Pembina Trails School Division proposed a 3.5 per cent tax increase, or \$75 per home. The Louis Riel School Division proposed a 4.44 per cent tax increase, or \$81 per the average home. Seven Oaks School Division proposed a 5.6 per cent increase, or \$106 more per average home. River East Transcona School Division—3.5 increase, or \$56 per average home.

And then the Winnipeg School Division has proposed three options: One, the first option is a 1.3 per cent increase, or \$40 per average home, with \$5.1 million in budget cuts; or, the second option is a 3.9 per cent increase, or \$52 per average home, with \$1.2 million in budget cuts; or, three, 4.5 increase, which is an average of \$60 per home, with \$1.3 million in program additions.

So those are significant dollars that families and homes are going to have to be—will have to take up the burden now, because of the cuts that have come from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) while in Costa Rica.

And I know that the Premier always talks about how much he values education, and I'm not sure if the two of these are actually in sync with one another. I don't know how you can actually say you support education when you're cutting education.

Or, similarly, I don't know how the Minister of Health can say that he, you know, supports and really does care about the overall health of Manitobans when he is executing his boss's directive of cutting health-care services.

So just those two pieces kind of don't mesh and don't make sense and actually cancel out each other in respect of supposedly really caring about these issues.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And, again, I know that, as a parent, I want my son and all my cousins and my nieces and nephews to have the best education. I know when I would suggest that everybody in this House wants their children, and, actually, I would argue, that probably want all Manitoba children to have the best education that they can have, and certainly cutting dollars to the education system isn't conducive with that.

* (15:20)

So I'm not sure how the Premier or the Minister of Education or the Minister of Health can honestly stand up in this House and say that they care about health, they care about education, or, you know, the

Premier constantly talking about how he cares about women's rights, and yet can't give a simple answer in respect to the abortion pill, in respect of really supporting women's full right to have control over their reproductive health. You can't even get an answer from the Premier in respect of what he wants to—or what he's thinking, or you can't even get an answer from the Minister of Health in respect of the abortion pill.

I do want to put on the record here that the abortion pill is a game changer in women's reproductive health and actually ends up saving the government, you know, dollars in respect of overall health care, because we know that surgical abortions cost, you know, a lot more than the abortion pill for \$350. And I think that it is incumbent on this government and this Premier and this Health Minister, that if they really do believe in women's rights, that they fully support women's right—women and girls' rights, actually, to access the abortion pill.

So I know that the government keeps talking about waiting until the review is done. However, I'm not sure why the government—you know, I don't know—I'm not sure why the Premier would direct the Health Minister, or whatever, to wait. Why would you sit on what you know is coming down the pipe? It's not like the abortion pill isn't going to come to Canada; it is. It's already in BC. Yes, we know that it's at the Health Sciences Centre. And I would suggest to the government—to the Health Minister and to the Premier—to actually look at what BC is doing. And so BC is kind of circumventing, I believe, some of the federal Health criteria in—and allowing pharmacies to dispense the abortion pill, which, I think, is more conducive in respect of allowing greater accessibility to access the abortion pill, but also allows women and girls to take the abortion pill in the privacy of their own home.

So I'm not sure, again, you know, why, you know, we heard the Premier speak yesterday at International Women's Day that he supports women's rights and yada yada yada, but then, you know, on the flip side, can't even ask a simple question—or answer a simple question in respect of whether or not he fully supports women's reproductive rights and will fully fund and make accessible the abortion pill. I'm not sure why it's such a hard question to answer, because if you really do support women's rights, then you support all of women's rights, however uncomfortable it may make people. I'm not sure why women's reproductive health makes people so uncomfortable, but the bottom line is that, you know,

we don't dictate what men can do with their bodies. And I don't know why this government would be a part of a policy or narrative, or however it's going to get executed, that would continue the regulation and marginalization of women's—women and girls' bodies.

Like, again, I cannot stress—either you support women's rights or you don't. You can't have it both ways. You can't support some of women's rights and not others. Like, it's—you're either all in or you're not. And, if you're not, that's fine too. Like, just admit that you don't support women's rights and you don't support women's rights to reproductive health, and that's fine too; that's your prerogative. But don't stand up here and say that you're talking on behalf of all women, Manitoba women and would refuse to even answer a question on abortion and the abortion pill.

So thank you, Deputy Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Colleen Mayer): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): First of all, I'd like to say that the last three, four months has not been easy for me, and I've gone through a testing time, and I, again, deny all the allegations. I'm not a harasser. I did not harass anybody. And I just want to make sure that the House know about it.

And the House also should know that I have impacted the last two leadership races, the first time in the race, although I'm going through, okay. I want to be thankful for my constituents because they told me, we trust you, deny any allegation, don't bow in and stay put; we are with you. I'm thankful for all the constituents. I'm thankful, especially East Indian community, who said, we know from the beginning since you came over here what kind of a person you are. I know I'm a victim of identity politics, and that's why I stand, my head high. I have no shame at all. I did not do anything. I did not say anything. And those people who are more interested in their identity politics, they should think about that. I'm a one-man party, and, therefore, I have a hundred per cent control; nobody is going to tell me what to do.

And so, in the first leadership race, I affected St. Norbert, I affected St. Vital, I affected Richmond, that constituency, Kildonan and also Inkster. We had some setbacks in The Maples, but helped us later. So that was when the member from Minto had to drop. And, similarly, in the second election, nomination, I provided 117 delegates because people trusted me. People still trust me. I provided another delegate

from Kildonan, from Tyndall Park, from Burrows. And 192 delegates I provided. If I am a person of that character, will people trust me? No, they won't trust me. They still trust me, so I'm here with my head high, although lots of damage has been done. My character has been assassinated, and people who don't know, they may not believe it, but I am—let me tell you how I treated my staff.

When I was Housing minister, my deputy minister, she—when she heard this on the news, she said, Mohinder, the people—sorry, I have to—I said my name—she said, people who know you, they trust you, and don't give in. So she wrote a letter to the interim leader.

Let me say it: I am writing to provide a letter of support for—she named my name, but I will say the *[inaudible]* Maples MLA—my name is Mala Sachdeva. I worked with the provincial public service for over 26 years, with 11 of those years served with the office of the Auditor General where I was deputy Auditor General from 2007 to 2011. More recently, I worked as both assistant deputy minister and then the deputy minister for Housing and Community Development until May of 2016.

I worked very closely with the minister, especially in my capacity as deputy minister of Housing. He is a very kind and gentle person and treated me and all his office staff and my staff in the department with the utmost consideration and respect. He was commuted to the concept of a respectful workplace and exemplified that every day.

* (15:30)

I recall a few times where staff in our department had been disrespectful to one of our partner vendors, in one case, and to Manitoba Housing tenants in a second case. When these issues were elevated to myself and to the minister, he was very concerned about our vendor and tenants not being treated fairly by our staff, and he worked with me to expediently resolve both situations and supported me in taking corrective action as the deputy minister.

I believe I am a very good judge of character, and I also always had an open-door policy with my staff and the staff of the minister's office. I assure you there was nothing but positive feedback and respect of—for the minister, both from the deputy minister's office staff and the minister's office staff. The minister promoted a respectable workplace and treated all our staff and clients with extreme respect.

He is committed to social justice and serving Manitobans as a member of the Legislative Assembly.

I am requesting that you share my email with all my members of the NDP caucus and anyone else you see fit. My contact number—she gave phone number—respectfully.

Although I know this does not belong to the—this topic, but I have to start from somewhere, clearly tell the House and share what I think of in this supply bill. We need—sure, I was going to criticize, but I did not have time to get all the notes, because I did not have staff yet. But I will run my own party, although I am a hundred per cent control.

And as—but I will try to give some suggestions, possibly, on the coming budget. Perhaps those can be incorporated. I will start with Seniors' School Tax Rebate. When I got elected first in 2007, I went to people's houses and I talked to them. They said we need a school tax rebate because we want to stay in our houses longer, and we need some kind of help with the tax or we won't be able to do it. *[interjection]*

Yes. No, I brought—I argued with the *[inaudible]* Premier that I'm arguing in the caucus at that time. I was able to convince; they said, okay, we'll do it. So first time, then, they gave up a break, \$235; next time, \$470. I said: No, no, we promised we wanted to make it totally eliminate that school tax for the seniors. So, at the end of caucus and after so much discussion, we were to give \$2,300 school tax rebate, almost 98 per cent of seniors could have been—got that rebate.

But, unfortunately, this government, they did not keep that promise. They said, well, they will keep the same promises that the NDP made, but did not keep the promise. Then they say, okay, we will give \$470, but \$470 we will claw back if it's more than \$40,000 and up to \$63,500. I think it will become zero. *[inaudible]* this isn't that because people are getting some other benefits; they will get less. So that was a clawback. That Seniors' School Tax Rebate is important because we will be saving money some other side, provide other services. And so they're—so it's not really cost; it's some kind of saving that will be balanced out at the end if seniors stay longer in their houses, and that way they don't get that much—they don't get other services, so that will save them money.

The other thing I will suggest too, training for newcomers. I think we should have some budget

over there. When newcomers come immediately, they should be exposed to their trades. Say, a welder, send it to some welding company. Three, four months, government should pay and they should go through that process. They will find their way, and they will become a valuable worker over here.

I suggested that, actually, when I was minister of Housing. I started thinking, I started talking to the department. Let us—we started the system, and so that we can—we don't have to pay, because people are going to be making more money. We don't have to pay the Rent Assist and other funds we normally pay, so that will help. Similarly, I brought other idea I think that we should try in the government; that idea was that people on social assistance, they should—we should encourage them. Sure there are people who are handicapped; they cannot work. We should help them fully, and they should be comfortable.

But there are able-bodied. If those people are on social assistance, we should encourage them—either take some kind of courses and/or they should report to the community centres, perhaps they can cut grass, perhaps they can shovel snow, because many seniors need that help.

So we should encourage them. It should be incentive that way. Similarly, I wouldn't mind if those people are given some kind of funds, that incentive to go to do exercise, go to wellness, and at least they will become part of the productive society.

I think that's important that we—I think government should be thinking in those terms, because if those people get off the—from the welfare, and get some trade or make some amount of money, we have—government have to pay less assistance and other services.

Similarly, I think Community Places Program was a really good program. And I remember a few times in eastern community, they got 60,000 in one gurdwara, 50,000 in other gurdwara. And so they were very happy, because when kids are going on Saturday, Sunday, they play over there. And so that is something. It's not only government spending money. And that way also—those people also those organizations also spending money. So it creates, in a way, an economic environment.

So I think Education Minister is—no, I should not say that, presence or absence, I think I am making a mistake. I would say we need schools in our constituency, because our constituency—boasts—

constituency kind of very—lots of immigrant coming and—so they need new schools, and not only one school. We need one extra school, because on the other side of Pipeline there's another development, and we need a school over there as well. So we need that help.

And other help, I think, in the coming budget—no, no, in the Provincial Nominee Program. I know our minister—our department are so much folks down. Let people come. First, they have a job. Later then they come they will get immediately a job, and therefore that will be better for the—those people, the newcomers.

I think that's wrong idea. No, it should not be that way. Those immigrants will be exploited by the employer. Let me give you the example. When truck drivers were not part of the nominee program, at that time they will come under work permit. They will pay 20,000, 30,000 dollars under the table. So, when they give pay under the table, \$30,000, then, again, when after six months, they can apply. And, when they can apply after six months, then the same company will ask them: Pay us another \$5,000; otherwise, we are not going to give you letter.

I remember at one time when five truck drivers came to me and they were afraid they may not be sent back. And I contacted the department. Through the department, I helped them, too, so they were able to apply.

So I think we should keep in mind this job-letter program; it will create kind of exploitation of the foreign workers. And there's—let me—I think the minister may have gone to BC, Agriculture Minister there and the Education Minister there, Immigration Minister there, and they may have gone to BC. They may have seen so many East Indian farms are there.

*(15:40)

When I came in 1970, there was only one East Indian farm. People came from Punjab. They have a mixed agricultural economy. The same farmer will grow a crop, the same farmer will have also animals, like cows, buffalos, even camel—I can tell you about that experience—and goats. So they are really skilled workers. And those people will come over here and they're developing a farming area, but in Manitoba, those workers are not allowed to come. They are being recruited from the other parts of the world but not from Punjab, India. If those people are recruited, they will come over here, first work over here, learn the culture over here, then they will buy farms. And

that way, we will do well for the rural areas because I think farmer shrink—ownership is shrinking. To expand that ownership, to develop that rural area, we need people who are ambitious, who have funds back there, they have property back there, they will sell their land, they will buy a farm over here.

So I think something is a part of—agriculture minister and immigration minister should think about that. I will be—I am thinking to sit with them and discuss more. And even previously, we thought about it. But I just want to remind that we innovatively think about that, how we can improve things—sure it's always opposition's role is to criticize, but I am here, one-man party, I'm here to give suggestions how we can improve the situation, how we can make a better economy in Manitoba.

I think there's another issue maybe I should address because I don't—won't get that much time. Also it's not fair; they said you can ask a question every two weeks, but if there are 14 MLAs, and whenever you separate from some business, you get proportionate—you are—proportionately your answers. Similarly, every day, of the 14 of the questions we can consider, I should get second day and third day my turn to ask those questions. But so that's—I'm just making the House aware so that I can be a more effective person. I can be more—sorry—I can be a more effective person. But that's a different issue, that different issue, I just want to make the House aware.

So I think more—I forget the idea where I was going, I was pointing out to the Education Minister that we have a problem, it's kind of—it's not fair for the—considering the different religions. And in other religions, people—they have their Ph.D.'s, they have their other degrees, when the priests come over here, so they can be assessed in the nominee program. But in the Sikh religion, people don't—priests don't go to school. They study in the church. Therefore, they—so they cannot be counted their years of education. So therefore, those priests cannot apply to become permanent residents. To make that easy, I think there should be a special category because nobody should be discriminated on the basis of religion. And these priests, because of their way of being prepared and they are not getting the same kind of chance that other priests from the other religions are getting.

So we have to think about that. And, actually, I think the federal government, I think normally it's excused as the federal government who is doing it. But, no, if we propose, as a Manitoba government,

that's the way we want nominee program, that category we want to put it in, that should be there. So there are many issues we can continuously talk about.

And so as I told, I am a one-man party and I don't have a staff yet; therefore, I did not have the capacity to prepare my speech and so I think I will have a chance to speak in future and bring more ideas forward, and I am again, I insist—I stand high with my head and although my character has been assassinated but my community is with me.

I am thankful to the East Indian community, and I am also thankful to many people from the other parties who sympathize with me, who came with me and they said, no, Mohinder, you are not that person. Sorry, again, I used my name. They said you are not that person, and I am really thankful some ministers I got there a response back through the staff that they trust you.

I am thankful to all the members and all the community members, all the other members who sent me emails and in this testing time, that game is just—it was not easy. It is still not easy. I don't know how many years it took me to bring my—only I got elected because of I did not fool around. In the East Indian community, no fool around. I had only—you have your relation with your wife. So I think that way we built it up—my reputation built up and the community trusted me and, unfortunately, identity politics assassinated my character.

And, again, I am thankful to all the members, all the people who supported me; thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak today in the matter of supply for this year, Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, and I want to make some comments and put comments on the record about a variety of budgetary concerns that we certainly have in this House and concerns that our constituents have that get relayed to us as their individual MLAs.

And one of the big concerns that people have out there that they're telling me about and our other members is the fact that the Premier (Mr. Pallister), in only like 11 short months, has managed to actually avoid—he's managed to avoid the traditional honeymoon that new premiers get and new governments get.

He seems to be out of touch with the electorate of Manitoba right now, with the average Manitoban, and the average Manitoban appears, to me, have this

feeling that he's more concerned about himself than the needs of Manitoba. And here's the reasons why I think we're getting responses like that at the moment. For example, he takes a 20 per cent pay increase, as did the whole Cabinet here, at a time when we're—the government themselves are voicing concerns of restraint. They're developing their scenario here for why they have to do huge cuts coming out of the budget on—upcoming budget on April 11. And then he does what is sort of hard for even experienced politicians in this House to understand: he takes off to Costa Rica for months out of the year when he's a new premier.

* (15:50)

It seems like his priorities are not quite sort of set the way a normal politician would look at things. For example, he also—then he forced his cuts on Manitobans. He's cut the CancerCare centre that was being planned. He's cut community clinics, plans to cut community clinics, cuts to personal-care homes, and the fact of the matter is that he is really setting us up, I think, for a substantial restraint program to be initiated when this new budget comes up.

And I—you know, I think back to the government of Gary Filmon; I think back to the government of Sterling Lyon, and this government is starting to look more—in its first, like, six months or so, it was sort of looking like a Gary Filmon government in some respects. In others, it was like spending more than we were. We left with, like, a \$400-million deficit and they somehow managed to torque that one up to a billion, but it started to look more like the government of Sterling Lyon, where he got elected on a platform of acute protracted restraint and he went on to deliver some very substantial cuts; in fact, alienated a good chunk of his own support base.

Very quickly the business community started to desert him because he literally shut down the construction projects in Manitoba—the hydro projects that we were constructing at the time were just shut down. Money had been spent on them—*[interjection]*—well, no, no; Limestone didn't come for a few years after that, but he had started the construction on Conawapa, and I'd been up there and looked at all of these projects and I believe at Conawapa they had some roads cleared and some work—pre-work done.

But the point is he just arbitrarily put a stop on all this construction, and senior citizens' homes, all sorts of government projects that were involved were simply stopped—construction was stopped, some with

just like holes in the ground, and what that did was it had, by 1990—sorry—by 1980, only about three years in, I was being—talking to people that ran construction companies, architects and engineers, and some of them were straight up telling me that, you know, we're not a supporter of the NDP. We're not a supporter of your party, but, you know, we're going to write you a cheque; we're going to write you a donation cheque to your party because while we're Conservatives, we can't afford these guys.

You know, I had an architectural firm with, say 10 employees, or an engineering firm with 10 employees or a construction firm with 10 employees, and now I've got, like, five employees, and I voted for these guys. I voted for these guys and I thought we were going to have, you know, they were going to, quote, fix the finances, and what they've done is they've shut the province down. They've shut the province down and they've put me out of business—they put me out of business.

And the result was that four years later—four years later, for the first time in Manitoba history, they booted the Conservatives out of government, just like that. They came and they were gone in four years, and the people that had given them the money turned on them very quickly when they found what they were really all about. And it seems to me that that is sort of the path—that's the path that they are starting to embark upon.

And, of course, the backbenchers, the new members here, I—you know, I don't fault them because they're not driving this train. They're not—the Minister of Agriculture has more to do with driving the train than they do and they've only been a year here and they're not—they're not really involved in this process, and they're going to be really upset when this thing starts going downhill, out of control, into the bush, and they had nothing to do with it, but then they won't be here anymore—they won't be here anymore. I mean, all they have to do is talk to the old members who were here during the Sterling Lyon years who were washed away after four years.

So, you know, in politics things can change very quickly—very quickly, and certainly they seem to be on the right track. And, you know, the member talks about Lakeside. He's the member for Lakeside, and he's the junior—the junior, because the longest serving MLA in the province was from his constituency, was D.L. Campbell, I believe, 47 and a half years, and then Harry Enns was there 37—he keeps adding those half years in there—but Harry

Enns was 37. In the last 100 years they've had, like, two and a half MLAs in a hundred years.

But even in Lakeside, things can change. If you alienate the public, if you start going on your program of acute, protracted restraint, such as was the case with Sterling Lyon, you might see Lakeside turn to the NDP.

And, you know, people said in Alberta, oh, it could never happen; we got 42 years of Tory government. And then all of a sudden they were unemployed. These Tories were gone. Safe constituencies like Lakeside, after 100 years of Tory government, can flip to the NDP.

So I say never—[interjection] Well, you want to talk about the Louise Bridge, we got lots of time to talk about that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, you know, in politics, things can change rather quickly, and certainly they have in the past, and as we go into the future, you know, we can certainly make those predictions of things. History does repeat itself over time.

Now, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) is too young to remember the Tritschler Report, I'm sure. I'm just waiting for his attention here.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, can you call the member for Lakeside to attention?

And so the member for Lakeside, actually, his former—the former MLA, would well have remembered the Tritschler Report, and I just happen to have the press release that the Conservative government set out December 18, 1979. And you know, it sounds to me like they're headed down the same, old road they were then. What they did was they appointed Justice Tritschler at the time to discover all the bad things that they thought had happened in Hydro. And they blamed the NDP government for increased rates and all these things.

You know, the member for Lakeside just has to read this stuff because it's like history repeating itself. Now, when I read this over yesterday—I don't even have to take the time to read the 450-page Tritschler Report itself, but I know where they're headed. They're headed down the same path that they were then. They're going to set up a similar kind of committee, and we already know—we knew then what the recommendations were going to be; we know what they're going to be this time. And at the end of the day—the end of the day—merely four

years into it, there was a big, big change in the government.

So this government, this Premier (Mr. Pallister), is certainly done it—*[interjection]* Well, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) says, talking about a conclusion. And I mean, all he's got to do is look at the clock. There's 19 minutes left in this speech, so the members should relax, sit down, grab a coffee, and then we're going to be talking about agriculture issues, I'm sure, before the speech is up and some of the issues of the—of agriculture.

We're also—have to be aware that we have flood issues this spring. I mean, there's a lot of issues here that this new government is having to face in very short order. And they've had the first 11 months of relative calm, but, believe me, this is all the calm before the big storm that's coming up. I mean, they've got their big budget on the 11th, they've got all their cuts, they've got all their restructuring, they've got all their privatization issues. And on top of that, guess what they're going to have deal with? A flood, a flood that is probably going to be very close to record limits.

And that is going to really test a lot of the initiatives that we in the last 17 years in government either participated in or initiated ourselves in terms of the flood protection issues. And, you know, history has proven that our expenditures in the floods over the last number of years that we've been the government has been very, very forward-looking in this. If we had not spent the money that we had since the days of the Filmon government on flood protection, we would've had a repeat of the devastation and damage we've had in past floods.

* (16:00)

And so we—you know, we have to go back to, you know, give Duff Roblin full credit when he was premier. And by the way, many people don't know that it was Duff Roblin who brought in the sales tax. You know, the members like to complain about the 1 per cent increase in the sales tax and the \$300 million that they still haven't given back, they're still collecting, still living off of.

But it was Duff Roblin who decided after the 1950—well, he wasn't the premier until 1957, but after the 1950s flood, it was determined that we had to do something about building the floodway. And he, you know, was the premier who brought in a five—the first sales tax in Manitoba. There was no sales tax. But he did what was necessary, brought in

a 5 per cent sales tax to build the floodway, and he took a lot of heat at the time. And in fact, I don't know how much it had to do with Ed Schreyer jumping from third place to government in 1969, but I'm sure it didn't help—didn't hurt Ed Schreyer in his effort to defeat the government, the fact that Duff Roblin brought in that 5 per cent.

But history, at the end of the day, was on Duff Roblin's side, and that floodway has saved us huge, huge amounts of money and expenses that we would have incurred had we not done it, unlike Alberta—unlike Alberta—in the last few years, where the chickens have finally come home to roost there and they had major floods costing huge amounts of money that could have been helped had flood-control projects been initiated in past years, you see?

So we have responded as a government; we've responded to the needs of the—of Manitobans, and we have spent the money where necessary. And, you know, it seems that Mother Nature does have a way of testing us, because no sooner do we build one project, expand another project, and then what we find is that the water's coming from somewhere else this time, right?

So this government is going to have to consider all of this and make those steps—make those steps—that in some cases may be controversial but are necessary for the long-term good of the province and for long-term savings in terms of the damage that would be provided if they don't make these changes. And so we would encourage them to embark on these projects and not simply pull back because they are concerned about balancing the books in a very, very short period of time, because that's not forward thinking. That's not the kind of forward thinking the people expect from the government.

Now, you know, I could make the argument about the interest rates are—being fairly low, that it's a good time to be doing these projects because you can borrow the money at very low rates. And so I would encourage the government to continue spending money on construction projects that are necessary to help Manitobans avert major expenses and disasters in the future. And I think that at the end of the day, they might take a short-term hit on some of this stuff, but at the end of the day, it's going to be seen as the proper way to proceed.

That's not where they seem to be heading. They seem to be looking at the—only what's in front of them, what's maybe six months to a year in front of them, probably looking at the next election, I would

think. Too much of politics these days is about that. You look in the United States and you find that, in the visitations I've had down there, which have been quite a number of the last few years, it seems that as politicians there, they are—it's not a very good job, I don't believe, to be a politician in the United States because you're like a little rat on a treadmill; constantly, constantly, constantly being lobbied for this, lobbied for that and being basically bought by interest groups down there. I mean, it's just a constant battle for fundraising where their campaigns are, as you all know, in the millions of dollars just for little—you know, low-level congressional seats, which I guess are not so low-level, but, I mean, a congressional seat campaign today, in spite of all the redistricting that goes on where they actually gerrymander all these seats into Republican, and into Democratic seats in the 500-, 512-member House, I think, in the United States—do you think about all this.

They gerrymander all these seats, so they've got like half the Republican seats are totally safe, half the Democratic seats are—the other half are all safe for the Democrats. How in the world do they spend a billion dollars? Like—it's like, you know—there's only about 10 seats that are up for a fight, and they spend like a billion dollars apiece; each presidential candidate, on just a few states. California, the Republicans don't even go to the state, you know, and they still manage to spend this money.

I mean, this is just total insanity, and, I mean, I would hope that the Conservatives here are not planning for us to follow down that sort of a route. But you have to wonder with some of the moves they make on public financing issues where they're trying to, you know, roll back public financing to put the fundraising back into the hands of corporations and their corporate friends. And you look at some of the other provinces—I think back to Alberta again—but I think other provinces where they allow basically, I don't know, I don't think it's unlimited money, but certainly huge amounts of money to be raised from private companies to fund their election campaigns.

But this is the—this is what you are starting—the public is starting to see, from this new government: the changing world, because they've had it very—well, I keep talking about the 17 glorious years. I mean, they had a predictability. They had a stability when the NDP had been government. They knew that, you know, five years out we had budgetary projections, right, which have all been eliminated

by this government. There's no five-year budgetary predict—projections out there anymore.

And the Conservatives have—kind of like leading us on this mission and people don't know where we're really headed here. So we're going to see this legislative agenda, and maybe we are going to see a return to the bad old days of unlimited corporate donations to political parties. You know, we're going to see the restraints of Sterling Lyon, and what they—what his government did.

We're going to see the cuts. We're already seeing cuts. I mean, look what the—I'm going to take just a couple of examples here, because I am running out of time and I'm still on page one of my 12 pages of notes. Page one, can you imagine? Like, got a long way to go here. But, you know, in Transcona there is a facility known as Park Manor, and Park Manor, I remember looking back in 2008—so that was, like, almost 10 years ago now. Nine, 10 years ago—but there was a Daryl Reid, the MLA at the time, was showing me the drawing of Park Manor.

An Honourable Member: To get it built?

Mr. Maloway: Yes, let's get it built.

And here we are, like 10 years later, and what have they done? They just shelved—they've shelved it. [*interjection*] Oh, well, yes. Now, let's talk about Lac du Bonnet. I mean, you got to feel—I feel a lot, and we do, we feel a lot for the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko). I mean, it is a seat that we had for many years, and we never understood why we could never get it back, but we are going to get it back now. Like I said, Lakeside is a first priority, but Lac du Bonnet's right behind there.

* (16:10)

Because, you know, you have a member here on the inner sanctum—on the inner sanctum—of the Conservative juggernaut over here, and he is—got a personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet that his residents have been waiting for, and finally, after all this years, these 17 glorious years, they get their chance—they get their chance—to become the government. So now they're—can you imagine what's going through these voters' minds in Lac du Bonnet? They have stuck with this loser party for all these elections, and they win the seat, but they lose the government. And they're planning on getting this beautiful new personal-care home built. Now they win the government, they elect their member, and what happens? He doesn't get in the Cabinet, and to

add insult to injury what do they do? They chop his personal-care home.

You know, like, these projects just don't get dreamed up overnight. There is a need for this care home in Lac du Bonnet, like, how could they not proceed with this? Like, you do the math, the Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield) is paying attention to what I'm saying right now. I mean, here you have a personal-care home that has been planned, has been much anticipated by the people of Lac du Bonnet, is needed by the people of Lac du Bonnet, interest rates are not going to be any lower. Like if you can't do it now, when will you do it? The answer to that is never. It's never going to get done. Okay? *[interjection]* And well—under you it's not going to get done.

So—and there's cuts to community clinics in The Pas, there's cuts in Thompson, there's cuts to community clinics in St. Vital and St. Boniface, the CancerCare centre in Winnipeg. I mean, cancer is just rampant. Everyone knows somebody who has cancer in their families. And so, like, I can't understand at all why they would target the CancerCare centre and refuse to, you know, build that building. I mean it doesn't make sense at all. But this is the kind of attention.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Now, let's deal for a moment about their performance reviews that they contracted with some of their buddies out there in, I think it's KPMG health review. And you know I think Sterling did the same thing if I'm not mistaken. I know that Gary Filmon when he was the Premier, he too ran into problems trying to square the revenues with the expenditures. And what did he do? He went and spent \$4 million. Four million in those days was a lot more than \$4 million today, I can tell you. And he gave a health-care consultant, Connie Curran, the job and of course what do they do? The health-care consultants simply come back and say well let's just cut everything and everything, all right?

And so we've seen this before. They just had a review. This government, in the last few months had this, what, Boston Consulting company—another private company—who I don't think came back and saw any of the projects, and they just simply come back and said no, we have to do a cut.

So really these consulting reviews are nothing more than a justification, an expensive justification

to provide the arguments they need and the justification that they need and want—

An Honourable Member: It's a veil.

Mr. Maloway: A veil, as the member points out, to proceed with the cuts that they were going to do anyway, so they can hang it. They don't have the desire to accept responsibilities themselves so they hire it out to an expensive consulting firm who comes back with the recommendations that they've essentially told them to come back with so they can justify these cuts.

Well, at the end of the day, what did they do? The Connie Curran review—costing I think it was \$4 million—came back and recommended that the nurses be cut. I mean, like, it don't take any genius to figure out that you don't need to spend \$4 million on a study to tell you that your revenues aren't balancing with your expenses. Right?

So, I mean, the fact of the matter here is that now they are committed. Once these recommendations are made, well, the first thing they do is not release the reports, okay. Now I thought there was an indication at the beginning that they were going to release the reports, that was my understanding. Our Health critic, I think, would verify that, that their plan originally—oh yes, sure, we'll let you see, we'll let you see the criteria, we'll let you see the details, we'll let you know who done it and what it cost, right? And then, as we progress further, oh no, whoops, I didn't mean that, we're not going to tell you what it cost, we're not going to tell you the criteria, and we're certainly not going to give you the results. We are going to tell you what the results are of the study and then we're going to implement. And all we're doing, all they've done is they've set themselves up for, you know, running downhill, I guess, here, to oblivion, because once they start heading that way, they are not going to be able to stop—like, once they're committed to this.

And, you see, the Government House Leader probably took some economics courses in his day; I don't know. But the reality is, when you try to start restricting spending on an economy that is slowing down anyway, what you do is you start a spiral; you start a downward spiral to the bottom. And that's what you're going to find, is you're not going to find an economy that was doing well under us, that was expanding: unemployment levels were like the second lowest in the country; the performance of the economy was, like, second best in the whole country; things were working really well. And now you want

to go and ruin what was operating just fine, just fine, before. And—but what you're going to find out, you're going to find out too late, they're going to find out too late and it's going to be too late to stop the slide. *[interjection]*

And, you know, Emerson can be one too, because we did win Emerson in 1973. And I'm going to make a prediction here right now that after Lakeside, after Lac du Bonnet, I think Emerson will be next.

Thank you very much.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Could I have your attention. We have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce you to. We have Casey Leasure and Sarah McLean and eight students from Minnesota State University from Mankato, Minnesota, and they are in Winnipeg for their school spring break. And they are the guests of the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

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

* * *

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I thought for a moment there that the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) was standing up to maybe talk a little bit about personal-care homes in his area and how he's going to get those built. But I see he remains in his seat.

I also wanted to just put on the record that I appreciate having young people here from out of province to hear some of the work that we're doing here and to hear some of the amazing speeches, not least of which from my colleague and the member from Elmwood, which we just heard, which is a great history lesson that I certainly appreciate hearing from and learning from him at all times. So that was very much appreciated, to hear words from him.

Once again, I do note that, once again, there's not a government member who's taking the chance to stand up, put on the record, you know, some information on why the—this particular interim appropriations bill is so important and exactly what priorities they see going forward and wanting to spend money on.

*(16:20)

And, I mean, frankly, I think it speaks, Madam Speaker, to the priorities of this government and to their level of engagement with Manitobans. And, you know, as has been said, I think even by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself, this sort of thing starts at the very top, you know; and I can only imagine, if I was a member of the government caucus and I heard that my leader was, you know, had decided by himself, unanimously, you know, by himself that, you know, he would raise his own wage for himself as Premier, that he would raise the wages of his Cabinet ministers, that this was one of their first priorities as government, they would say, I want to get a raise and make that happen—no consultation with Manitobans. They didn't say to Manitobans, look, I know we're concerned about wages in this province and, you know, we're—we're tightening our belts; we're—I'm trying to think of all the different euphemisms that have been used—all hands on deck, the Premier, I think, has said. Well, apparently all hands on deck does not include himself, it doesn't include his front bench, and it doesn't include ministers of this government.

And that's unfortunate, Madam Speaker. Again, I mean, it's unfortunate for his colleagues and for the members of the government benches who now have their wages frozen, and you know they're certainly tightening their belts. They understand that this is a time to show restraint, or as our caucus has said, solidarity with workers who are feeling the pinch throughout Manitoba.

So they've certainly understood this and they've taken that appropriate step, but the Premier himself and his Cabinet ministers decided, wait; before we do that—wait a minute—before we lock anything in, let's give ourselves a big raise—20 per cent, then we'll lock it in for four years and, boy, tough times, boys, isn't it. Like, we're all in it together; like all of those kind of things.

I guess, maybe, their caucus is still, you know, singing solidarity forever. I don't know. I mean, at some point there's going to be a breaking point, I would imagine, and I'll have an opportunity to talk a little bit more about that, as well, going forward.

But it just does—it does speak, Madam Speaker, to how out of touch this government is, how disconnected I think they are from the reality that certainly my constituents are living. And I would venture to say 99 per cent of Manitobans, you know, they don't hear their voice being reflected in the priorities of this government.

And, you know, that became so crystal clear to me not too long ago when I got a phone call from a constituent. And I spent some time talking with her and, you know, it took a little time for her to open up and sort of, you know, explain to me exactly why she called, but basically what she said to me—she said, you know, I'm—you know, I've got two part-time jobs that I'm working right now. You know, I make a little bit more than minimum wage at one of them and minimum wage at the other, and, you know, I've heard—and I live just a couple blocks or a block away from your constituency office—and she said, you know, I heard that there was potentially changes to the Rent Assist program.

And I said, well, you know, I mean, we're hearing things. We don't know. The government hasn't been clear about what their priorities are. They certainly haven't been up front about what's important to them, but I've heard this as well. And she said I heard that the minimum wage, which I know has been going up every single year, that this year for some reason, it's not going up. And I said well, that part is a hundred per cent true. And she said, well, do you know when it's going up? Like, what's going on? And I said I don't know. To this point we haven't heard anything about this being a priority for this government.

But then what she said to me is—and this is, again, what really grabbed my attention, I think it was actually, if I remember correctly, you know, I mean it hasn't been too bad of a winter, but it was one of these days where I looked out the window of my constituency office and it was just—it was a white-out, it was blowing, it was cold, you know, I'm done with winter—I'm, you know, ready for it to end. I know my constituents are, and she said—this is what she said to me, she said: When I look out my window, you know, is this what my Premier sees? Does he see what I—you know, when he looks out his window, does he see the reality that I'm living with? Does he see what, you know, we're facing and the pressures we're facing in this constituency, in this neighbourhood?

And I—I had to tell her, well, actually, no. Actually, when he looks out his window, I mean, I can't even imagine, but when he looks out his window he seeing the beaches of Costa Rica right now. This was back in January. It was very well known. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) made it very clear to Manitobans that he was gone without contact, any contact at all.

And I said, no, he doesn't, actually—literally, I mean, in the literal sense—does not see your reality right now. He doesn't understand your reality because his reality is a 7,700 square foot hacienda in Costa Rica. His reality is an infinity pool. His reality is, you know, 35 acres of pristine jungle. And I said no, I don't think he knows one lick about what's going on in this neighbourhood and this community, and he certainly doesn't understand the pressures that you're facing, that your family's facing, and he certainly doesn't understand it for the reason that, if he did, he would make real, actual changes and investments in the services and the programs that matter to you and your family.

And so it was disappointing to me, Madam Speaker, and I know the Premier is not of my political party, but, you know, I do think, you know, when I get a phone call at my constituency office, my first, you know, instinct or my first goal is not to slam the other party. I don't do that as a regular—on a regular basis, and certainly don't slam the Premier on a regular basis, because I think he, like everyone else in this Chamber, is supposed to be here for the, you know, the betterment of all Manitobans and for the good of our province.

So it's not my intention to certainly slam him, but when it was put to me so directly, does he understand what we are going through, does he understand the pressures that my family is facing, I had to tell her—I had to tell her—you know, Wellington Crescent home, hacienda in Costa Rica, I can tell you definitively he doesn't understand what you're going through. And I wish he did.

But this particular, you know, opportunity to talk about our budget, which—we haven't seen the budget yet, but we've seen an opportunity to get a sense of where the government's going and for them to ask for the interim appropriations that they're asking for today—gives us an opportunity, and I appreciate that every one of the members—well, almost all the members. I know the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew)—sorry, Fort Garry-Riverview is waiting with bated breath to get up. He—I know he has unlimited time, and I can only imagine what an epic speech—three-day speech maybe that that's going to be.

But, you know, all jokes aside the—honestly, people on this side of the House have had an opportunity to stand up and put these real concerns from their constituents on the table, and yet the members opposite, you know, refuse to do that. They

don't see that as a priority and, you know, the House leader gets up in the—in question period and he says, we have other pieces of legislation to debate. I say, absolutely. Why he called the interim appropriations bill again without having any kind of agreement with House leaders—I know, again, I can't comment on the presence or absence of any members, but I would imagine if the two House leaders wanted to get together, they could probably get together very easily. They could get together, debate and discuss exactly when this particular piece of legislation was coming forward. And we could get on with the business of this place.

I mean, this is one of the strange aspects I have to explain to my constituents sometimes. You know, well we spent, you know, we spent a week talking about interim appropriations and, you know, then we want to get a bill passed to second reading, and we can get that done in an afternoon. So that's sort of the behind-the-scenes, I guess you could say, way of looking at the operations of this place. But, instead, they don't want to get to their, you know, to the bills that they have in front of the House. They want to spend the time listening to our concerns about this interim appropriations bill, and they want to hear, you know, what our concerns are for the budget generally. So I'm happy to put that on the record, as I know many of our members are.

We are disappointed that we are now well into March and we have yet to see a budget. I know it is the tradition of this place to come back to start a session with a budget, with a direction, a clear direction from government on where they're going for the upcoming year, and this is—could not be more important than a year like this where there is so much uncertainty out in the communities that we represent. And I know that I'm not the only one facing this, and I know it's not just the members from this side of the House that are facing this, because these are cuts, these are freezes and these are uncertainties that are being face by all communities across this province.

Now, I know some of the programs that are under the most pressure right now, well, they are, you know, focused more in urban constituencies. So I'm looking around the room. I know there are many members from the government side who have urban constituencies.

* (16:30)

In my case, Madam Speaker, there's a number of my constituents who are impacted by the activities of

Neighbourhoods Alive!, and, for those who do have a Neighbourhoods Alive! program in their community, they can tell you first-hand stories about the impacts that those programs have had at the grassroots, and then I certainly have those myself. You know, in particular, in my neighbourhood, we've seen a rejuvenation of community engagement that, you know, when I first became sort of engaged in my community as a community organizer, we had the—kind of the thread of this movement. We had a few different groups that were doing amazing work, that were kind of doing their own little pockets of work on their own issues, for myself, working on language training, newcomer settlement.

So there was good things that were happening in the community, but we, as residents, were saying, you know, we need something more. We need to bring all of this together, all of these different groups who are trying to work to a better neighbourhood and a safer community. And what we realized was, you know, we had the people; we had the people on the ground doing the work. We had the money at that point from the community groups in terms of community donations. We had that part.

So we had the commitment, the full commitment of the community, and we definitely had the ideas. That was—there's no shortage of great ideas for the community. What we were lacking was community—or was government engagement at that point, and it was government funding that could sort of help all of this blossom and become something real.

So, I mean, it took an immense amount of work, and I don't want to downplay the amount of work that was done at the community level, but it was only when the government grants and the government programming started to come in to sort of amplify this work that we actually saw real change in that community.

So, I mean—and just see the difference, you know, again, as a resident, as somebody who lived there in that community raising my family, I could literally see the difference in my own neighbourhood as to, you know, where people—the level of engagement they had, the concern that they had and the outcome in terms of a better, safer, healthier community. We witness—I witnessed this first-hand.

And yet I sat down with those same groups just yesterday and said, you know, what's on your mind? What's your concern? And they threw their hands up. They said, we don't know. They said, we've been frozen; we've been cut, but we don't know what our

future is going to bring. I said, well, you know, this isn't any way to operate an organization. But I said, you know, I guess you're going to have to wait for the budget.

And here we are, as I said, well into March, well into the beginning of this session with no budget on the table and no answers for these communities. And as I said, I don't want to paint this as a—you know, one side of the House over the other, because, you know, I'm sure they're getting those exact same calls in their constituency offices saying, what about Community Places? How are we going to build infrastructure in our neighbourhoods? What about Neighbourhoods Alive!? What about these programs that support us and actually make a difference in this community? And quite frankly, it is for the government to answer those questions and to be responsible in giving those answers to those communities.

April 11th, of course, has been announced as the budget day. You know, I'm waiting with bated breath. I can't wait. But that's 11 days past the end of the fiscal year. You know, and so this is, again, giving huge anxiety to these communities that operate on a year-to-year funding basis. This is their bread and butter, is getting, you know, secure funding for the upcoming budget year.

And, I mean, they've done everything that they can do, reaching out to great community partners, reaching out to, you know, groups like the Winnipeg Foundation, reaching out to all kinds of non-profits who are willing to support the work that they do. I know the City has stepped up. In our particular area, our councillor has stepped up to support these groups, and yet they don't know what's coming. So they're going to enter a brand new fiscal year with no answers from this government and no assurances.

Well, Madam Speaker, I could continue talking about our wonderful community organizations and the uncertainties that have been impacted by this government's inaction, but I would be remiss if I didn't spend some time talking about health care, and talking about health care specifically in northeast Winnipeg.

I know for a fact that personal-care home projects that were underway in our community, as well as in other parts of the province were blown away. They were taken by absolute surprise by the announcement made by this government. They were taken by surprise for a number of reasons, not least

of which was that this government itself, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself, during the campaign made personal-care homes a centrepiece of the campaign.

And I would—I mean, I've said it many times in this House but I will say it again: In a campaign where all they were trying to do is not trip over their shoelaces to get elected, the one—one of the few things that they could say, or were willing to say, was: Personal-care-home beds is a priority and will be a priority for this government. In fact, the Premier went so far as to say it was a crisis in this province. Agreed. He said that it was something that needed to be acted on immediately. Agreed. And he said, we will build 1,200 personal-care-home beds immediately. Well, that's how I understood it. *[interjection]* But he didn't say that, as the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) correctly points out.

And, you know, I'm just—I love this tack. So, basically, what they did is they went out, they duped all Manitobans—

An Honourable Member: Duped? Strong word.

Mr. Wiebe: And I think that's a parliamentary word, Madam Speaker.

They said 1,200 beds. Now, they attached a number to that, a funding amount, and they attached a timeline to that. Okay so, you know, I asked my constituents, so what did you hear during the campaign? Well, they said, well we heard 1,200 personal-care-home beds. Yes, that's where people's understanding was: That this is a priority, and 1,200 beds; this is crisis; and the Premier says it's going to be done right away. *[interjection]* Well, back up a bit. Back up a bit, as the member for Rossmere correctly saying, back up a bit. Because actually, you got to read between the lines because what they actually said was: We will give money to personal-care-home projects. However, we're only going to give the amount that we laid out in the campaign, and, if you divide that by the 1,200 beds that we promised to build, we're actually only going to give a hundred, and, I think, thirty-three—member for Rossmere?—\$133,000 dollars per bed.

Madam Speaker, \$133,000 per bed. Well, that's something. It's a step.

But, when we went to—back to the communities and said, okay, so you're getting your \$133,000 per bed; when's the project getting built? They said, we're not building anything at \$133,000 per bed. The cost is over \$400,000 per bed, and we're willing to step up, as the communities have done, has—they've

proven they have the ability to do. They've stepped up with their own funding, they've done their own fundraising. They've done their own fundraising. They've done their own work on the ground. They've invested their own money in these projects. In some cases, in Lac du Bonnet, \$5 million has been spent already to get the project ready to be built; \$3 million is on the table.

But at that funding level, it's impossible to build a personal-care-home bed. And the government says, well, I mean, it was done in—

An Honourable Member: Niverville.

Mr. Wiebe: In Niverville. Niverville is an example of a community that can get it done. Well, absolutely.

First of all, the community of Niverville is to be commended for the work that they did. It's a very wealthy community, a very wealthy community that was able to step up. You know, I know it's not question-and-answer period, Madam Speaker, but I'd love to ask the member from Morris, who's chirping over there, if he can tell me how much did the Province put into those per bed, into that project. Can he tell me? *[interjection]* I think he's saying \$190,000 per bed.

* (16:40)

Well, this was a project that was considered exceptional throughout our province in terms of their ability to pay the amount that they did. The community stepped up in an exceptional way, and the best that the community could do was to get it down to \$190,000 per bed. Now, I ask that member from Morris, that if he could get \$190,000 per bed in one of the wealthier communities in our province, in an exceptional set of circumstances, how he expects the people from Transcona to get it down to \$130,000 per bed. I can tell him—and I'll answer that question for him because I've talked to the community over there, they've thrown their hands up, they're walking away and they're saying it—

Madam Speaker: I'm having great difficulty hearing debate and I would encourage the member that is debating to put his comments through the Chair, I think that would be a good first move. And then I would encourage all others to please show some courtesy to the member that is speaking and let him get his comments on the record.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Wiebe: Oh thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and through you I once again say to the

member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), to the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), that these communities have said to us that it is impossible; that this government has set a target that's unrealistic. And more importantly maybe is that when this target was given, when this new number was presented to them, no additional support, no other ideas, no new funding model or ways to reach that number were suggested. It was a hard no and these communities are basically throwing their hands up and walking away from the table, taking their money and their great ideas with them.

And where does that leave us? Well, that leaves us, Madam Speaker, in dire need in my neighborhood and so many other communities in our province of new personal-care-home beds. Something that at the very least I think the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) put it very well, you know, they expected, they were electing a new government and this new government said they had one priority, it was build new personal-care-home beds. They thought at the very least they could count on that. They didn't know what they were getting when they elected this government, certainly because it's resulted in a total stall in this great need in our province.

So I can see my time, Madam Speaker, is getting short, but I do appreciate the opportunity to talk about personal-care-home beds. I also would again be remiss if I didn't bring up another project that's very near and dear to my heart, and that is the Concordia health and fitness centre project. And you know, once again, I bring this project up because it's something that I've put a lot of work into, that I've met with the community on. I know they've put in an immense amount of work to get this project to be something that, you know, from all sides of this House should be understood is a need and a quality project to invest in.

And once again, we're, you know, I'm here advocating for projects not even in my constituency, it's in the constituency of the member for Rossmere I believe, it certainly affects the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski), it affects the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma). And I would love to take the Health Minister out and knock on doors one afternoon in my community and Radisson and Transcona and Rossmere, and I bet you if you knocked on 10 doors, nine of those people would say when is that health centre getting built, because this is a project that has been long in the design and the

fundraising and the planning and, you know, and they were ready to go, right.

So we met with them, we said we are ready to build this project; let's get the feds on board, let's work together, right. At that point I think it was still a Conservative government and then a newly elected Liberal government, I said we can work together, I don't care. I don't care what political stripe the other guys are; that's not my job here. My job is to get something built. And so the people—good people of Rossmere probably went to the ballot box and said, you know what, this project is a good project, we know we have support from the member from Concordia, we know we have support for this project from all community members. They said we're going to elect a Conservative government; they—I'm—certainly going to get this built because we are going to have a Conservative MLA and they're going to be the government.

Well, as the member said, the member from Elmwood, said, if you can't build it now, when could you ever build this project? It is as shovel-ready as you can get. The need is there. And this government has, once again, failed in its obligation to address the long-term health needs in our province.

And it's an absolute shame. It is terrible that the communities that we represent are without any kind of information. They are worried. They're concerned. And this government fails to even bring in a budget to give some clarity as to where they are going.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, just on a quick point of order.

Madam Speaker: On a point of order, the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin).

Mr. Martin: The member opposite made a question or made a comment about the Niverville personal-care home. He made a suggestion—or actually more than suggestion. He put in on the record that the government had spent upwards of 180-some thousand dollars for a bed.

I want to clear the record for the member opposite. The government opposite did not put a dime into any beds in Niverville. They paid the operating costs of the facility, but the actual construction of the facility was paid not by government funds. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, the member clearly does not have any point of order. This is just a dispute over the facts. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): You know, our hearts go out to the members opposite when the facts get in the way of a good argument, but, unfortunately, they need to be called to task on this one, Madam Speaker, and that's exactly what our member is doing.

Madam Speaker: I appreciate hearing everybody's comments, but I would indicate that it is a dispute over the facts. It is not a point of order. And points of order should not be used for debate.

* * *

Madam Speaker: I would encourage the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) to continue with his remarks.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, once again, I feel like we've made progress here today. It seems that the member opposite may have revealed their plan to build 1,200 personal-care-home beds—no provincial money into those projects, and they'll just get built. And he's got that all figured out.

Well, I think we've got it clear now. I think the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) and I can go back to the Park Manor Personal Care Home folks and tell them, yes, you know what, pack it up, go home, because there's no provincial money, apparently, on the table, at all. And, if you've just got to do what they did in Niverville, and it'll magically get built, just go ahead and raise all the money yourself—Madam Speaker, that's not a plan, that's not any kind of—that's not a plan. That is no kind of way to build health care in our province. And not only have they done this with personal-care-home beds, not only have they done this with projects such as the Concordia health and fitness centre, but projects that I—surely, every member in this House can come together and see the need for, like CancerCare Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, it boggles the mind that when a group like CancerCare, who has affected so many people's lives, has made a positive difference for so many Manitobans, has a solid project, a solid plan to build CancerCare in this province—and, well, again, we heard what the plan opposite is. It's to walk away from these community groups. It's to say, well, that's

not government's role, to build health care in our province. That's not our job. Just get it built on your own.

Madam Speaker, I think members of this—of my constituency, people throughout Manitoba would be aghast to hear that this member thinks that there shouldn't be any provincial money in personal-care-home beds, in projects like the health and fitness centre and in CancerCare Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, this is a government without a plan. This is a government that thinks cuts and austerity is the way forward. We are in dangerous times if this is the direction our province is headed. And, you know, it's just like the campaign announcement where they said, oh, well, we told you how much money we were giving you for your personal-care-home beds. We told you. We were clear about that.

Well, Madam Speaker, maybe they weren't quite as clear as they thought they were being and maybe Manitobans are just starting to wake up now and just starting to understand exactly where this government is headed. And I can tell you, they don't like it.

Mr. Micklefield: You know, Madam Speaker, we've just heard phrases like, it boggles the mind, and I think that's a very true statement. Clearly, the member opposite's mind is boggled.

These wild assertions are—*[interjection]*. I'm just quoting out words that we all heard in this House. These wild assertions are the lost bamboozlings of somebody who clearly is not in touch with the facts. That's quite unfortunate.

I just want to put on record that—

Madam Speaker: Could I just ask the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield), is he speaking on debate or is this a point of order?

Some Honourable Members: He can do both.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The honourable House Leader, then.

Mr. Micklefield: So as I was saying, Madam Speaker—you know, I'm just going to go back because I kind of feel like they weren't listening—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Micklefield: We've just heard a continuous tirade of wild assertions. Clearly, the lost ramblings of a bamboozled and befuddled—I'm not even sure what to say.

But something that I think we should all be concerned about is where one member asserts this is a plan, when it—what is being asserted as a plan, was never put forward as a plan. So what I want to just put on the record for all of us here today is that what the member from Concordia claims in his own mind to be a plan is, frankly, merely the imaginings of his own making.

So, Madam Speaker, I don't want to belabour this. I don't want to stand up and talk for hours like we've had to endure from members on opposite—the—on the opposite side of the aisle. But I would like to say that if we could endeavour, please—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Micklefield: —to stick to things which are factual, to stick to things which are true, I think that would be a good thing. I think, it boggles the mind, was a true statement, and I think that there are a lot of boggled minds in this room this afternoon. Thankfully, we only have nine minutes left.

But, thankfully, we can go back now and I certainly want to wish the member from Concordia—I want to wish my friends on all sides of the aisle well, but let us recall that as we debate together that we should stick to what is true and what is accurate. And so I wish to thank the members for their attention and—*[interjection]* We'll leave it there for now. But I understand you want to hear more but I think for now we're just going to leave it.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just like to clarify for the record that the honourable Government House Leader had indicated that he was speaking to the motion and I would also caution the member that with some of the language that was being put forward, it came pretty close to some of the language that is indicated as unparliamentary.

So I would urge a caution in that area, and I would also indicate that we only have five minutes left of this afternoon and of this week, and I would really hope that everybody could take these last five minutes and show some respect to the member and use caution with your heckling and the—allow everybody to hear the member that will be speaking next.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I know that we're debating all over the world these days what's truth, what's not, what's facts, what's not facts. I wanted to start by welcoming the members from Minnesota

here and pointing out that one of the relationships that we—one of the relationships we've had for a long time with Minnesota is a reciprocal agreement whereby students in Minnesota can attend post-secondary institutions in Manitoba at domestic rates of tuition, and vice versa, Manitobans can go to post-secondary institutions in Minnesota and pay their domestic rates as well, which is an opportunity for us to learn more about each other. And we've always had a good relationship with Minnesota on matters of the environment as well as education and economic development.

Today, we're debating The Interim Appropriation Act, and I understand that the member from Rossmere, the House Leader is frustrated by the amount of time that's being taken on this. And I simply say to him it's an opportunity for people to put their concerns on the record before the budget comes in in the hopes that the budget will moderate some of the concerns that have been expressed, and those concerns are many.

First and foremost, is striking a budget that will allow Manitobans to continue to have a strong economy in order to provide the revenues that pay for the things that we need, like education, like health care, like services to families, like infrastructure, like the whole gamut of services that Manitobans benefit by including culture and heritage services and things that we do at the community level that makes such a difference.

Smaller projects, like Community Places Program, that makes such a huge difference in the quality of life that people enjoy, because every one of those investments leverages dollars from the community, leverages further community initiatives in terms of volunteerism, and allows them to do things that provide the services that keep people healthy, that keep people out of our post-out of our health-care system that allow them to recreate in the true sense of the word of recreating their lives in such a way that they have strong relationships and the ability to do things together, which creates healthy lifestyles. Which is after all, the role that we want to play in this Legislature, is to support those kinds of quality lifestyles in our communities.

And there's so many things that we can do in Manitoba, and we want to strike a budget that will allow those things to flourish.

So we have to strike the right balance between how much investment we put into our communities

at a time when economic growth is lower than it was before the recession, and at the same time how much we want to protect our core services as well as our services that make a difference in people's lives. Like literacy, for example, like adult education, like those kinds of things that allow vulnerable groups in our society to have access to the protections that they need.

So today I want to put some facts on the record. Recently this week Moody's brought out their opinion on the state of the finances of Manitoba, a credit rating agency not an economic agency, not a growth-oriented agency but a strict credit rating. And they said that Manitoba is in decent shape that the cost of servicing the debt in Manitoba is less than half of what it was over 12, 13 years ago. Less than—significantly less than what it was in 2002 at about six cents on the dollar—actually about five and a half cents on the dollar. And if you can service your debt, your investments in schools, and education, and infrastructure at six cents on the dollar or less—and that is significantly better than what it was in 2002, that is a good place to be as a province of Manitoba. And we are in that place right now.

So there is no need to panic and start cutting everything in the province of Manitoba when your debt-servicing costs are at a historic low. When your debt-servicing costs are at a historic low, that is a signal that you can invest in things that will grow the economy and provide the long-term assets that we need to ensure that not only that seniors—those that came before us—are looked after, but the next generation also gets the opportunities they need to become full citizens, and productive citizens, and contribute to a prosperous future in Manitoba.

And that's the kind of budget we're looking for, and that's why we raised those issues today in The Interim Supply Bill.

We looked for a budget that will strike the ballots and, of course, no matter who's in government you always have to find a way to moderate your expenditures without slashing them and at the same time identify where your strategic priorities are for investment.

We've heard the member from Concordia talk about the need for investment in health care, whether it's personal-care homes, whether it's QuickCare clinics, whether it's prevention programs for chronic disease, all of those things are essential investments and if they're structured properly, they avoid future

costs that will drive up the costs of services in Manitoba even more. So we have to make sure that when we strike this coming budget—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 25 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 9, 2017

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Manitobans Receiving Health Care in the US	
Bill 19–The Efficiency Manitoba Act		Wiebe	590
Schuler	583	Goertzen	591
Bill 20–The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act		Medical Expenses Case Concern	
Schuler	583	Wiebe	592
Bill 213–The Gift of Life Act (Human Tissue Gift Act Amended)		Goertzen	592
Fletcher	583	Women's Reproductive Health	
Bill 214–The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert)		Fontaine	592
Isleifson	584	Squires	592
Ministerial Statements		Hanover School Division	
Response to Refugee Claimants		Kinew	593
Pallister	584	Wishart	593
F. Marcelino	585	Keeyask Dam	
Lamoureux	585	Gerrard	594
Remembering Master Corporal Barr		Schuler	594
Squires	586	Manitoba Hydro	
Swan	586	Gerrard	594
Gerrard	586	Schuler	595
Members' Statements		Manitoba Hydro Debt	
Humanitarian Work in Emerson		Gerrard	595
Graydon	587	Schuler	595
Organizations that Support Refugees		Newcomers to Manitoba	
Fontaine	587	Helwer	595
L'Arche Tova Café		Wishart	595
Yakimoski	588	Charges Under The Wildlife Act	
Provincial Nominee Program		Swan	596
Lamoureux	588	Cox	596
Sex Trafficking		Pallister	596
Teitsma	589	Sustainable Development Round Table	
Oral Questions		Altemeyer	597
Infrastructure Budget		Cox	597
F. Marcelino	589	Petitions	
Pallister	589	Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations Funding	
		Swan	597

ORDERS OF THE DAY
(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Debate on Second Readings

Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017

F. Marcelino	598
Fontaine	599
Saran	604
Maloway	607
Wiebe	612
Selinger	618

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