

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

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

Vol. LXX No. 39 - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, April 13, 2017

ISSN 0542-5492

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, April 13, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Private Bills

First Report

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Vice-Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Private Bills presents the following as its First—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on PRIVATE BILLS presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 12, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Bill (No. 201) – The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act/Loi sur la Journée des animaux d'assistance et de zoothérapie*
- *Bill (No. 214) – The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les personnes disparues (alerte silver)*

Committee Membership

- *HON. MR. FIELDING*
- *MS. FONTAINE*
- *MRS. GUILLEMARD*
- *MR. ISLEIFSON*
- *MS. LAMOUREUX*
- *MS. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *MR. MARCELINO*
- *MR. SMITH*
- *HON. MRS. STEFANSON*
- *MR. SWAN*
- *MR. WHARTON (CHAIRPERSON)*

Your Committee elected Ms. Morley-Lecomte as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following five presentations on Bill (No. 201) – The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act/Loi sur la Journée des animaux d'assistance et de zoothérapie:

Tara Reimer, Private Citizen
Jody Kuik, Private Citizen
Wally Antoniuk, Winnipeg Police
Katie Powell, Save A Dog Network Canada
Dr. Jonas Watson, Private Citizen

Bills Considered and Reported

- *Bill (No. 201) – The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act/Loi sur la Journée des animaux d'assistance et de zoothérapie*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- *Bill (No. 214) – The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les personnes disparues (alerte silver)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Southdale (Mr. Smith), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I'd like to table for the House the Power Smart Annual Provincial Report for the year ended March 31st, 2016.

Madam Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Malala Yousafzai Receives Canadian Citizenship

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage. The required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I rise today to acknowledge a momentous occasion for girls and women from across the globe. Yesterday, activist, author and humanitarian Malala Yousafzai rose to address the Canadian Parliament and officially received the honorary Canadian citizenship bestowed upon her in 2014.

As Manitoba's Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I was honoured to witness this significant moment in our collective history that acknowledges Malala's years of tireless work in the name of girls' education. We are continually awestruck by her courage and filled with hope, knowing this is only the beginning of her extraordinary efforts to make the world a better place.

At just 19 years old, Malala has inspired people around the world with her passion and determination to make sure girls everywhere can access education. When the Taliban tried to silence her, Malala answered their brutality with strength and resolve. We know that this remarkable young woman continues to face down threats and intimidation in her efforts to build a better world for future generations. We applaud and commend her for her unyielding commitment to justice and an unshakable belief in the basic dignity of every girl across the globe.

Madam Speaker, in addition to Malala's personal fortitude, she is supported by a loving father who has

championed her right to seek an education. Her father's support and belief in his daughter's equal rights is also another reason to celebrate this remarkable young woman and her family.

As Malala shared in the house of Parliament yesterday, the age of an individual does not determine whether or not an individual can be a leader. She shared that upon her return to Canada, that she hopes to see more young people take their stand as leaders.

Malala has challenged us, and by reflecting on her accomplishments, we are reminded of the importance of her work to protect the rights and freedoms of all young people and to ensure that they have a chance to fulfill their potential, regardless of their background, their gender or their status.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all Manitobans to mark this momentous occasion with the same courage, strength and commitment to always stand with those who defend our universal human rights.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Yesterday, Malala Yousafzai became the youngest honorary Canadian citizen in our history and joins the ranks of the Dalai Lama and the late Nelson Mandela.

Today, she stands as a beacon for all children's right to an education and a voice for young women who are victims of oppression.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, how excited I was that my colleague was offering a ministerial statement on Malala. I'm not shy to say that I absolutely love her and can rarely watch her speeches without crying.

Malala represents something more than just a brilliant, humble young woman who survived the Taliban. Malala's strong voice, determination, courage, resiliency and, ultimately, her commitment to girls' education, highlights for us all the transformative power of supporting and lifting up girls in every culture across our globe.

When girls are honoured, encouraged, understood as sacred, while unconditionally loved, there is absolutely nothing they can't accomplish or survive.

Malala's young life and, in particular, her relationship with her amazing father, literally and

figuratively manifests equality. Malala is what equality of space and place looks like.

In Malala's own words: I rise up my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot succeed when half of us are held back.

On behalf of our NDP caucus, we honour Malala for her courage, her determination, and support her on her incredible mission to ensure that all children have access to education. Miigwech.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you.

It is a real honour to stand today and congratulate Malala Yousafzai for receiving Canadian honorary citizenship.

Madam Speaker, members of this House already know her story. They know how in 2012 she took a bullet to the head and has since spoken out time and time again about the importance of education for girls.

She is the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and her advocacy has since grown into an international movement.

But, Madam Speaker, what stands out to me the most is how incredibly inspiring this young woman is. She is so strong and she conducts herself with such beauty and confidence.

Yesterday, Malala spoke at Parliament Hill and she said something that really resonated with me, and I hope it resonates with many of you listening here today.

* (13:40)

Malala said: I would like to tell something to the children of Canada, that you don't have to be as old as the very young Prime Minister Trudeau to be a leader.

Madam Speaker, Malala is right. Young people should feel bold. They should feel confident and they should be, as I am, very inspired by Malala.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Infrastructure. The required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Spring Flood Update

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Good afternoon.

Manitoba Infrastructure's Hydrologic Forecast Centre reports overland flooding and tributary flows will continue to subside across much of southern Manitoba.

Flows on the lower Assiniboine River are continuing to rise, with the crest expected today at the Portage Reservoir. Northern areas will continue to see rising waters.

There is a potential for precipitation between April 14th and April 15th that will affect the following basins: the Saskatchewan River, the Carrot River, the Red River area and the Whiteshell lakes area. Precipitation amounts are forecasted to be approximately 15 to 30 millimetres.

Water levels on the Carrot River in Manitoba are influenced by the Carrot River flows and water levels on the Saskatchewan River where the two rivers meet in The Pas region.

A flood warning remains in effect for the Carrot River as there is a very high risk of ice jamming over the weekend.

A flood warning remains in effect for the upper Assiniboine River from the Shellmouth Dam to Holland, the Oak Lake, which is at crest, and on the Souris River.

Temporary flood protection measures are in place along the lower Assiniboine River.

The risk of shoreline ice pileup driven by high winds on Manitoba's major lakes is high for tomorrow.

The water level at James Avenue on Thursday morning is 17.5 feet. With the floodway in operation and flows on the Red River receding, water levels at James Avenue are expected to drop below 17 feet over the Easter long weekend.

The partial ring dike closure at Gretna was removed yesterday, and preparations are under

way to remove the partial ring dike closure at St. Adolphe.

At this time, 330 Manitobans remain evacuated.

With the Easter long weekend upon us, we remind motorists to avoid driving through moving water as the water depth can be unpredictable and the current can push vehicles off the road.

We will continue to respond to issues as they arise and work with our partners across the province to ensure the safety of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to note that I had the pleasure today of presenting the Manitoba Community Emergency Preparedness Awards, recognizing communities with emergency programs meeting or exceeding standards.

The Town of Snow Lake, the Rural Municipality of East St. Paul and the City of Steinbach have demonstrated excellence in developing and maintaining their emergency preparedness programs.

We applaud the efforts of the emergency management teams in these municipalities, with the support of elected leaders who clearly understand the importance of reducing the risk of disaster impacts on their communities through effective emergency preparedness.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): As overland flooding is subsiding in much of southern Manitoba and all major southern rivers are clear of ice, water levels on the Assiniboine and Souris continue to rise.

The Assiniboine and Souris rivers are still expected to crest within the next few days, which means flood warnings remain in place for all areas along the upper area of the river. At Brandon, the river has crested. Pumps are up and running, city crews are working around the clock checking the sites and monitoring the dike system. Thankfully, it doesn't look like anyone will have to be evacuated.

Ice remains an issue on northern rivers and 'tributedtaries,' and there's a risk of ice jamming at the Saskatchewan River near The Pas. Residents living along Lake Manitoba also have been warned that water levels are going to rise over the course of the week.

As it stands, a total of 17 states of emergency have been issued throughout the province, the municipality of St. François Xavier being the latest

one. A total of 332 Manitobans have currently been evacuated.

Our NDP team sends our thoughts to all Manitoba families who've lives continue to be disrupted by flooding.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for his statement and update today.

I note that the peak flow at Portage on the Assiniboine River is expected to be in the range of about 39 to 40,000 cubic feet per second, which is very high flow rate, with probably close to 15,000, going down the Assiniboine River between Portage and Winnipeg. Again, that is a high number, and if substantial rain, could put people at risk.

The flow down the Portage Diversion, I believe, is expected to be about 25,000 cubic feet per second, perhaps slightly less than that if we are—if it doesn't reach the 40,000-total-cubic-feet-per-second level.

It will be of considerable concern to people on Lake Manitoba, and I would certainly ask the minister at some point to give us what the expected level is going to be on Lake Manitoba so people can prepare for that. We hope that with the potential high winds over the weekend that nothing serious happens.

It would also be helpful to know in advance for people on Lake St. Martin, who suffered a lot in the past, what the expected peak maximum is going to be. That often doesn't occur 'til late May or often early June.

So there's still quite a bit to go before we're clear of the floods this year. But we hope for the best, and so far the weather has been helpful. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Valerie Delorme

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Madam Speaker, if I asked my colleagues what the town of Altona and the town of Schladming and Rohrmoos, Austria, have in common, it may appear to be a riddle. However, I'd like to highlight the Special Olympics taking place in Austria, and honour Valerie Delorme as a competitor and a medal winner who resides in Altona.

A few short years ago, Valerie didn't know what snowshoeing was. Four years later and Valerie is a tour de force on Team Canada at the Special Olympics. She was one of seven athletes and three coaches from Manitoba proudly representing us on the international stage.

Only 22 years old, Valerie has accomplished what many fellow competitors will never achieve. In Austria, Valerie won a bronze medal in the 200 snowshoe race and helped her team win the silver medal in the four-by-100-metre snowshoe relay.

As the cliché holds true, there is no I in team. Recognizing that Valerie's—recognizing this, Valerie's parents, friends; coaches Joanne Zahaiko and Sabrina Klassen; the CEO of Special Olympics Manitoba, Jennifer Campbell, and all others who supported Valerie, deserve special recognition today for a job well done.

According to Valerie, Austria was a trip of a lifetime, and I hope that today's recognition in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba will only add to the overall experience.

Valerie, you are a true champion, both in the Olympic venue and as a proud Manitoban. Your dedication to your training, your sport, teammates, hometown, province and country cannot be overstated.

Valerie is accompanied by her grandmother Hilda Kehler and coach Joanne Zahaiko in the gallery today.

I ask all members to join me in a round of congratulations and welcome Valerie today to the Legislature.

Impact of Budget 2017

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): My constituents are incredibly concerned and worried about the impacts of the budget that was introduced just earlier this week. In all honesty, in all my years down here, Madam Speaker, I have not seen this level of response to a government budget in all that time.

The closure of the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre just does not make sense to people. We have to remember that Misericordia used to be a full-fledged hospital. It was downgraded by the previous Conservative government to an urgent-care centre in the 1990s, and now our community is losing the urgent-care centre as well.

This is happening because this government is taking action in the inner city, which is the polar opposite of what they're recommending in other parts.

*(13:50)

In the suburbs they are—there are communities there losing their ERs, their emergency rooms; they're being converted into urgent-care centres. But in the inner city, the urgent-care centre is being closed when the next nearest health facility is just down Sherbrook Street; it's the Health Sciences emergency room. No one can understand how this is fair, no one can understand how this is going to improve wait times in our emergency rooms, and this government needs to be providing better information to my constituents and all Manitobans.

Another serious shortfall in this budget is its very unfair treatment of post-secondary institutions and the students, staff and faculty who work there. For students to not only have the tuition cap removed by this government, but to now lose the post-graduate tax rebate is putting enormous stress on a vulnerable segment of our society who are just getting started in our careers.

And it would not be a Wolseley member statement if I did not mention on the environment. This is the second year in a row where this government has promised action on climate change in their Throne Speech and not even mentioned a word in their budget document.

This government needs to be doing a much better job, and I'm proud to bring the voices of my constituents to the Chamber here today.

Thank you.

Atticus McIlraith

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, today I rise to introduce the House to a community hero. The hero I speak about comes in the form of a young man with a large smile and an even larger heart.

In 2013, Atticus McIlraith heard a man by the name of David Northcott on the radio. He was asking for baby formula. It was an urgent plea. With only 11 tins left on the shelf at Winnipeg Harvest and over 1,600 babies to feed, the need was far greater than the organization could provide for.

Atticus, at 10 years old, looked at his mother and said: No baby should go hungry. Can we do something?

This, Madam Speaker, was the day a community hero was born. The Atticus McIlraith Baby Formula Drive was created and raised \$1,500 through a school fundraiser and other activities. The following year, the drive raised \$10,000, and each subsequent year saw exponential growth as more people heard of the initiative.

To date, Atticus has raised \$40,000 to help feed the babies of Manitoba, and has inspired many other young citizens to do what they can to help those in need. He can often be heard saying: It does not matter how old or young you are, you can make a difference.

It was an honour to meet Atticus last December 9th, when we worked together on a baby formula drive at my constituency office. I have fond memories of discussing quantum physics and perpetual motion in space as we accepted generous donations for a wonderful cause.

Madam Speaker, although I appreciate the lessons learned from the scientific mind of an impressive 13-year-old constituent, the greatest gift was knowing that our future is in good hands because of the heart that leads our next generation.

I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Atticus McIlraith, who is with us today in the gallery, along with his mother Sharon, father Alex, and friends Chris Albi, Kiley Exner, Belinda Squance, Ross Taylor, Marie Gisson, Linda and Barry Thorlakson, David Northcott and Siri Northcott McCaulder and Kelly Martin.

Thank you.

Kevin Manias

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I'd like to pay tribute to my cousin Kevin Manias, son of Adam and Cathy. Kevin was a charismatic person. He was loved by all as he always had a great smile for everyone, even bigger than mine. Even though I was so very young, I knew that he seemed to have that extra sense; he always knew when people needed a spiritual lift.

He was a recent newlywed when he passed away. He was tragically caught in a shoring collapse while his crew was trenching. The men did not want to risk his life further by using the heavy equipment to dig him out; they could not tell which way he was

lying, as the earth had swallowed him. Many took turns holding Kevin's hand and were encouraging him as men ran in from all directions to help hand dig Kevin out.

Women started to gather at my mom's home for updates. It seemed like hours had passed when they finally freed Kevin. He was severely crushed and in great pain. The nurses struggled for hours to stabilize him and prepped him for his medevac. It cruelly started to snow. The medevac airplane circled the airstrip. The grader could not be used in case the plane had a shot to land.

All the women grabbed their brooms while the men readied their boats to take us to St. Mary Island, where our airstrip is located. We were so desperate that we were going to go sweep the runway so that the plane could land.

It was not to be. My cousin, always so thoughtful of others, slipped away before we could mobilize. He must have sensed that we were going to risk our lives by crossing the pitch-black lake to get to the airstrip.

I want to ensure our family's sweetheart, Kevin Manias, is always remembered because it is thanks to him that Manitoba has heavy safety regulations, as our excavation workers must now be provided with steel trench cages when digging.

Our family will never forget our much-loved Kevin.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Easter Celebrations

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, this weekend, approximately 2 billion Christians worldwide will remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter is not only a memorial weekend, but also a celebratory one. In the Easter story, believers find hope in the truth that new life can appear where we least expect it.

The resurrection provides the way for new life to happen daily in the hearts of believers who experience personal renewal and become inspired to serve and work for transformation in others.

The resurrection offers the promise of new life for failed relationships and the hope of redemption for broken people. It brings the empowerment to heal wounds, enable forgiveness and embolden the timid to work for justice.

The resurrection is the promise of a new start for those who have experienced loss. It reminds us that those who despair the most are at times on the brink of the greatest joy.

May this spirit of resurrection fill us with living hope, inspiring us to work to transform our province and improve the lives of those we serve.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests to be introduced here today in our Legislature.

Firstly, to my left, we have Drew Caldwell, the former MLA for Brandon East, and on—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Chairperson: On behalf of all members, we welcome the former member here to the Legislature.

Also, in the public gallery, we have from École Sainte-Agathe 12 grade 4 students under the direction of Nicolas Durand, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin).

Seated in the public gallery we also have 30 grade 3-to-11 home-school students under the direction of Rachelle Aime, and this group is located in the constituencies of the honourable members for Gimli (Mr. Wharton), Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) and Rossmere (Mr. Mickelfield) and the honourable ministers of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler) and Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox).

And also in the public gallery from Warren Collegiate, 40 grade 11 students under the direction of Mrs. Lee Stewart. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

WRHA Budget ER Closures

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier has made deep cuts to our health-care system.

He shut down three ERs in Winnipeg and is closing an urgent-care centre. This comes after he closed a QuickCare clinic without consultation and

cancelled three personal home-care-home projects, pulling the rug out of residents in Lac du Bonnet and north and south Winnipeg. Then, he demanded RHAs cut over \$100 million from their budgets. It is truly a terrible record for such a short period of time. Now we've learned the WRHA estimates it will keep over \$50 million by shutting down ERs.

Why did the Premier order the WRHA to shut ERs to meet his demands for cuts?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question concerning health care and concerning access to health care, of course, which is a major concern for us on this side of the House and was a concern and remains a concern among all Manitobans.

* (14:00)

It was studied extensively, in fact, even by the previous government.

The difference between the previous government and our government is that the previous government was afraid to make the necessary changes, and, Madam Speaker, we have the courage to stand up for Manitobans and for better health care in this province.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Last Friday, the Health Minister announced closure of three ERs and the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

On Monday, the Premier publicly said that he didn't know how much money the government will keep by shutting three ERs. The Premier refuses to reveal the cost of his cuts.

Last Tuesday, there was no mention of these cuts in the budget speech.

Today, we've learned the WRHA told the Premier at the end of March his government could keep \$50 million if it closed three emergency rooms and the urgent-care centre.

Why did the Premier not come clean with the people of Manitoba about the real costs and the real reasons for his decision?

Mr. Pallister: Now, why would the previous administration, or the remnants of it, sitting on the opposite side of the House, not come clean with Manitobans on the real reasons why they failed to

act to improve health care for Manitobans, Madam Speaker, on the real reasons, on the dismay and the horror and the fear they felt at their own political futures that got in the way of helping people not have to wait for six hours in the ER?

Madam Speaker, the waits last year—we want to talk dollar savings—the waits last year resulted in an accumulated number of hours of waiting in Manitoba's—in Winnipeg's ERs of 630,000 hours.

Now, putting a dollar value on that, Madam Speaker, and putting that money back in the hands of Manitobans would be a worthwhile thing, and I hope we'd all agree. That is our aim. Our aim is to provide better emergency services, better care, and sooner, for the people of Manitoba.

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

Ms. Marcelino: This is the time to governing and not blaming from the Premier.

We know that seconds count when someone needs to get to an emergency room. The Premier needs to explain to the people of northeast Winnipeg why he closed Concordia Hospital's ER. He needs to explain to the people of northwest Winnipeg why he's shutting down the Seven Oaks ER. And he needs to explain to the people of south Winnipeg why he is shutting down Victoria hospital's ER.

We now know the real reason: to meet the demands to cut \$100 million from the RHA budgets.

Why did the Premier, in a wrong-headed bid to cut costs, force three ERs and an urgent-care centre to close in Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the members opposite are put in a difficult position not only in the fact that they are now on the opposition side, which is a challenging role, but also in the fact that they are forced to defend the status quo which they themselves created, a status quo which resulted in Manitobans waiting longer, longer for diagnostic testing in many categories than any other Canadians, longer for treatment than any other Canadians, longer in emergency waiting rooms than any other Canadians.

And not only that, Madam Speaker, not only are they defending the worst system in Canada, a broken system, they are also trying to cover up their own fear and their own refusal to improve that system. They are defending a broken system, covering up the fact they refused to fix it. And we now know that

they had the information and were equipped to know that it was a broken system, yet they refused to act.

We will act. We will improve the system for all Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

WRHA ER Closures Impact on Patient Care

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Since the devastating news of widespread ER closures in Winnipeg were announced, the Premier and the Health Minister have dodged questions about how much this major reorganization would cost the health-care system.

Today we find out that, in fact, the Premier and the minister have known since the end of March. The Premier and his minister have ordered the biggest cuts in Manitoba's health-care system in a generation, and yet they refuse to be up front about the details and the impacts to tens of thousands of families and workers.

Why exactly did the Health Minister hide this information from them?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, Madam Speaker, the member refers to hiding information. They had the information over there when they were government. They knew they could change the system for the better. They knew they could reduce wait times. They knew they could improve the quality of care for Manitobans. They knew they could stop Manitobans from having to spend their own money and go to the United States for tests and treatment and procedures. They knew they could save tens of thousands of dollars for Manitobans. They failed to act, and now the member talks about hiding.

The members opposite were hiding because they were concerned about the political consequences. But this Health Minister has the courage to act, and he deserves to be recognized by everyone in this House—everyone in this House. *[inaudible]*

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the Premier seems unwilling to come clean about when and how much he knew about the cost savings.

Front-line workers have been pressing the Premier to explain the costs and the savings that come with these massive cuts. But the only answer that he could muster was, quote, I don't think it's—

that's well defined at this point, end quote, and details need to be, quote, priced out, end quote. Today's revelation actually seems very well defined and, in fact, seems to fit perfectly with the \$83 million in cuts that the Health Minister ordered from the WRHA months ago.

Will the minister just admit that he's closing ERs in Winnipeg only to cut costs and has no idea how this will impact patient care?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): When I read the Peachey report for the first time I certainly got out of it that it was about improving patient care.

Now, the report was commissioned by the NDP. I don't know what their motivation was in commissioning it. The Selinger government commissioned it. Perhaps they commissioned it to save money. I don't know. If the member wants to know if the Peachey report was commissioned to save money, he should lean forward and whisper in the ear of the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger). *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, this minister continues to pick and choose only those parts of expert reports that fit his narrative. The minister has revealed his real motives and which are to find cuts even if they come at the expense of patient care and community health.

Cutting emergency care to community hospitals may satisfy this minister's single-minded pursuit of cuts, but without investment of an equal or greater amount in those ERS, which will now be swamped, patient care will suffer. These cuts have a real impact for so many communities, and families deserve all the facts about the Premier's plan.

Will the minister admit that his government is trying to balance the book—the health-care books on the backs of patients?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I only wish that pouring money into the ER system was the solution to the problem because there wouldn't be a problem anymore. In fact, I asked my department the amount of money that has been poured into the ER system in the last number of years, and they said, over \$100 million, and yet the problem got worse each

and every year. More than \$100 million poured into the health-care system, and yet it got worse.

I assume that that was the reason why the former NDP commissioned the Peachey report—was because money wasn't the solution to the problem. Now the member wants to say that is the only solution to the problem. He may want to speak to the former premier. He might get some insight, Madam Speaker.

Post-Secondary Education Student Support Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): And I'll ask the Education Minister to hold his applause.

Fifty-eight million dollars, that's how much the government is taking from students and recent graduates each year by raising their taxes in this budget. Their legislation will allow tuition fees to rise by thousands of dollars each year, potentially, putting university and college out of reach for some, and they will let course-related fees rise as much as institutions see fit.

* (14:10)

Students are being hit hard: Why is this government targeting students?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question. It'll allow me to put on record an announcement we made earlier today where we put 10 and a half million dollars directly in the hands of students as a grant to help them with the cost of education, an up-front program like what students had asked for here in Manitoba. They wanted the help up front, not down the road somewhere, 20 years later.

So we have done what students ask, and we are helping students in Manitoba get better access to post-secondary education than that government ever did.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Fifty-eight million dollars for students and recent graduates will be lost each year due to this government's tax hike. Student leaders call that a regressive move.

So, yes, instead, the government replaces it with barely \$2 million in new money, and, of course, we

welcome new supports for students, but there should be more to help students.

Madam Speaker, can the minister tell this House: Why has he taken \$58 million away with one hand while only planning to contribute back \$2 million with the other hand?

Mr. Wishart: It's a pleasure to get up to answer this question to continue with some more details of the assistance we have put in place for Manitoba students.

Besides the 10 and a half million dollars of direct grants to help students get access to education, we have changed the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative from \$4 million under that government to \$20 million.

I don't know why the member doesn't like helping students, but he must look at his own motivation here.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Manitoba students would have received over 5 and a half million dollars in the advance portion of the Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate this year alone. That's money in students' pockets while they're still in school and comes out at tax time. That's twice the amount the government has put into bursaries and new monies.

Then you factor in, too, the higher tuition. Then you factor in the higher fees. Then factor in the tax hike that this government plans for students after graduation.

Why is this government undermining supports for students in Manitoba?

Mr. Wishart: I find it beyond credibility that this government, or this ex-government, should talk about a tax cost and tax competitiveness at this point after years of loading on extra costs and deficit after deficit that those same students are going to have to pay off.

I think he really needs to stand back and look at this picture and not just look at his little slice of life.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Support for Municipalities Government Funding Reduction

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

Government supports for municipalities through the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations have been reduced by over \$50 million this year.

I ask the Premier: Has he consulted with AMM or leaders—and leaders in Brandon about his plans to provide less support?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite.

As the members opposite continue on reckless path towards a \$1.7-billion deficit that would put the security of front-line services at risk, we are very pleased that, in a time of fiscal restraint, we're actually continuing to provide significant and appropriate funding support to municipalities.

And I would like to quote Mayor Bowman on his response to this budget, which I quote: I had asked for an indication in this budget that our traditionally strong partnership with the promise of Manitoba would be maintained, and they listened.

So it is a budget to be welcomed.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Elmwood, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Maloway: Well, Madam Speaker, the question was about who she consulted with for these \$50 million in cuts. And, like the consultations on Bill 30 on the ride-share bill where she consulted with no one in the taxi industry, she consulted, evidently, with no one on these cuts.

Last year, the Premier promised that he would maintain increased funding for municipalities. This is what he promised: The funding level will remain as is, he said, or may go higher, not lower. Yet the department of indigenous and municipal affairs has seen its support for municipalities reduced by over \$50 million—that's down, not up, like he said.

I want to ask the Premier: Can he provide a list of those he consulted with before breaking his word?

Ms. Clarke: I'm so proud to stand up and speak about the consultations we've had with municipalities, the most robust consultation in decades.

They actually helped formulate, going forward, the funding model that is brand new to the province of Manitoba. They have endorsed it all the way.

We spent the whole morning this morning with Manitoba municipalities at their conference, and they are very pleased with this budget. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Elmwood, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Maloway: The budget for Indigenous and Municipal Relations removes budget lines this year for Building Manitoba, City of Winnipeg and the transit operating support, instead, putting all of these into one budget line.

Madam Speaker, it's the law in Manitoba that municipalities share in the growth of our province, yet now the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations has been reduced by over \$50-million reduction.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister): How much is he cutting funding that builds our municipalities after he promised—he promised—he would not do so?

Ms. Clarke: Again, I'm so proud to speak on the process that we've had this past year with municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg.

They asked for a fair say previous to the election—

An Honourable Member: Fair share.

Ms. Clarke: Fair share, fair say. They had a fair say, and they are getting a fair share. They are very satisfied, moving forward, what their share is going to be.

Not only that, they've had the opportunity, and will continue to have an opportunity, and have a voice in what happens within the municipalities. That did not happen previously.

Libraries and Cultural Sector Funding Reduction

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The minister complained back in November about the level of funding for arts and culture provided by the previous

government. What she didn't tell Manitobans was that she thought it was too high: \$200,000 less for Manitoba Arts Council, \$100,000 less for libraries across the province, \$700,000 less for cultural organizations.

Why does the minister want to undermine Manitoba's libraries and cultural organizations?

* (14:20)

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I appreciate the question from my critic.

And we were on-set to inherit a \$1.7-billion deficit. Members opposite had left our—all of our industries suffering with a debt and the deficit from this previous administration.

Our government made \$68 million worth of strategic, targeted investments to grow the culture industry, and we're very proud of that.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, funding for cultural organizations and the Manitoba Arts Council makes a massive difference to groups all across the province. The folk, music, art festival in Brandon will be hit. Festival du Voyageur will be hit. National Ukrainian Festival in Dauphin will be hit.

Why is this minister slashing funds to festivals and celebrations which make this province a cultural beacon?

Ms. Squires: Our government values the culture sector. In fact, it contributes 3 per cent to the provincial GDP and employs about 22,000 people in our province. And that is why we are committed to growing the creative economy.

Last month, I launched the first cultural review since 1992 in the province to find out how to grow the creative economy so we can sink more money into the targeted investments that will help grow this vital sector that is so important to our economy. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lindsey: We know what the minister's return-on-investment test means: less money for cultural organizations, cuts to the Arts Council, cuts to libraries, another short-sighted move on the part of

government which can't see the true benefits of investments in literary and the arts.

Which arts groups called for these cuts, Madam Speaker, or did the minister bother to talk to them at all?

Ms. Squires: I'm happy to rise to speak to some of the misinformation that member opposite puts on the record.

In 1997, our government introduced a Film and Video Production Tax Credit, which took a \$17-million industry into—this year, was a \$127-million industry. That is what we're going to do, continue to make targeted, strategic investments to help grow the creative economy. Thank you.

Mississippi Airways Impact of Airline Closure

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Hopefully, my member's statement resonated with this government. Another key message was the fact that all our northern airports are critical to each and every one of my people.

As the first leader from a remote northern community, can either the Minister of Infrastructure or the minister of indigenous affairs please tell us how many First Nation communities here in Manitoba own and operate 100 per cent of their own airline? And if the minister knows the names of those owner-operators, please state them for the record.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, in the interests of answering a question, I believe it's one, and it's called Mississippi airlines. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Klassen: Mississippi Airways is one of the oldest and most professional air services in northern Manitoba. It has been operating from its base for over 30 years. It is Manitoba's only First Nations-owned airline.

Had this government consulted with this stakeholder, they would've learned those facts. And I quote: It will also allow the land to be used for other purposes to improve the economy of Manitoba's North.

This is a slap in the face; as if the First Nations business hadn't already been doing that in the first place.

Can the minister state for the record which airport this prosperous First Nation-owned airline operates out of?

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

And let's review again: Brandon, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton—I can go on and on—they all have one airport. Mississippi airlines is definitely able to use Clearwater Bay airport in The Pas.

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

Ms. Klassen: This prosperous First Nation-owned airline has been ordered to get off the property of the Grace Lake Airport. They have been left to try to relocate their base of operations, and they were only given two short months to clear out.

I'd like to table the letter given to Mississippi air.

Medevac'd people will now have to endure losing precious moments, precious time, by having to travel farther to get to a Lifeflight.

Can the minister explain what kind of signal this sends to my people, to my First Nation entrepreneurs and to my First Nation ventures? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: I thank the member for that question.

The Clearwater airport is longer, it is paved, it is in much better condition, and it is operated by the Town of The Pas in the RM of Kelsey. And we certainly welcome the additional use that it will see. Rather than having two airports in a very small community, it will enable the community-owned airport to continue to exist.

Post-Secondary Education Low-Income Student Supports

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, Budget 2017 makes record investments in our post-secondary and training system, ensuring that thousands of students across Manitoba can pursue post-secondary education that leads to a rewarding career in our province.

Can the Minister of Education and Training inform the House of how Budget 2017 increases access to post-secondary education for low-income students?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question.

Earlier today, I was pleased to announce 10 and a half million dollars in funding for a new grant for low-income students in Manitoba that will provide up-front financial assistance directly to the students who need it most.

Students who qualify for the maximum benefit will receive up to \$5,000 in non-repayable grants from federal and provincial student assistance programs, enough to cover the cost of undergraduate tuition and books in any given year.

Overall, Budget 2017 enables more than \$35 million in direct and non-repayable support for Manitoba students. Our government is focused on reducing barriers for post-secondary education and ensuring university—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Privatization of Air Ambulance Services Impact on Northern Manitoba

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The government is cutting investments in roads and infrastructure, including the Grace Lake Airport, at a time when they're also cutting funding for the Northern Patient Transfer Program.

We've also learned that the government is looking into privatizing the Province's Air Services branch, which is responsible for air ambulances.

Can the Minister for Infrastructure explain how privatization and reduced infrastructure investments are going to improve access to health care for northern Manitobans?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, as I have previously explained, there are two—currently two airports in The Pas—a small community to have that is certainly unique all across Canada.

I should also add that the previous government was advised to close Grace Lake Airport a number of years ago, but they failed to do that. They didn't have the courage to look after Manitoba taxpayers' best needs and the community of The Pas's best needs.

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

Indigenous Communities Government's Duty to Consult

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The Pallister government has still not provided any plan to address their duty to consult with indigenous communities a year into their mandate.

They've also offered no clear plan as to how they're going to address the legacy of residential schools and walk the path to reconciliation.

Can the Minister for Indigenous and Municipal Relations tell the House exactly when they will produce a concrete plan to address their duty to consult, as well as a plan to address the legacy of residential schools?

* (14:30)

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite for the question, and truth and reconciliation and the path to reconciliation is definitely a high priority within our department.

And I'm also happy to share with the House today that duty to consult is an ongoing process that will be developed very, very soon. It is being worked in collaboration with all our departments, not individual departments with a different plan with duty to consult. We will operate as one duty to consult that will be for all people.

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

Northern Manitoba Communities Need for Economic Development

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Instead of looking north, this government should be building in the North. I look north and I see economic potential. But, as the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) can attest, I also see mental health crisis, food shortages and disparities that most people who live below the 53rd parallel can't imagine.

Tuesday's budget did little more than mention the North.

When is this government going to provide northerners with a long-term strategy to ensure economic growth and provide families hope for a brighter future and for their children?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite.

I'm really excited about the progress that's been made in the past years in regards to our relationships with communities in the North, First Nations as well as municipalities, and I was even more encouraged meeting with municipalities this morning and taking that message forward that we have to work together, we have to start doing business in a new way.

I'm also encouraged by the gardens that are happening within your own community and Garden Hill, and the Minister of Ag and myself hope to visit those communities. These are models that we're going to build on. There's so much potential and we're going for it. Thank you.

Constant Care Services Impact of Funding Cuts

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Premier's (Mr. Pallister) deep cuts to our health-care system include shutting down three ERs, closing an urgent-care centre and cancelled home-care projects. Now we know that this government is also going to reduce the use of constant care as well.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House how many less patients will receive the constant care they will need, due to their cuts?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, as part of the Peachey report, which was commissioned by the Selinger government, there is also a plan to ensure there's increased enhanced home care. That plan will ensure that 1,200 individuals can move more quickly out of hospitals and into their homes because we know that they, in many cases, in most cases, would rather be in their homes getting that care.

We're excited about the enhanced home-care program; hope the member's also excited about it.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: This government glossed over the fact that their budget is reducing the use of constant care, where a single support-staff worker is assigned to monitor a patient 24 hours a day.

According to the WHRA guidelines, constant care is used for patients at risk of suicide or self harm, impaired patients who may leave the hospital

or interfere with their own treatment, aggressive patients who may harm staff or other patients, and patients who are themselves at risk of physical and sexual assault.

Can the Minister of Health explain which of these patients requires less constant care?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I know she asked it in a serious way; it's a serious question.

Under the Peachey report, which was commissioned by the Selinger government, part of the changes that'll happen are increases to mental-health-care beds at the Victoria hospital, as one example. When I've talked to the WRHA about the vast improvements that we hope to see with the change of the health-care system, they identify a number of areas which is—intend to see improvements, that one of the most critical areas is mental health.

I hope the member will get on board and support that and also recognize that we are moving to improve mental health under the NDP-commissioned Peachey report.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Reducing constant care is simply just a bad idea. The WRHA has been put in a position where they must meet the government's unworkable demands, save money and improve patient outcomes.

Can the Minister of Health explain how reducing the use of constant care, such a critical front-line service, will improve outcomes for the most needed and vulnerable of patients?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Under the NDP-commissioned Peachey report, there are a number of different areas that are going to improve the fortunes for those who are dealing with mental health. I've already mentioned the 50 additional beds that'll be going into the Victoria hospital, but there's also a plan to strengthen Alzheimer's care at Riverview, for example. There is a plan to ensure that at Deer Lodge there is more support for those who are dealing with issues around mental health.

I hope that the member will embrace the Selinger government's Peachey report because I do believe it's going to improve care across the system,

and I'm sure that she wants that result as well, Madam Speaker.

Treaty Land Entitlements Urban Economic Zones

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Our government is committed to economic development and sees great opportunity with Manitoba's First Nations.

The minister, along with other partners, made an important announcement regarding the Treaty Land Entitlement process.

Can the Minister for Indigenous and Municipal Relations please update the House on her work in this important area?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank my colleague for such a great question in a time where our government is making great strides in partnerships across the province.

Our government is committed to working positively and respectfully with our First Nations, and we support economic opportunities for indigenous people.

Our 2017 budget speech highlighted our strong commitment to the Treaty Land Entitlement process as well as the development of urban Aboriginal economic development zones. And we are proud that during our first year in office three new zones were created in Thompson, Winnipeg and Headingley. And there are many more to follow.

We continue to work collaboratively with municipalities and First Nations—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Health Clinic in Burrows Future of Facility

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Several of my constituents work at the health-care clinic on Keewatin and Burrows.

With all of the abrupt decisions happening within our health-care system, will the minister shed some light on what's happening with the health-care clinic on Keewatin and Burrows? Thank you.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I know that this particular member has spoken negatively about the Peachey report and the things that are going to be happening under it.

That's in stark contrast to her leader, who said, when the announcement came, that it was a comprehensive health-care plan that needed to be extended beyond the city of Winnipeg.

But, actually, the former leader, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), said we should actually have trial emergency room closures that should be conducted on a trial basis.

It's like the three bears. One says it's too hot. One says it's too cold. One says it's just right. Three members, three positions, typical Liberals, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): On a point of order.

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

* (14:40)

Ms. Klassen: When my colleague, the member from St. Johns, was asking her questions, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) stated, and I quote: Let them die on a doorstep.

And I was very shocked to hear that. And I would expect an apology for the people that we represent in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that I did not hear any comments at all. But I would also indicate that because of the seriousness of the point of order being raised by the member, I will take it under advisement to pursue Hansard and come back to the House.

PETITIONS

Taxi Industry Regulation

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service for all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, to continue.

Mr. Marcelino: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will continue.

The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

The—(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

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

Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize how important it is to provide young people with quality learning spaces to succeed in school.

(2) Sport, recreation and the spaces to engage in them are critical to the health and welfare of all students.

(3) All forms of educational infrastructure, including gymnasiums and recreation centres in general, represent an incredible value-for-money investment, whereby the return is improved physical and psychological health and wellness.

(4) Kelvin High School is one of the largest high schools in the province, with over 1,200 students.

(5) Kelvin High School spent several years raising almost \$1.2 million towards the construction of a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

(6) Some Kelvin students currently have to pay to use outside facilities to obtain their mandatory physical education credit.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for the Kelvin gym and wellness centre for political reasons, despite the extensive community support, fund-raising and engagement.

(8) It is wasteful and disrespectful to the dedicated efforts of students, staff and the community in general to simply lay their goals aside without consultation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the need for excellent recreation facilities in all Manitoba schools, to reverse this regressive cut and to provide Kelvin High School with the funding necessary to complete a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

Signed by Emily Cook, Catriona Swan, Giuliana Povoledo and many other Manitobans.

Madam Chairperson: Before we proceed with petitions, the honourable member for Emerson.

Point of Order

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Graydon: In response to the point of order by the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen)—

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

Mr. Graydon: The allegations that she made were untrue. I did say that they sent them home in a taxi to die on a doorstep. That's exactly what the NDP government did when they were in power. I did not point at anybody in—I said, the party. That's what it was meant to. She misunderstood, and so I'm not denying that I said it. I'm not apologizing for what I said because it was fact.

Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is you've taken this matter under advisement previously.

Madam Speaker: The—I have taken this matter under advisement, and we will pursue it and see what we can determine has been picked up in Hansard, and then we will come back to the House with a ruling on the point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Petitions?

Taxi Industry Regulation

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition are as follows:

The taxi—(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Kelvin High School Gymnasium

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

During the past 20 years a colossal community effort has been put into obtaining a new gymnasium for students at Kelvin High School.

The Kelvin High School gym has been on the Winnipeg School Division one's list of projects for approximately 10 years, and it has slowly worked its way up to the No. 1 priority.

Exercise and sport are a vital part of school activities for students, and these play an important role in developing skills, including discipline, team-work, co-operation and communication.

The current Premier of Manitoba has said that children and grandchildren should not have to pay the price of his austerity budgeting.

The Kelvin High School gym is a desperately needed space for children and youth to get exercise.

* (14:50)

The community has raised more than \$1 million to help pay for the gymnasium so it can be used as a community facility as well as a school facility.

Kelvin High School serves students from many areas of Winnipeg, including central Winnipeg.

Children and youth should not have to pay for the financial problems of the Province.

Improving the physical and mental health of children through exercise and sport can keep children healthy and reduce health-care costs in the long term.

Having young people learn good habits like improving their physical and mental health through exercise can save a lot of money in future health expenditures by helping to keep Manitobans healthy.

This facility will enable members of the community to participate in physical exercise and sports activities in the evening, and since community members have raised money for this component, it will help to save health-care dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse its decision and to provide the remainder of the funding needed to build the new Kelvin High School gymnasium as soon as possible.

Signed by Colin Smith, Ed Matheson, Donna Dawson and many others.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi service is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There was no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the implementation of this bill.

The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what have been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by so many Manitobans.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields, cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city, and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

This petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

St. Boniface QuickCare Clinic

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, and the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) QuickCare clinics support the health-care system by offering important front-line health-care services that help seniors and families.

(2) The six QuickCare clinics in Winnipeg are accessible, located within communities and have extended hours so that families and seniors can access high-quality primary health care quickly and close to home.

(3) QuickCare clinics are staffed by registered nurses and nurse practitioners who are able to diagnose and treat non-urgent-care needs as well as perform procedures and interpret diagnostic tests.

(4) The bilingual St. Boniface QuickCare clinic actively offers an essential health-care service in French to Winnipeg's Franco-Manitoban community.

(5) Having access to bilingual services is essential to ensuring the ongoing vitality of the Franco-Manitoban community.

(6) The provincial government have announced the closing of the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic on January 27, 2017, leaving St. Boniface and St. Vital seniors and families without access to community health care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to both recognize the importance of bilingual health-care services in Manitoba and reverse their decision to close the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Taxi Industry Regulation

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

* (15:00)

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this was signed by Sindy Brar, Sewak S. Brar and Anoop K. Brar and many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Third Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the budget motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Dauphin, who has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I'm very pleased to get up once again and speak very favourably towards the budget. It's a very, very responsible budget brought forward by the Minister of Finance, and he needs to be commended for that.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I think I left off dealing with some of the economic uncertainty that we as Manitobans face, and just some of the good work that is being done by the government.

And I mentioned yesterday, the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), how he's working to improve and grow trade across western Canada and across Canada, and really looking at the development up in northern Manitoba where there's a lot of potential up there. And I really commend the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade for really pushing for that growth up in there.

And for the first time in a long time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture has been part of the—part of this budget and been mentioned, and that's great news for Manitoba producers and great news for Manitoba.

I noticed here that the Budget 2017 increases investment in the enhanced Livestock Growth Strategy. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, livestock is a very, very important part of the Manitoba economy, and it has a lot of potential. And I really have to give the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) a lot of credit for pushing the growth in this industry. That's going to help out a lot of Manitoba communities and the Manitoba economy in general, so.

We also have made significant contribution—or significant commitment to an overall strategic investment—infrastructure investment forecast to reach \$1.7 billion in 2017-18, and which is one of the highest total infrastructure expenditures in Manitoba. So this is all positive news for Manitoba as we go forward.

I know the previous government, you know, they had a way of going into reckless spending and irresponsible management, and, you know, that's a bad thing when you consider the unforeseen risks that are out there. And when you have that big debt and you have that reckless spending, it really does limit your ability to react. And really, that kind of actions by the previous government really were irresponsible. And we're going—our budget is going a long way to change that.

So Madam Speaker, this budget is just common sense. We can't keep spending more than you take in. This budget represents responsible leadership and is reassuring to all Manitobans that we have a government and a minister finally steering this province in the right direction.

This budget is more than a correction or an adjustment. It is a document of hope. And we have everything to rebuild our economy—great people, great resources—and now we have a government with the right approach to fixing our finances, repairing our services and building the economy.

All the things are tied together, but this document is more than just a sign of hope for our economy. Of course, there's again the record investment in infrastructure that's been mentioned, that—the significant increases in both Families and Education budgets, and, really, those are the social commitments that we're making in Manitoba and what's more important than these commitments is our government's commitment to performance and results.

So it's not a matter of, just like the members opposite, to just throw more money at the problem and increase the taxation on Manitobans. This is about getting results for the taxpayers' money and improving—and getting improved outcomes for all Manitoba. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just—in closing, I just want to say that this is really a great budget. It does lay a strong foundation for the rest of—for our kids and our grandkids and it doesn't jeopardize our kids' future, like the previous governments did.

So, with that, I thank you.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I want to talk a little bit about this budget and, really, you know, when we look at what's missing from this budget—let's talk about that for a minute. It looks very similar to the last budget that this government introduced in that it fails miserably, as this government continues to fail miserably, to do anything for the North.

Their last budget did nothing, put no money into the North, made no investments into trying to create jobs for the North. And what do we see in this budget, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker? Again, nothing for the North.

They take little junkets to The Pas and Thompson, Churchill, and claim to be having some sort of Look North summits. While I was unable to attend that Look North summit in The Pas because, of course, they didn't have one in my home community in Flin Flon, I'm told that really it was the sticky-note summit, that the minister didn't bother sticking around to listen because, apparently, maybe he didn't really care, I guess. I don't know. I see that perhaps I shouldn't have said that and I will retract it.

The Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) hopefully listened to what people in the North had to say. I don't know where he's filed his sticky notes that constituted the bulk of his plan, I guess, but really, Churchill has been suffering since before this budget came into being.

Did the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) mention Churchill in this budget? No. Nothing to help the people of Churchill out.

What about the communities that are along the Bay Line that runs from The Pas to Churchill?

What did this government, this minister, this Premier (Mr. Pallister)—what hope did they give to those folks? None. No mention; no investment; no offer to assist in any way, shape or form, just totally ignoring, yet again, people in the North.

Shameful behaviour, really. I mean, they often talk about how important the North is, its vast resources, its people, but that's all it is, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, is talk. And talk, I guess, talk is cheap. That's why this government only invests in talk about the North; they don't really invest in the North.

* (15:10)

What investments has this government made recognizing that two of the largest employers in the North are talking about massive job cuts in the coming years? Have they talked about increasing anything for training opportunities for any of those workers that are going to be displaced? No. No, they failed to mention anything about that.

Did they talk about increasing any funding opportunities for exploration to find the next mine?

No. No, they failed to talk anything about that investment. You know, we—we've seen the government invest in some businesses here in southern Manitoba. While they try and claim they didn't, they get found out that they did. But what have they invested in northern Manitoba? What have they planned to invest in northern Manitoba?

Well, if you ask people that lived in the town of Snow Lake, for example, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, you would find that they have no intention of investing in infrastructure. Well, in fact, they don't even plan to invest in maintaining the infrastructure that they've got. Highway 395, a vital link for people getting to work and from work, a vital link for industry in the North, is left in a state of being unsafe for people to travel on. No mention in the budget about doing anything to maintain that road—Highway 395—no mention whatsoever.

So what's in it for people in the North?

And just, you know, as a bit of an aside, when we look at those people that have good-paying jobs in the North and look at the amount of taxes that come out of the North from those individuals to support this government, while this government refuses to put any money back in to support those hard-working people in the North. Shameful behaviour, really.

You know, we hear about their plans to potentially privatize air ambulances, privatize water bombers, shut down airports that are vital links for people getting to northern communities, threatening the very livelihood of a northern success story. Not only don't they want to invest in new businesses, they try and threaten existing businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mississippi airlines has been in operation for 30 years. This government comes in and says, get off your property; we're shutting it down. Adding to the expense of trying to operate an airline in the North, trying to, I don't know, maybe they're trying to eliminate competition. It's going to make it more expensive for northern patient transfer, as opposed to a, maybe, \$10-to-\$12 taxi ride for people from The Pas. Now it will be an \$80 taxi ride.

People from Pukatawagan, that—which I'm sure many of the members opposite, because they've never actually been in the North, don't realize Pukatawagan is strictly a fly-in community—does have a rail line. This is going to add tremendously to the cost of those people trying to seek medical care.

This is going to add dramatically to the costs of northern patient transfer, at the same time that this government is cutting the budget for northern patient transfer, making sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people in the North will suffer even more with less access to health care.

Shameful behaviour, really, but I guess when you look at the overall plan that this government put forward, where they're shutting down emergency rooms, maybe that's part of the plan. People from the North won't be able to get to those emergency rooms, so there'll be less people there. I certainly hope that that's not what they've got up their sleeves.

You know, it's hard enough living in the North. You don't have access to the same services that you do in the south. And limiting—limiting—people's access in the North is really terrible behaviour, and I would urge this Finance Minister to reconsider ignoring investments in the people of the North.

Let's talk about what this government has done in their budget or talked about in their budget. They've talked about making education less affordable—less affordable for students—less affordable for students whose families have the great misfortune to work for minimum wage.

Oh, did I mention, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that once again, in this budget, this hard-hearted government has refused to even talk about raising the minimum wage, continuing to let hard-working Manitobans all over this province face increasing hardship—increasing hardship—while they sit back on their bags of money and enjoy their big increases they got for being the ministers. They refused to cut them. They're quite happy as long as they're well fed. Doesn't matter that hard-working Manitobans are suffering with no end in sight with the budget that this government has introduced.

They talk about how this budget is going to make life more affordable, and it's just complete 'orwallian'—excuse me—or whatever the word is I'm looking for.

An Honourable Member: Don't use the big words.

Mr. Lindsey: Don't use the big words; you're right. Stick to the little ones.

It's just doublespeak, because it's not designed to make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

The arts—you know, a lot of hard-working Manitobans have a hard time thinking that there should be a lot of money spent on the arts, except

once you actually start looking at what that spending creates for the Province of Manitoba, what it creates in net economic gain, which this government is quite often quoted as looking for value for money—well, not so much value for a small-town library.

My own home community of Flin Flon was already struggling, shutting their library down one extra day a week, hoping—hoping—Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in this budget, there would be a few crumbs—a few crumbs to keep that library open, but no. What do they get instead? Cuts—cuts to funding for libraries and museums. That will have devastating effect on those small communities, but more importantly, it'll have a devastating effect on those Manitobans that live in those communities that need libraries to access things that everybody in this Chamber takes for granted.

They go home and play on the Internet; they play on the Internet here. A lot of Manitobans—and certainly not just northern Manitobans—a lot of people right here in this city of Winnipeg don't enjoy that same privilege, so they go to the public library to try and fill out a resumé, to try and get a job, and now those libraries may not be there. That service may not be there.

*(15:20)

You know, they've—this government has talked about protecting front-line services. Well, they're certainly not protecting front-line services if you're a worker working for Manitoba Hydro. Nine hundred of them—900 of those hard-working front-line service people—are going to be looking for a job. It's about cuts, this budget.

You know, they spent a lot of time, Premier (Mr. Pallister) spent a lot of time, prior to the budget telling people how bad it was going to be, alluding to things to come. Then, you know, come budget day, he releases a bad budget, but it's not as bad as what we were expecting.

An Honourable Member: Fooled you.

Mr. Lindsey: Still pretty bad—still pretty bad for hard-working Manitobans.

One of the members opposite, you know, he's sitting here saying, fooled you.

No, you didn't fool us. You fooled Manitobans last election, and for that you should be ashamed of yourselves. You should be ashamed of yourselves that you even thought about trying to fool hard-working Manitobans. But guess what?

Hard-working Manitobans are going to pay attention and they're not going to be fooled again by this bunch.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care is important. In the North, we're already struggling to attract doctors, nurses. Freezing wages, I'm not sure how, in the mind of this government, that will help attract quality people to health care, particularly in the North. Well, I'll tell you what—it won't. But then, maybe they'll just use that as an excuse to shut down hospitals in the North. Who knows what they're liable to come up with. Oh, wait a minute, we shouldn't be fearmongering because every time we say something bad that may happen, it generally comes true, which is kind of a shame, kind of a shame, indeed—*[interjection]*

You know, my friend is talking about improving the service. I'm not sure who he thinks he's improving service for. Well, let's see, maybe somebody from Pukatawagan, is their service gotten improved? No, because they can't get here because they're going to shut down their airport. How is that going to improve service, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well, quite frankly, it isn't, but that's part of this whole government's mind warp thinking that cutting something here really is an improvement, when it isn't.

You know, shutting down ERs without any idea of what the economic impact of that will be, which is just amazing in itself, that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) makes a decision with no idea of what the outcome will be. It baffles me, it boggles the mind, how he talks about value for money and then makes a decision to shut down these ERs, to shut down these quick 'clare' clinics when no idea what the value will be.

We do have a pretty good idea what the value will be for Manitobans seeking medical care, and that won't be a good thing, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. It won't be good for those people that are trying to get care and can no longer get that care, that'll get turned away from a hospital and told, no, no, no, this is the wrong hospital; you need to go to that hospital over there; that's the one that now will look after you.

Well, how do I get there, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker? This Finance Minister hasn't got a clue how they're going to get there, and apparently he doesn't care. Just shut it down, walk away, leave Manitobans hanging.

We talk about education. You know, again, they use the doublespeak that they've, you know, increased funding over here while they've taken more funding away over there. They're making it that much harder for Manitobans to get an education.

Can the minister, you know, tell us how much money has potentially been taken out of budgets for, I don't know, Frontier Collegiate, UCN, places like that? We haven't seen that exact—actual line in a budget, but there are impacts for that very vital service.

Yesterday, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we had some young folks—young folks who had hope for a future because Frontier Collegiate Institute was there, was able to offer them a decent education that was affordable, and this government is trying to take away that hope from those young people.

Shameful behaviour for a government to turn its back on people, on people—particularly people in the North that they continue to just ignore. Shameful, shameful, shameful—[interjection]—you should feel bad. You should feel bad that you're part of a government that thinks so poorly of your own constituents, never mind the rest of the constituents throughout the North. You know, that—that's kind of too bad.

So this budget is a bad budget.

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

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to see you in the Chair today so that you and I can have a conversation and so that all Manitobans can hear my thoughts on the budget. So, I rise today to speak on the record about the Manitoba 2017 Budget.

And I'd like to begin by thanking the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and his team of dedicated staff for all of their efforts in putting together what is no doubt one of the most anticipated and important budgets our province has seen in years.

Just two days ago, along with all other Manitobans, I listened to how the government will continue to invest in our province by putting Manitoba back on track towards a sustainable financial future. Yesterday marked 51 weeks since I was elected to represent my community, and in that time I have heard the voices of residents in St. Vital. They are very clear with their hopes for our

community and our province. I was proud to stand—I am proud to stand here before you as their advocate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under our previous government, Manitoba was heading down an unsustainable path. We knew it, and Manitobans knew it. In the 2016 budget, we acknowledged the approaching challenges and tough decisions, and now, in 2017, we remain committed to lowering taxes, bettering services and having a stronger economy.

In 2017, we are presented with a budget that was built for Manitoba by Manitobans and will continue the course towards our province's recovery. This budget builds on the foundation created in 2016. We are seeing an end to reckless spending with declining services, and it shows a real commitment to our pledge of fiscal repair, protection of front-line services and the renewal of economic sustainability.

In St. Vital, we have a vibrant and diverse community of families, newcomers, seniors, businessmen and women, and students, all of whom can take away from this budget.

Leading up to yesterday, I heard the concerns of deep cuts and reduced services. The NDP have done a wonderful job of scaring the public, Mr. Speaker, which is shameful—completely shameful—but I believe the residents will find that we have presented a balanced and thoughtful budget with them in mind, keeping them at the forefront of every decision that we make.

Manitobans understand the need for tough decisions, and that will ultimately lead to a brighter future.

* (15:30)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. I just said order to be more respectful.

Mrs. Mayer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm excited to see that our government will be increasing the funding for Manitoba Education and Training with a boost in 2017-2018 of \$36 million.

Just recently, it was announced that we are investing \$1.3 billion in our K-to-12 education system. Our government remains committed to our post-secondary institutions by giving a record number of funding in the amount of \$700 million annually for grants. Through the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative, we will provide

lower income and indigenous students with an up-front grant that will help them achieve their goals of pursuing a higher education.

Having the opportunity to access higher quality education at any age or any income level remains one of my highest priorities, and I am proud to see our government is continuing to invest in our education system throughout Manitoba.

One of the most significant challenges our province and government has ever seen is the failing health-care system. It was unsustainable and changes were needed. Manitobans no longer want to be part of a system with the longest wait times in the country. This budget will see a record investment of \$107.5 million into the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living that will go towards an increase of \$1.7 million to universal newborn hearing screening, \$8.8 million for expanded dialysis treatment and a bump of \$65.8 million to the regional health authorities to provide a relief for deficit spending for increased demands on health care and reflecting the change in demographics.

We are committed to all Manitobans by giving \$6.5 million to further reduce the costs of ambulance services and by investing a total of \$35 million into our family doctors, which will continue to connect those who don't have a primary care provider with a doctor or a nurse practitioner.

There will be an increase in funding for new oncology drugs, which will provide coverage for those who require life-saving treatments. Currently, my family is dealing with a loved one who is—whose cancer has come back. I'm not unique in this, Mr. Speaker, by no means. Many families are dealing with this horrible disease in their own families. But I can tell you that I think about Sueann and all those others who are working through this journey every day when I think of putting our health-care system back on track. It is no longer acceptable to think that the status quo is good enough in this province.

As we heard two days ago, the 2017 budget is increasing funding to the Department of Families by 5.4 per cent in the amount of \$105 million. Our government is focused on families in need by supporting by the delivery of programming and services that are vital to our communities. There is a significant need for a reduction in wait times for child care, and by adding 501 new licensed daycare spaces, 50 new home daycare spaces and increasing 'opering' grants for providers, we will reduce the backlog that has grown over to 12,000.

I recently attended the grand opening of the Windsor Park Children's Care Centre, Stepping Stones, in St. Vital. It's a new facility that offers infant early learning and child care.

Our government recognizes the importance of investing in a creation of quality licensed child-care spaces, and I was happy to be part of that special day.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that an increase in available child care is a priority in St. Vital.

Manitobans can also be confident in our support of improving quality and affordable housing by investing \$12.8 million in projects through the Social Innovation Fund under the Manitoba Housing and rental corporation. So many individuals and families find themselves in need of help, and by providing continued support through programs, such as Rent Assist and Employment and Income Assistance, we are ensuring our most vulnerable are protected.

Our government will provide an increase of \$48 million in Employment and Income Assistance, with \$8 million going to support Syrian refugees. With a considerable number of newcomers in St. Vital, I know they will feel more support than ever before. Our province is on the road to recovery. I'm happy to say that Manitobans will not see any new tax increases in the budget.

In fact, Madam—sorry—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mayer: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we are reaffirming our commitment by leaving more money in the pockets of Manitobans by continuing to index tax brackets to inflation and, again, increase the basic personal exemption. This means that more than 2,000 taxpayers in this province will be removed from the tax roll, saving Manitobans \$23 million this fiscal year and \$34 million by 2020.

This budget maintains the Seniors' School Tax Rebate and Education Property Tax Credit and the farm school tax rebate, something I know that our communities will be happy to hear.

We will also see the primary caregiver tax remain, which will support—which will continue to benefit those who provide vital supports for a spouse, relative, neighbour or a friend.

Municipalities will also be happy to hear that our government is continuing to provide significant

funding for overall operations in capital infrastructure.

I stand before you today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, honoured and humbled to be part of a government that is committed to engaging in respectful and collaborative discussions with our indigenous communities.

As a member of this Legislature who has been a part of two budgets now, I have seen first-hand how integral our roles are. Manitobans depend on us to keep their best interests a No. 1 priority, and as we take the time to reflect on this budget, I know they, too, will understand that if we face the inevitable challenges today, our families, our communities and our province will once again be strong.

I would like to take a moment to thank the residents of St. Vital for their commitment, their support and their engagement, not only throughout this budget process but over the last year. I am honoured to have been elected to represent a community that I love so dearly and will continue to be their voice in the Legislature.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that good governments make tough decisions, and we have heard it two days ago, and we've heard it many times before, but it's worth repeating today: The only thing better today—the only thing better than today is tomorrow in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): It's my pleasure to rise today and put a few words on the record about the budget that was released this past Tuesday.

I recognize that when there's a change in government—and which there was nearly a year ago—there are going to be some very drastic changes in the way that the province is being governed. With that said, if we want the best for our province, we have to consider the future.

Everyone in this House knows our province accumulated as much debt as it did because of the mismanagement of money under the former NDP government.

You see, Madam Speaker—oh, just wait—you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP handed out money left, right and centre. This is probably why they were in government as long as they were. Now, the Pallister government is having to make some very difficult decisions because this province cannot

continue to be so carefree and oblivious with money the way that the NDP were.

But, Madam Speaker, this—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sorry. This government needs to get its priorities straight. Forty-two per cent of Manitoba's budget goes towards health care. Health care is everything to us as humans because if we don't have our health, we don't have a life. I'm amazed that our health-care system isn't running smoother by this point, considering the millions that have been invested.

* (15:40)

I want to talk about this new budget and how it addresses health care and why it makes Manitobans so nervous. With a completely unknown amount of money going into the transition of three community hospital ERs being closed down in order to expand three tertiary ERs. There needs to be at least a plan, and, as of three days ago, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) still didn't know how much it was going to cost.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you're a parent and you have a 14-year-old teenager and they come and ask you for \$6,000, I'm pretty confident that you, as a parent, would question what the money is for. I used this analogy before, because it's extremely simple to understand and portrays how this government is handling money. They think, oh, it's a good new idea, let's all invest all of this money and then we will think about how we can make it a reality. It's completely backwards.

The other day, a member of the NDP was asking about this new health-care transition, and this government said that they were following the Peachey report. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government was following the Peachey report, they would be expanding the three tertiary hospitals and their ERs before closing down the ERs in the community. What's that saying? You can't have your cake and eat it too? Maybe I need to spell it out a bit more. This government cannot simultaneously retain their cake—in this case, the ERs in Winnipeg—and eat it too—downgrade ER space.

Another factor to consider is the closing down of three ERs is accessibility. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague from River Heights picked a random house in the community he represents and found out it would take three buses and two transfers to get to the Health Sciences Centre, the nearest ER, after the proposed changes are implemented. Perhaps this government should consider investing more in rapid

transit; that way, people will have a way to at least get to where they need to go in an emergency situation. This government, again, is forgetting about real Manitobans. Not everyone in the province has cars or a ride at their own convenience or the money to afford a taxi or an ambulance. What does this government expect a person to do when they need to go to the ER, and they are concerned about transportation?

I particularly have the Seven Oaks hospital in my thoughts, because many of my constituents both work and have used this hospital in many emergency situations. Last weekend, I was speaking with several nurses from the Seven Oaks hospital, and they are alarmed, because they don't understand what changes are being made and some of them are concerned about losing their jobs. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this hospital is consistently the highest performing emergency department, by almost any metric, and, apart from the Health Sciences Centre, no hospital facility sees more people per day. It truly feels as if the government is benching one of their best players by closing down the ER at Seven Oaks hospital.

You know, we understand that changes do need to be made to reduce the wait times in emergency rooms, but Manitobans, they deserve to feel confident that this government has done their due diligence in preparing for these changes.

I would encourage this government to take a step back on their recent health-care announcement, or show us some evidence that this is going to work before billions of dollars are invested into it while hundreds of Manitobans suffer and risk their lives waiting for a doctor to see them.

Another part of the budget that is worrisome is the lack of budget being used towards seniors. The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics projects that Manitobans aged 65 and older will nearly double by the year 2038. The greatest increase in numbers will be found among the 75- to 84-age cohort. We currently do not have enough facilities, especially affordable ones, for seniors. What's going to happen in 2038? The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy projects that Manitoba will need to add 5,100 personal-care-home beds in the next 20 years to meet the needs of the baby broom-boomer generation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when this government first came into power, they committed to building 2,100 personal-care-home beds, yet the Province has only started construction on one facility thus

far; that's nearly a year in. You know, prior to entering politics, I worked for long-term care here in Manitoba. I know that only building personal-care-home beds are not the answer. Yes, we need them, but not every senior falls under the category of needing a personal-care-home bed. We also need supportive-housing beds, 55-plus homes, hospices and assisted-living facilities.

The budget that was announced on Tuesday has no numbers, meaning no commitments for senior housing here in Manitoba. This is unacceptable and, frankly, members of this House should be nervous about their own futures.

While on the topic of senior facilities, we should talk about home-repair programs. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the majority of people want to remain in their homes, and sometimes the smallest adjustment to the house can enable this, whether it be, for example, a wheelchair ramp, a handle in the shower, or a stair lift or perhaps some shingles need to be replaced on a person's roof. But a senior on low income, who is unable to climb on their own roof, is unable to have these shingles changed. It's a simple fix by the people in the trades, of course, and will add value to the houses and allow people to continue living in their houses as they want to. And, by this government refusing to invest more in Neighbourhoods Alive! home fix-up grants, they're saying to people on low income that they're out of luck; that's too bad. You either need to live in a dangerous surrounding, or you need to find a new place to reside. This government is forgetting about so many real Manitobans in this budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another big error by this government is the decision to take the mismanagement of money from the former government out on the students here in Manitoba. I'm sure members of this House can appreciate that many of my friends, they are students, and I can confidently say that this government is pushing this generation out of the province. Yes, bursaries are helpful, but it's not fair to disadvantage those who worked hard to pay for their post-secondary education by not giving them the rebate that, more times than not, is what kick-starts a person's life after their post-secondary career.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know students who use their rebate after spending many, many years and dollars on their educations, and this enabled them to put down down payments on houses, to pay off their student loans, to buy themselves a vehicle. It was my

personal rebate from all my education that enabled me to put down a down payment on my first house. Rather than this government helping our generation prosper, they are doing the opposite by making even—making life even more unaffordable.

Money needs to be invested in education, in our future, not only post-secondary, as I just mentioned, but also K to 4 to grade 12. You know, I recently sent out a brochure asking my constituents how they felt about smaller classrooms being expanded. I didn't have one response in favour of it, and I don't expect to, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Manitoba already has the lowest grades of all Canada, and expanding classrooms is not going to help Manitoba children excel further in their education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how about justice? This Pallister government continues to say one thing and then do the complete opposite. The minister responsible for Justice keeps saying crime is getting better here in the province, yet our correctional facilities are even more packed than they were under the NDP government. This government needs to invest in youth justice committees and addiction facilities and mental health facilities. This will help in overcrowdedness and the success of a person's ability to help further their lives in a positive way.

Right now, the system of throwing everyone into prisons is a broken system. Mr. Deputy Speaker, youth justice committees would help provide second chances. It would provide a sense of security to the community. It would be a constructive way to deal with youth who make mistakes, as we all do as humans, rather than hardened criminals that do not deserve to be incarcerated.

Addictions facilities would help filter repeats that are using the Winnipeg Remand Centre essentially as a home with how often they are rotated in and out.

And, lastly, mental health facilities. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud of Canada. We have adopted mental health, in a very serious way, and we understand that it's an issue that needs to be taken seriously as—just as physical health is. If a person breaks a bone, they go to the hospital and they are treated. If a person is struggling with depression, for example, and they need to talk to someone, in order to do this, they have to wait months and pay out of their pockets. This should not be challenging—there should not be any challenges in seeking help with respect to mental health. The fact is there still is—it's still completely unacceptable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last season, I visited five correctional facilities here in Manitoba. And it's sad, but the reality is that many people who are currently incarcerated are struggling with mental health. What if they receive the help that they need? Would this help with the overcrowdedness? I believe that it would.

What about the cuts to children with disabilities? I'm astounded by how this government feels that that is okay.

Our safety as Canadians is supposed to be our No. 1 priority, yet this government just keeps making cuts to fire and emergency response teams and to workplace safety and healthy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on and talk about how this government made poor decisions in cutting investments in victim services, community libraries, and community and regional services in indigenous and northern Manitoba and in Research Manitoba, which, ironically, would have been very helpful for this government to consult with before announcing the budget.

Ultimately, the onus is on the government, and I know Manitobans are smart and I know that they will remember these decisions and the true priorities of this government come next election.

Thank you.

* (15:50)

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): It's a privilege to stand here and make some comments about the budget which was recently released. You know, as we approach the first anniversary of that momentous Manitoba day, April the 19th, 2016, a date which many of us in this House looked forward to, hoping and working to see if perhaps Manitobans would signal the change that was so desperately needed, and, thankfully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that change came and has not disappointed ever since.

This is our second budget and we have presented a solid plan to make Manitoba the most improved province in our country. I'm honoured to be part of these efforts. I'm honoured to work with a team that is collectively undertaking the hard work required to put this province back on its feet, to make some difficult choices, but to do what is right. And it's a good feeling to be able to sleep well at night as we consider the things that we have put before Manitobans, most specifically, in terms of the budget which was tabled just a few days ago.

Certainly, our province faces challenges, and those challenges do require for us to demonstrate a degree of caution in our expenditures. We recognize such caution may cause members opposite to feel uneasy, to feel all kinds of new feelings, because it is that type of caution which they have never experienced. Their legacy was to spend and spend and spend and borrow and borrow and borrow, and the trajectory was a dim one, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The trajectory was that under the current direction that—the previous direction, I should say, things would have escalated to the point where within just a few years, we would be facing an annual deficit in the neighbourhood of \$1.7 billion. That is a tremendous amount by any accounts and a disturbing amount as well, not only for ourselves but most significantly—for many of us who have children—for our children, because they would have to pay, naturally, taxes to cover the debt-servicing costs on the spending sprees of an irresponsible government.

You know, this is generational theft where one government takes money that it does not have and says, that's okay; my kids will pay for it; future generations will pay for it. And, of course, that is neither kind nor responsible, and so we have undertaken to do what is responsible. We recognize that such corrections cannot be immediate, but they must be deliberate and that is what we have endeavoured to do in Budget 2017.

I'd like to hone in on how such a budget affects families in our province, families who have limited income, and we know that for many Manitoba families—dare I say for most Manitoba families—income is something they take very seriously. We recognize that not everybody has a job which makes life easy. Not everybody has a job, and we have taken measures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that the budget that we have tabled allows for affordability on the ground: affordability in our neighbourhoods, affordability for families of all kinds.

We recognize they are stretching the family dollar as far as possible and that is what we want to do as well. In Budget 2017, we focused our limited resources in some key areas such as health care, support for families and education. Like Manitobans, we believe in living within our means, planning for tomorrow and caring for our neighbours, and this budget is a reflection of those beliefs.

So, allow me, if I may, to take a little time to focus on a few areas that are within this budget which might not get the attention that some of the larger items do.

We could have taken a politically expedient route. We could've continued the course of irresponsible spending. We could've attempted to achieve political gain in the short term. We could've done many things. But that would not have been responsible. That would not have left us with a good conscience. Every dollar that we spend comes not from some magical bank account in the sky but, certainly, from the taxpayers of our province, from moms, from dads, from single people, from seniors. These people pay taxes to live here, and it falls to us to take that responsibility with utmost seriousness. It is a heavy burden, and we must not take it lightly.

I just want to say in passing that something which often is overlooked is the fact that we are enjoying, at the moment, historically low interest rates, a situation which certainly has its advantages, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but comes with an equal degree of caution; 1 per cent today could easily be 3 or 4 per cent tomorrow. I remember, although I'm—I consider myself relatively young at 39 years old, I remember our first, when we were able to buy our first house, the interest rate was over 7 per cent. And I know other members in this House can certainly top that number with their memory. I know the member from Elmwood, who is unfortunately—I was about to reflect on the presence or absence of a member, which would be a breach of the rules, so I won't do that—but he often comments to me in our deliberations and negotiations that he remembers a very long time ago—and I'm quite certain that one of his age and maturity could remember back very, very far—to days where interest rates were much higher. So let's keep these things in view and let's think about sustainability. That is what we have done.

So you cannot spend your way to prosperity. We must take decisive action to restore our economy, to fix those finances, since it is private industry that creates wealth. Taxing people more does not create wealth. It is private industry, people working hard, working creatively, working with that spirit of an entrepreneur to create goods, to create services that people need, that they will pay for. We need people who can do things, people who can provide things. This is how we have a strong economy.

So getting back to my point a few moments ago about the priorities or the things mentioned in this

budget which may be overlooked, I would like to draw attention to some things that we have—some incentives that we have in this budget.

The first incentive I would like to draw our attention to is the Children's Arts and Cultural Activity Tax Credit. This is an incentive which helps parents offset the costs of providing cultural enrichment to broaden the horizons of their children. You know, this makes it more affordable for parents to enroll their children in a variety of arts or cultural activities and not to have to bear the brunt of that exclusively by themselves. It's no secret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that arts and cultural activities can be of tremendous enrichment to the lives of citizens in any jurisdiction. And, certainly, in a province as diverse as Manitoba, as rich as Manitoba, we see that allowing people to access these kinds of activities, helping them along as we are able, is a kind thing to do, is a good thing to do.

I think also of the fitness tax credit to help encourage active lifestyles—possibly a tax credit I should review myself, as may other members of this House. The fitness tax credit, again, lightens the burden on those who would choose to enroll themselves in fitness programs or other opportunities to get in shape. We don't have to do this. We could quietly retire such an incentive. But we've chosen to keep it in as a demonstration of the value of helping people have a life that is a little easier and a little better.

* (16:00)

Another important tax credit I wish to draw our attention to today is the adoption tax credit, and I have friends, quite a number of them, who have adopted children from other countries, from inside our own country. It's a fine enterprise and one worthy of assistance and relief. These costs can quite often mount up even into the thousands, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the adoption tax credit supports those who are giving the gift of love, family and a home to children.

I have friends, as do many of us here, who were themselves adopted, and we do not take that lightly. We are grateful for the kindness of a family who took us in and made room for those of us who were adopted. I was not, myself, but some of my friends were. This is a special feature of our society, and our government is honoured and proud to continue to support those in that position with the adoption tax credit.

Recognizing that I do not have unlimited time, the Fertility Treatment Tax Credit assists those trying to start a family. Again, this is very often an extremely stressful and often painful journey. We want to recognize that by helping people in that difficult situation.

I don't have time to talk at length about the Seniors' School Tax Rebate or the Education Property Tax Credit or the Farmland School Tax Rebate or the Manitoba tuition fee and education amounts, but needless to say in passing, that these credits, these relief mechanisms, are tokens of kindness that we have inserted into the budget. Let nobody say that this is austere, that this is mean-spirited, when, on the record today, I have been privileged to put—to mention just a few of the kind credits and opportunities afforded to Manitobans in this budget.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I actually do have more to say, but I will, out of respect for other members, sit down and allow others to put things on the record.

In closing, I am not ashamed in the slightest of Budget 2017. It is a step in the right direction. It is a step towards fixing our finances. It is a step towards doing what is right for Manitobans, and that is why Manitobans are standing and supporting this fine document, and it is a privilege to take a few moments to speak about it today.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, I'm pleased to be able to put a couple of words on the record in respect of Budget 2017.

It's interesting that we're here, obviously, again, and looking at more cuts. I do want to note that, similar to the last budget that was tabled by this Pallister government, that there was no mention of MMIWG. So we only have, like, 20 minutes to be able to speak, so I know that a lot of my colleagues are talking about a lot of the just egregious cuts that are in this budget, so I'm just going to concentrate a little bit on just a couple of points.

But I do want to note—again, I think—and I know I've said it many, many times in this House. Obviously the members opposite aren't kind of taking note or listening on it, but I think it is particularly egregious that there's no mention of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in the budget and nor are there any dollars allocated to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls to deal with a variety of different things.

So, you know, I know that there was mention of \$186,000 to Nova House in Selkirk, which—I think that, obviously, a women's shelter is needed, so I think that that's a good thing. I'm not sure if it's enough. I would imagine that \$186,000 for Nova House is not enough. However, it's—something is better than nothing; I will concede that for sure.

I know that the budget made mention of the Blue Bombers don't-be-a-bystander campaign. I worked on that with the executive director, Beth Ulrich, who, of course, is just an extraordinary civil servant. And, you know, the Blue Bomber campaign is a really good campaign but it's not substantial dollars; it's just a public awareness, you know, campaign, with some videos and some Blue Bombers that are able to kind of go around and share and do some public education which, again, is really good, except that there's not a whole lot of dollars that are attached to that. And whatever, you know, limited dollars that are attached to that go to the campaign and don't necessarily go to women. But, again, I think it needs to be stressed that it's very, very small amount of dollars.

I know that there were—there was mention of Ka Ni Kanichihk's program, again, a small amount of dollars to do really, really important work. And certainly I support that program in—and was part of some of the early discussions in its development to look at having that program at Ka Ni Kanichihk. But, again, it's just very, very limited small amounts of dollars to deal with sexual assault or abuse.

So, you know, there's no dollars for MMIWG, and we know that right now we're in the midst of a national inquiry and, you know, I know I've asked several questions in the House in respect of what the Province has been doing and what their role is in respect of the MMIWG. And just this week, actually, the Minister for Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) said that they were—you know, they wrote a letter and they're waiting for the federal government to get some direction.

But I think it's important to note that, you know, the Minister of Justice is the government, and she can, alongside the minister for indigenous and municipal affairs, can actually take a lead on, you know, developing a strategy to engage MMIWG families here in Manitoba. You don't need to wait for the feds to tell you what to do with your own citizens. And, I mean, I—it seems to be that, you know, members of the government keep kind of, you know, deferring to the federal government on what is really their responsibility and part of governing

responsibility and they just kind of keep deferring and so we know that they're kind of still waiting on what the feds, you know—what the next steps are.

But, you know, and I can say it here, and I've been saying it for the last year, that the next steps are actually working with MMIWG families in ensuring that they've got the information that they need. So I'm going to give kind of like an overview of what's going on in Manitoba in respect of MMIWG.

You know, there are so many different families all across the province. Some are more engaged than others, absolutely, hands down. There are some family members that are, you know, regularly in the media, you know, find their information that they need—miigwech—and then, you know, there's the opposite spectrum where there are some family members in Manitoba that are in really, really isolated communities and don't have much engagement or agency or support in respect of the loss or murder of their loved one. So it does certainly need a different kind of range of opportunities to work with families, kind of recognizing where everybody is.

But there's also several groups that work with MMIWG families, so there is Ka Ni Kanichihk's medicine bear that work with families. In fact, medicine bear elders and counselling services for MMIWG families was actually part of our phase 1 strategy back in November of 2010 when I started, when I was the—appointed as the special advisor. That—we had embedded that in our phase 1 of our strategy and it—at that time and for many, many years, again, I know I've noted this, that it was the only victim services model of its kind.

*(16:10)

So, they've got extraordinary staff. They also have very limited dollars and I would argue that, you know, they certainly need more dollars to be able to do the work that they do but they do have Angie Hutchinson now—there now. They've had, actually, several staff that have worked there: Colleen Robinson, Ruth Murdock and Candace Neumann, who were all family support workers and counsellors. And, actually, the work is so difficult that they all had to leave those positions because the work is so difficult. And so, I think that it would be beneficial for this government to look at partnering with Ka Ni Kanichihk in respect of working with the families that go to Medicine Bear Ka Ni Kanichihk to help them navigate through that national inquiry.

Now, not all families go to Medicine Bear, obviously. Medicine Bear is located in the city, so of course there are families that are up North that don't have the opportunity to access Ka Ni Kanichihk in the south. I know that, just before the election, Ka Ni Kanichihk was doing work in the North and reaching out to families in the North, because I think that we all recognize we needed to do a lot more outreach in the North, particularly for really isolated communities.

I know I tried my best to engage several families from the North and always bring them in for Wiping Away the Tears. So, Ka Ni Kanichihk is one organization that does work with families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls that this government could be partnering and funding to do more work.

The other is the coalition for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, which I think is kind of—operates out of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, which is, you know, again, some more family members, some same family members here, some additional family members that—the government could work with them to ensure that the coalition also has, you know, information to be able to disseminate to, you know, those MMIWG families that are a part of that.

There's also the Manitoba coalition of families of missing and murdered, and again that's co-chaired or chaired by Bernadette Smith. And that's a mixture of different families, some of both those groups that, again, this government could work with in respect of MMIWG and actually co-ordinating for the national inquiry.

There are some MMIWG families that work through Mamaway, and there are some MMIWG families that actually work up North with a group up there as well. And why I, again, say this is because this is the second budget that this government has brought forward that has nothing earmarked for MMIWG and didn't even bother to, actually, even note it—note MMIWG in the budget, which I think is particularly egregious when—you know, the budget just came out on—when did the—Tuesday, Monday—

An Honourable Member: Tuesday.

Ms. Fontaine: Tuesday, okay. It's been a long week. So, Tuesday. And we know that on Monday, you know, Christine Wood was no longer considered a missing person. We know that she is considered a homicide. Her file is a homicide. So, actually—and I

would imagine, and, I mean, I'm sure my colleague, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), would probably know this, that I'm sure that they would have been notified prior to the police releasing that. I'm sure that the minister maybe might have had some information.

But, certainly, there was about 24 hours where this government could have made sure that there was some mention of MMIWG, when within the last 24 hours we know that a 21-year-old young woman who just came down to the city with her parents was actually murdered in a house, but no. Like, I just don't understand. Like, there was not one mention.

And yesterday, I rushed out of here after question period to be able to participate in the vigil that was organized by, you know, the Centre for Child Protection, MKO, Bear Clan, all of which really, really supported the Wood family from the very, very beginning.

There was an extraordinarily—there was an extraordinary amount of people that came out yesterday to support the family and to show, you know, physically that, you know, their daughter Christine's life mattered, and if all that they could do was actually just come to the vigil, they did.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

But this government, a government that is supposed to be for all people, including of the North, couldn't even see fit to put any mention of MMIWG in their budget for the second year in a row, even though we're in the midst of a national inquiry. And yet, at the same time this government then, you know, pretends that they, you know, stand up for MMIWG and try to take some sense of ownership or leadership on MMIWG, and it's all really just a farce. I mean really, why would you not put anything in your budget?

You know, part of the vigil yesterday was actually started off at a church only—I don't even know how—not that far away, less than a block away from the house that was where Christine Wood was murdered. And actually my colleague and I, from The Pas, went to the vigil yesterday to join other Manitobans, and it, you know, you go—after so many years of doing this work, you go to different sites all the time. You know, like, you know, this woman's body was found here or, you know, this young woman's body was found here, or.

But, yesterday, you know, there was just something about standing in front of this house with

these two parents and singing on a big drum. There—it's just a very surreal moment in one's life, and all you can imagine is, like, what is this like for George and Melinda to stand in front of the house where this individual, who never met Christine Wood, he literally just met her that day—that night, you know, slaughtered her in this house. And I have to say that, you know, it was really sad. It was very sad to be there.

So why I share this with the House is because, like, Christine Wood's life mattered. Her life mattered to the family, to Melinda and George, who, I know I shared in my member's statement here, are just such—such kind—kind humble people, like, so, so kind. And here this government can't even make mention of MMIWG in the budget.

I'm not sure why, and I'm not sure what this government is doing in respect of tapping into some of the 16.6, or 16 million anyways, over four years that the federal government is giving for provinces and territories and organizations to tap into, to have the family information liaison units. Like, I don't know what this government is doing there. If they did apply for those dollars and did put a proposal, certainly, there should be something—certainly, it should've been, you know, mentioned, and, certainly, it should be already established and in place and it's not.

So I spoke about some of the other agencies that are not mentioned in the budget, and I briefly mentioned that, you know, I've spoken to many, many agencies and organizations and families that are saying they have not heard anything. Contrary to what members opposite say during question period, nobody's heard from this government and—in respect of MMIWG.

And, you know, I would actually also, you know, say I'm not even sure if anybody reached out to the family of George and Melinda. I would hope so. I hope that I'm wrong. I hope that, you know, the ministers or the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself reached out to George and Melinda, because I can tell you that it would probably go a long way to reach out directly to the family just to give your condolences.

But, certainly, I think that for all of the families in Manitoba, you know, providing or establishing—tapping into those dollars and immediately establishing these family information liaison units, particularly right now—I mean, I—I'll, you know, we know that the national inquiry is struggling right now

in how to do things, like how do they execute disseminating information. You know, how can we get information out to the families?

* (16:20)

So—so absolutely I think that the national inquiry is struggling, and it is what it is. But this government's responsibility when they know that their citizens are about to participate in a historic national inquiry that actually took years to get to, like years and years of, you know, vigils and memorials and lobbying. It took, you know, two national—you know, national round tables. It took like—I mean, the amount of engagement and agency and lobbying across the country is so astronomical to actually get to this point. And here's this government not putting anything in place or not doing anything and—which, you know, whether or not people agree with it, it is this government's role and responsibility to ensure that their citizens—you know, families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls who do not have the same level of, you know, technology structures or, you know, just even Internet or anything, like, we have to do more to be able to disseminate that information to them. And this government should step up and start doing that.

And, you know, I—you know, I wasn't going to talk about this for the budget, but I just really was reflecting on the vigil yesterday for Christine Wood and just all the people that came out to support Christine Wood's family. And, literally, in the last couple months, we've had, tragically, so many women, you know, who have been murdered. And you would think—I mean, I don't know if perhaps I'm naïve or perhaps I give too much benefit of the doubt—you would think that there would be some mention of MMIWG in this budget. And what it does, whether or not people want to acknowledge it, it is absolutely dismissive of the reality of families in this province. Even just the families in the last couple of months that—their daughters have been murdered, and no mention.

It's like this government doesn't care, and I can't believe that that's true; I absolutely can't believe that that's true. But, certainly, if they do care, and, if they do care equitably for all of their citizens, then this government has to step up, and, as I've said many, many times in this House, get on the right side of history and start supporting families. It's not enough to say, well, we're waiting for the feds. Who knows what the feds are doing? The feds could be mixed up for another year. Who knows what they're doing?

But Manitoba can step up and ensure that families have the supports that they need and they get the information that they need and they get the resources that they need and they get the supports that they need to participate, again, in this very—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): It is an honour to stand up and speak to the budget that was just presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen).

I have spoken to a few budgets in my time, and it's a great opportunity to, first of all, start off by speaking about the individuals who are—you are here to represent, and I would like to, once again, as I always try and do, is thank the good people of St. Paul who elected me, now for several times, and have sent me here to speak on their behalf. The communities of Springfield, East St. Paul and West St. Paul, particularly when it comes to Springfield it's more the Oakbank-Dugald area—and I share some of the Springfield area with the member from La Verendrye—so I'm always humbled and want to make sure that, as I stand here, I think about what my community is and what they represent and what they would like me to say and put on the record.

And, Madam Speaker, I want to start off by saying that over the last 17 years, I've had the opportunity to speak to various budgets and, over those years, we saw storm clouds coming, we saw the kind of reckless spending that was taking place; it started with '99 and went in to the 2001-2002 and so and so forth, where the government went on a spending binge. That worked okay for them for the first 10 years, then there was a leadership change, and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) took over, and then things didn't go so well for them, because the cupboard was basically bare. They got into substantive deficits that kept on climbing and climbing until the point came where they found that they were in financial difficulty. And they went into the 2011 election, and, for those of us who were around at that time, we would remember that Hugh McFadyen indicated to the NDP that at the rate they were going, they were going to have to raise the PST. And it was at a leaders' debate, and the leader of the opposition then, Hugh McFadyen, pointed to the member for St. Boniface, who was the premier of that time, and said: The only way you're going to make all of this work is you're going to have to raise the PST. And the member for St. Boniface said: Nonsense, not true, won't happen, read my lips. In

fact, the media caught the member for St. Boniface, the then-premier, leaving the debate, and they scrummed him and they asked him again, so will you raise the PST. And he said, that's absolute nonsense, knowing at that time that they'd already talked about it before the election. So out he walked.

Every one of the NDP candidates, every one of the NDP MLAs went door to door and basically said something that was not true at the door. They knew they had to raise the PST. So they got elected in 2011, and then in their first budget they broadened the PST. They applied it to basically anything that walks, talks, is alive, is not alive. They applied the PST to everything.

Then the next budget, the following budget, they raised the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. But what was most egregious about that was for 17 years they had run on a commitment, they had backed the balanced budget legislation brought in by the Filmon government and said they would never tinker with it. And what did the NDP do, besides breaking their word from 2011? They also—also—stripped away the right to a referendum which they had run on. The balanced budget legislation has a component that if you're going to raise the PST, that you allow people the vote. So the party of—evidently, New Democratic Party might as well have stripped democratic out, because this is the group that would stand up and advocate for a vote when it comes to a school board election or any kind of a board election, or they wanted referendums for anything else, anything but what was in the law that said you needed a referendum to raise the PST.

And, Madam Speaker, they stripped that away, and there were demonstrations in front of this building. And the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), he fled out of the back of the building. And the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), he fled out one of the other doors. And one after the—they fled out the side doors and fled out the back doors, wouldn't look the voters in the eyes in the front of the building who were here to protest and stand up for their democratic right to have a vote on whether or not their PST should be raised or not.

And, you know what is the most shameful thing, besides all of that, is the \$300 million they raised didn't even make a dint in the deficit that they were running. In fact, if they hadn't have been defeated, we would be seeing deficits coming in a year or so of \$1.7 billion. They had run the deficit up to the point—and we know now from the documents released, that

they were not just looking at a 1 per cent increase, they were contemplating a 2 and 3 per cent increase. And, even if they'd have gone with a—gone from 7 to a 10 per cent PST, it still wouldn't cover the deficit that they were creating under their leadership.

And you have a party now that should go to the public and apologize for having misled them on the PST. They should go to the public and apologize for having stripped away their democratic rights. And they should go to the public and apologize for having driven the finances of this province into the ground. The first thing, the first thing this NDP should do, and perhaps under the leadership of their new leader, the first thing they should do is go on an apology tour. I think Manitobans would appreciate that.

The budget that was presented is a balanced, is a reasonable budget, is a budget that Manitobans understand was necessary. It takes a lot of courage. It takes a lot of fortitude. And I would like to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), I'd like to thank our Premier (Mr. Pallister), for putting forward a budget that finally puts this province on financial sanity, that finally puts us on the right course towards getting the finances under control in Manitoba without raising 1 cent of taxes.

I thank the Minister of Finance. I encourage the House to vote for this.

Thank you for this opportunity, Madam Speaker.

*(16:30)

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, Madam Speaker, that's quite a performance to follow. The member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) got up and gave his whole speech, couldn't point to a single positive thing in his own government's budget. I presume he goes to Cabinet meetings. I presume he sits around the Cabinet table, but, you know, after that performance, I'm really not sure.

You know, 20 minutes, Madam Speaker, is scarcely enough time to say everything that needs to be said about this budget, so I will speak generally about the budget. I'll speak specifically about the lack of this budget to make any inroads, any progress on public safety, but most importantly, I'll use the rest of my time to speak about the negative impact of this government's choices and this government's decisions on the people that I'm very proud to represent in the West End of Winnipeg. And the West End is a great place; it's not unique. Of course, there's great neighbourhoods all around Winnipeg and all around Manitoba, but I know that the choices

this government is making is going to make life harder for the people that elected me a year ago to once again represent them in this Legislature.

Now I know, Madam Speaker—you and I have been around this place for a while—often it's common for opposition politicians to get up and say that the government has no vision, and I'm not going to say that because this government has a vision; it's simply a terrible one for the great majority of people who live in this province. Their vision is to make government smaller, to provide less service, less assistance, more choice for those who have the most, less choice for everybody else. It's a government whose vision is to transfer wealth from average Manitobans, from ordinary working Manitobans, and transfer it up as much as possible to those who already have the most. This is a government whose vision is to cause people to lose faith in our public institutions, and it's a government whose vision is to make life harder for most Manitobans and easier for the very, very few.

Now, Budget 2017, when we look at it in its totality, it proves that this government had no intention of following through on the bill of goods that they sold Manitobans just one year ago. And the Premier and all the rest of his candidates went around the province and they told Manitobans a bunch of things. They said, well, we'll reduce the deficit without cutting front-line services, and somehow they got people to believe that there was a big pool of things that were just sitting out there that they could cut without impacting anybody's services. And they tried to convince people that maybe they were NDP-light, that maybe you could just change the channel but you could still get all the same things that people were already getting. They promised they would keep building, keep investing, that they would keep adding to the things that Manitobans count on, and they promised, above all, and the Premier's on record, time and time again, of saying that he would protect front-line services.

Well, here we are, just a year later, and have we ever discovered just how wrong that was. We've seen a government which has been quite prepared to slash investment in all of the things that Manitobans count on.

I was listening to the coverage of the budget on the way home afterwards and I heard Ron Hambley with the Winnipeg Construction Association, represents a number of large construction companies, and he talked about the impact alone of the

infrastructure cuts that this government is making. Just in question period, we heard about \$50 million being cut here. We know that there's money all over the province that's now been cut by this government that will not be used to improve our infrastructure. And the commentator on CJOB asked Mr. Hambley: Well, what are we talking about? Are we talking about hundreds of jobs, are we talking about thousands of jobs? And Mr. Hambley said we are talking about thousands and thousands of jobs. And the problem is, Madam Speaker, that that short-sighted choice cascades.

Well, first of all, we know there's going to be thousands and thousands fewer construction workers building and rebuilding Manitoba's infrastructure. We know there's going to be less infrastructure to be there, the places that doctors work, that nurses work, that our teachers work, that social workers work at, and we know there's going to be less services and less opportunities. We now have Manitobans who are now getting less—far less—than they thought they were going to get when they cast their vote just a year ago. We're seeing, of course, virtually no reductions in tax despite all the service reductions and, in fact, how much—who is getting a tax break by this budget? Well, we know that—how proud the minister is every time he talks about indexing the personal deductions. Well, how much difference does that make? Well, if you're at the low end, if you're one of the Manitobans working for minimum wage, which, of course, hasn't moved now in well over a year, the benefit to you is about \$10 a year—not \$10 a week or a month, \$10 over the course of the year.

Of course, if you're the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and you earn a supersized salary, supersized by 20 per cent just by his own decision not that long ago, well, he's getting a benefit many, many times that. It gives the people who have the least the least benefit.

So who really is benefiting? Well, there's one group of people who get the biggest benefit under this budget. Those are families who have \$4,500 a year to donate to political parties. They do very well, because the only real tax break given by this government is for people who donate from \$1,300 up to about \$2,300 a year, which works out—*[interjection]*

Well, the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) has decided to chime in, and, you know, I'm sure when we go knocking on doors in Radisson, we'll

say that their MLA is very, very proud that his family is getting an extra \$666 dollars a year from the provincial Treasury so they can donate to the Progressive Conservative Party.

And we're going to go to households that have kids in university or are about to go to university or kids who have finished university who are going to want to know why this Finance Minister stood in the House and cut funding to universities and affected the—and took away the tuition tax rebate, froze the minimum wage and made it more expensive and more difficult for young people to get their education.

But the member for Radisson, I'm sure, will step up after I'm done, and he will justify why his family is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan:—entitled to an extra \$666 dollars a year from the provincial Treasury. I will be delighted to hear—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan:—what he has to say.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And sometimes I know the truth hurts. And I'll be very happy to knock on doors in Radisson and knock on doors in Fort Richmond and knock on doors in St. Norbert and knock on doors in Seine River and knock on doors in Selkirk and tell the people in those areas that they thought the major tax breaks should go to families that have the most who want to donate \$4,500 a year to a political party, and we'll let them try and justify it.

And, of course, I've certainly forgotten some other ridings I could mention. And, of course, what progress has there been by these great deficit slayers? Well, absolutely nothing. And we've had a look, and, if you have a look at the budget papers, you can see that their entire deficit reduction strategy is smoke and mirrors.

They've now brought in a law which says that if the deficit decreases by \$1 from year to year, they still get their supersized Cabinet paycheques. And, indeed, when you look at the budget papers and you look at what else this government has produced, you see how tenuous it is.

We have a modest reduction, they claim, in year of the deficit at the same time as we know that Workers Compensation Board and Manitoba Public Insurance are gaining large amounts of money because the stock market has gone up. And, if you read the third-quarter statements for Manitoba Public Insurance alone, you'll see that they've earned \$101.8 million investment income.

What if the stock market had stayed flat? Well, they'd actually be increasing the deficit. What if the stock market had gone down by the amount it went up this year? They would actually be \$200 million behind where they are, and, of course, if the stock market went down, they'd say, that's not our fault. But, if it's gone up, well, they must be geniuses.

But Manitobans are slowly learning just how—what poor choices this government is making and how tenuous their entire austerity plan is.

So we know, from reading their budget papers, that even their old, tired narrative doesn't fit. And I will encourage members to listen carefully. We had, of course, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) stand up and talk about what's happened since 2009. And I'm quite happy to read the provincial budget papers so we can hear what's happened since 2009.

* (16:40)

And I will quote this government's budget papers: Major federal transfers to Manitoba have been increasing in a more modest rate than in most other provinces and territories. While Manitoba's combined major transfers were flat from 2009-10 to 2014-15, other provinces and territories received increases as high as 65 per cent. This lack of major transfer growth has added to the financial challenges facing the Province, particularly in light of the increased demand for public services resulting from Manitoba's rapidly growing population. In fact, once population growth is taken into account, the Province's combined major federal transfers have actually declined by 1.2 per cent on a per capita basis, or \$34 per person, since 2009-10, and by almost 14 per cent when both population growth and inflation are taken into account. And for members opposite there's even a nice little graph, so they don't have to read the text to see what happened.

The member for Rossmere is right. In 2009, something did happen to the Province. That's when Stephen Harper slammed the door in the face of Manitobans and cut transfers to the Province of

Manitoba in a way that was suffered by only one other province, that being Newfoundland and Labrador. So there's a—there was a government problem after 2009: it wasn't the government of Manitoba, it was the government of Canada.

And the worst part is that members opposite didn't even lift a finger. They didn't make a phone call. They didn't open their mouths. They just sat back. And, as a matter of fact, when we raised the challenges with the cuts from this federal government, they denied, and they said, well, don't blame the federal government. And somehow there's been a conversion on the road to Damascus where we now have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) and a Health Minister and other ministers now turning around and saying that a federal government—the new federal government, giving them more money than was ever the case under the previous federal government—they are now complaining and using that to distract from reality.

But, of course, time moves on quickly, Madam Speaker, and I need to move ahead. Now, I've been asking the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) for months to try to explain why crime is on the rise in Manitoba. And you see that anecdotally, but don't take it from me. Anybody in this Legislature who can use a computer can go check out the City of Winnipeg Police Service CrimeStat. And we see that crime is actually up 20 to 25 per cent, year over year. And I've asked her to explain it. She won't. Just last week we saw in the Free Press the Winnipeg Police Board is acknowledging there are many, many more calls for service by the Winnipeg Police Service in just the past year.

And I've tried to get some answers. What it is? Is it the abuse of opioids or other drugs? Is it gangs? Is it organized crime? Well, this Justice Minister won't answer the question. We'll just have to wait for the full crime statistics to come out. But, in the meantime, there were a few words about public safety in this budget and no investments to improve public safety in this province.

In the few words that were contained about justice, well, there was one piece. The Finance Minister said that restorative justice would be expanded to Community Corrections. Well, that's a good thing. I'm looking forward to having a good discussion with the Justice Minister in Estimates. Hopefully, she'll give better answers in Estimates than she gives in question period or in questions and answers on bills or at committee. But I'm always

hopeful that we'll be able to have a good discussion about that. And, if she wants to follow the lead when I was very proud to introduce Canada's first stand-alone restorative justice legislation, I will support that.

But that's about it. What else is there about justice in this, and public safety, in this budget? Well, there is a comment that the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) is still waiting for the federal government's answer on doing away with preliminary inquiries. Well, it won't happen and it won't work. And what else is there in the budget on public safety? Well, nothing. There's no ideas. There's no solutions.

After 17 years in opposition, when we had sometimes rather loud critics who seemed to have all the answers, we see nothing. And I expect, as we go through Estimates this year, we'll have another Estimates where this minister will simply acknowledge that we were on the right track and there is no major movement, except, of course, for cuts to sheriffs, freezing Legal Aid, freezing everything else that we need to do and not making any dent into the additional problems.

I want to finish my comments, talking about people in my own area. And, of course, in the throne 'shpeets' and budget speeches, I've always had the opportunity to brag a little bit, but certainly talk about the tremendous people who live in the West End of Winnipeg. And I'm sorry this year that it's much tougher to get up and talk about a future for kids growing up in the West End.

And, you know, kids in the West End, they go to a number of different schools. Most of them go to Daniel McIntyre Collegiate; some go to Tec Voc, which, until now, has first-class technical vocational programs. Some students go to Grant Park across the river, which has tremendous performing arts programs, and some students when they get to grade 9 or grade 10, they go up to Kelvin. That's my family's experience. Kelvin has international baccalaureate and they have French immersion programs. They've got great sports. What they don't have, of course, is the gym that they were promised that they raised \$1.2 million for, but that is another story.

In the 12 years that I've been the MLA for the area, I've had the chance to see the increase in graduates at both schools in the West End, at both DMCI and Tec Voc. When I was first elected, Daniel McIntyre had scarcely 200 graduates every year.

Now that number most years, it's over 300. It is a sea of maroon at the Duckworth Centre at the end of June. And Tec Voc, which used to graduate less than 200, is now close to having 300 grads every year, and that fits; that fits with the success that we had as a government of getting more students through school. The graduation rate, which was only 71 per cent in 1997, had increased 87 per cent by 2016. I'm worried that's going to start slipping with the lack of interest in the public school system, but I suppose time will tell.

But what do we know about these students? Well, we know they come from hard-working parents. They work hard for their own financial success whether—and they work hard outside of school to try and raise money to pay for their own university or their college. We know some of them go on to university or college. Some take up trades. Of course, Tec Voc has an excellent aerospace and welding program. We're still waiting for the shovels to be in the ground at Tec Voc, and I'm hoping the Minister of Education will be able to enlighten us when I have the chance to ask him questions in Estimates.

But what has this government done to young people in the West End and young people in the North End and young people all over this province?

Well, they've done their best to slam the door in their face. This is a government which has frozen minimum wage. How do students earn the money to go to university or college? Well, if they don't have parents that have the money to give it to them, they have to go out and earn it. And how can it be fair to freeze minimum wage for the first time in 17 years and make university that much out—that more out of reach?

But it gets worse. It gets worse than that, because now we have a bill before this Legislature that would make university tuition more expensive. Right now there's a law in place which provides that those increases must be limited to the rate of inflation. But this government wants to take the cap off that, allow university tuitions to increase by 5 per cent plus the rate of inflation, which we expect will be somewhere in the nature of 7 per cent per year, and also deregulate other course fees and ancillary fees which could put the cost of post-secondary education out of reach for more and more students.

And, you know, we hear what this government tries to say. They try to tell us, well, no, no, no, we're

providing more money for students. If you look at the budget papers, which I would encourage members to do, you will see that it is all smoke and mirrors. And I will turn members to page 47 of the Manitoba Budget Estimates of Expenditures and Revenues and, of course, the Manitoba Bursary Fund, which last year was \$10,540,000 is this year going to be \$10,540,000. In other words, zero additional dollars to help students deal with a frozen minimum wage and higher tuition. In fact, the only increase at all for a student is about \$1.8 million in Manitoba scholarship and bursary assistance.

This, at the same time as support for universities and colleges is being frozen by this Budget, even though we know universities and colleges have expenses that are increasing, and at the same time as this government is doing away with the tuition tax rebate—and that is a shame because that rebate has helped to retain students in Manitoba. It's helped to attract students to Manitoba, and it has actually meant that, since that rebate came into effect, that students in their first six years after graduation enjoy the lowest tax rate in all of Canada, and with the Finance Minister's speech the other day, we have now discovered that is no longer the case.

* (16:50)

That is the largest tax increase on recent graduates in Manitoba and in perhaps Canadian history, and that is going to make it harder and harder for young people to live out their dreams here in Manitoba, to stay in Manitoba, and that's why I'll be supporting the excellent amendments we put forward, but I will be voting against a budget that slams the door in the face of young people that I'm proud to represent in the West End of Winnipeg.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity to address the Assembly this afternoon and provide a few comments regarding Budget 2017.

First of all, I would like to thank our Finance Minister, Cameron Friesen, and all of his colleagues in his department—[interjection]—oh, sorry—let me rephrase.

First of all, I would like to thank the Finance Minister and all of his colleagues in his department and in the Treasury Board for their hard work and efforts in putting this budget together.

The document that we are debating today, the fiscal blueprint for our year ahead, is one that has been in the making for several months. Our government consulted with over 18,000 Manitobans during our prebudget consultation phase, and I'd like to point out that many of them, just over 40 per cent, were women. This is incredibly important to me as the Status of Women Minister and as someone who believes wholeheartedly in the need for continued advancement of women's rights and as an advocate for women's equality. Our message to all Manitobans and to women especially is that we are listening to them.

As a slight detour, I would also like to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and all my Progressive Conservative colleagues for participating in the shoebox for shelter's initiative on budget day. Doing something so small, like putting together a box of personal items and toiletries for a woman fleeing domestic violence and trying to improve her circumstances may not seem like much to any of us, but these shoeboxes mean a great deal to the many recipients, and I was very pleased to participate in that event with my colleagues on budget day.

Madam Speaker, our government asked people all across this great province for feedback and recommendations in preparation of this budget, and we resoundingly heard from Manitobans that we needed to take a measured, responsible approach to fixing the finances, repairing the services, and growing the economy, and that is exactly what this budget does.

In addition to the many Manitobans that we consulted with, this budget was also drafted with many Manitobans in mind who do not yet have a voice—Manitobans of the next generation, Manitobans like my beautiful three-year-old grandson, Jaxon Wayne Kehler, and my unborn baby grandson, who is due to arrive in this world any day now. I think about these precious children and I am reminded of why I got into politics, and that is to build a better future for the next generation.

In speaking with many women across our great province, we are united in a common concern, the concern with out-migration. What many of us want so desperately and personally is to have a province to raise our families and to have our children and grandchildren inherit a province they can proudly live, work, and call home for years to come.

Under the previous administration, we led the country in out-migration for many years, and many

of us saw our families, our children, and our grandchildren leave the province for greener pastures. Budget 2017 corrects the course and is steering us toward a safer shore, a better place for all.

Our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has pointed out many times that in regards to fixing the finances of this province, it is all hands on deck. I would like to point out that our government set the tone at the top in terms of reducing travel expenditures and administrative costs, and including a reduction in the size of Cabinet.

Our government also set the tone by initiating a voluntary program where we all gave back to annual salary increases. Likewise, in setting the tone at the top, we're asking other agencies and departments within government to do the same and to look where they can reduce their travel budgets and overhead costs without impacting front-line programming or workers.

On another equally important note, a cause that is near and dear to my heart is ending violence against women, and I am proud that Budget 2017 introduces some initiatives to help vulnerable women and girls. Ending domestic and sexual violence is a significant priority for our government, and we are establishing and enhancing many worthwhile initiatives to improve the lives of women and girls in our province.

Under the previous administration, domestic and violent—domestic and sexual assault violence increased significantly to the point where Manitoba led the country in many regards, a statistic no one on the opposite side should be proud of. Family violence and violence against women is a serious crime, and we must stand with those who have become victims of this societal ill.

This budget provides additional supports for Nova's—Nova House's new shelter in Selkirk and many other shelters in the province. I'm also very proud to work with our Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson), our Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke) and Minister of Health, in particular, on improving the lives of women and girls in our province.

To empower the next generation, we're also enhancing initiatives to create two more Unlocking the Toolkit Girls Forums to expose girls, in grade 5 and 6, to women who work in the non-traditional trades of science, technology, engineering and math fields. Studies show that by exposing these girls

to these trades, they are more likely to envision themselves in those roles in the future.

We will also continue our work with the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council through administration and research support, and help to achieve—help them support their goals to help us all achieve women's equality in the province.

Culture is a significant contributor to our economy in this province and a source of quality jobs. And, as such, our budget invests more than \$68 million in targeted, strategic investments in Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Manitoba's at a pivotal time in our cultural history, and we have crafted a budget to reflect the value of this sector, yet find efficiencies within it to help save our hard-earned tax dollars.

The province's robust arts and culture scene is well known but is also need in—a modernization and innovation. Through our recently launched cultural review, we will do just that. This is the first cultural review in 25 years, and we aim to modernize the culture sectors, examine our return on investment and address current pressures within the industries.

We will look at new ways to attract high profile sporting events to Manitoba and create a robust events management strategy to promote major sporting events in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, a new cultural strategy can support numerous provincial priorities, including innovation, job creation, youth retention and indigenous reconciliation. It can contribute to Manitoba's attractiveness as a place to invest and raise a family and be emphasized as a key feature of our tourism.

Madam Speaker, in 1997, our government also introduced a film and video production tax credit and helped grow what was then a \$17-million sector into the \$127-million film industry that it is today. Our government recognized the value of those tax credits, and Budget 2017 maintains those tax credits for the film industry.

I commend all those who work in this vital sector and congratulate them for their hard work and their efforts and their success.

Madam Speaker, as someone who used education as the foundation for building a better life, I'm immensely proud to be proud to be part of a government committed to a brighter future and better education for our youth.

Our early childhood literacy strategy, as well as our commitment to better access to post-secondary education, will be life changing for many young people and will help all our students succeed in our economy.

Our government also just introduced a new grant for lower income post-secondary students that will ensure they receive the up-front support they need in order to further their education in the province. And I congratulate my colleague the Minister of Education on his announcement today.

This new \$10.5-million grant will provide advanced non-repayable financial assistance directly to students who need it most during their course of studies.

We are ensuring that post-secondary education in Manitoba is made more accessible through enhanced support for lower income students while they're in school. This will benefit—this benefit will help approximately 5,800 students with financial assistance that will be provided earlier during the school year than under the former system whereby a loan-reduction award was not applied to a student's debt until the following school year.

Ce budget, le premier depuis que le Manitoba a adopté la Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la Francophonie manitobaine, montre clairement notre engagement à améliorer les services en français à l'échelle du gouvernement. Le renforcement de Secrétariat aux affaires francophones est l'une des clés de la mise en œuvre de la Loi, et je suis fière de dire que le Budget de 2017 va dans ce sens.

Translation

This budget, the first since Manitoba has adopted The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act, clearly demonstrates our commitment to improving French-language services throughout government. Strengthening the Francophone Affairs Secretariat is key to implementation of the Act, and I am proud to say that Budget 2017 is a step in that direction.

English

By increasing the budget for francophone affairs, we are ensuring that departments have improved access to the supports they need to create and implement their multi-strategic, French-language service plans and that the resources are in place to provide even more written and oral translations to government entities.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a team that values integrity, caring, inclusion, common sense and teamwork—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 10 minutes remaining.

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

And, at this time, I'd like to wish everybody a happy Easter and everybody enjoy the extra-long weekend and I hope you have a great time with your families.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 13, 2017

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