

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 20, 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.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Sustainable Development. 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 her statement.

Welcoming New Conservation Officers

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): Every day our conservation officers do a tremendous job protecting our pristine lakes and streams, our magnificent wildlife and our precious environment. They are the boots on the ground, Madam Speaker, keeping Manitobans safe while they enjoy our great Manitoba outdoors. In addition, our conservation officers also maintain and 'promote'—promote the sustainability of our natural resources.

Today, Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure and honour to welcome our newest conservation officers to the Chamber today. These three officers have joined us with their families this afternoon in the House, and I would like to introduce the conservation officers now: Judith Einarson, Lee Kemball and Brady Kidd.

To get to this point, they all had to work extremely hard. Potential recruits must finish a university degree or a two-year college diploma.

Then they go through rigorous training at the Winnipeg police academy, followed by on-the-job mentoring with the department. Congratulations to all three for successfully completing this challenging process.

Our three new conservation officers have been posted throughout Manitoba in The Pas, Neepawa and Manitou. I know they will serve Manitobans well and proudly as they join their fellow conservation officers in the field.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the House to join me in thanking these officers, and all of the officers in Manitoba Conservation for their commitment to preserving and protecting the great outdoors in our beautiful province.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I appreciate the opportunity to extend, on behalf of our caucus, our own thanks and congratulations to the three individuals involved. They're joining an honourable profession. They'll be doing very important work out in the field and we wish them the very best of luck in their future endeavour.

As someone with a master's degree from the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba, I have some understanding of the delicate nature of wildlife issues and trying to manage those in the field. And it's not so much the resources that need to be managed, Madam Speaker, as it is the people.

And not to put too fine a point on it, this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) own comments are actually making it far more difficult for these fine individuals and other conservation officers to do their job. Comments like a race war are completely inappropriate and are actually making it more difficult for these fine people to do their work on behalf of all Manitobans—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order

Mr. Altemeyer: —so the minister is fine—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —I know the members opposite are thin-skinned, Madam Speaker, but the plain truth of the matter is the Premier said those words, he's

refused to apologize for them and those words are having an impact.

I thank the conservation officers for the work that they're doing, and I'm holding the government accountable for their own behaviour.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Liberal caucus to welcome our three new conservation officers and their families.

As new members of our third largest armed law enforcement agency in the province, these officers have a mighty big job ahead. Manitoba's wide and diverse landscapes and wildlife need our protection, and I congratulate these officers on joining the front line in delivering these services.

It's also vital that this government is providing conservation officers with the tools and training they need to do their jobs effectively, including being able to work well with people in indigenous communities. This is an area that has often been not adequately addressed, with previous governments piling on responsibilities and new legislation while cutting funding.

Our caucus is hopeful that these new officers will take great pride in the natural resources they are protecting and will build long-lasting relationships with the Manitobans who've lived off these lands for hundreds of years. As with any peace officer, the relationships that are made with the communities they serve are the most important.

Once again, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, we welcome you to our Chamber and your new roles.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ron Koskie

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I'm proud to rise today to honour Ron Koskie, a wonderful Riel constituent who contributes his time and talent as an active volunteer in our community. Ron and his wife Jo-Ann raised four children in Riel and have 12 grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, Ron taught school for more than 30 years in the Louis Riel School Division and has always been an active community volunteer. Ron helped start the Terry Fox Torchlight Run that is held annually and continues to flourish each year in the Riel community. Additionally, Ron was a provincial coach with the Manitoba wheelchair sports for basketball and track and field.

Ron served on the Norberry community centre board for many years and was presented with a Volunteer of the Year and the Norberry Builder Award. Ron was also awarded the commemorative medal for the 125th anniversary of the confederation of Canada in recognition of significant contributions to compatriots, community and to Canada.

Madam Speaker, Ron continues to give back to the community in his retirement. For the past 20 years, he has co-chaired the St. Vital, St. Boniface and Norwood retired teachers and support staff association. This association holds annual spring and fall luncheons, as well as a golf tournament that raises money for bursaries for the Louis Riel School Division graduates.

Ron is also involved as a community representative in the newly formed RIEL-EVATE foundation, a community-school foundation that serves people in my riding of Riel and provides clothing to newcomers.

Madam Speaker, as the MLA for Riel, I am proud to honour Ron Koskie, who represents the volunteer spirit and makes Riel a great place to live.

And I'd like to ask my colleagues to help me welcome Ron and his wife Jo-Ann, plus Kristen, Kaitlen and Scott to the Legislature.

Transcona Historical Museum 50th Anniversary

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): You have to know where you come from to know where you're going. That's why history is so important and our shared history is remembered and celebrated.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Transcona Historical Museum. Fifty years ago this month, in April 1967, the council of the City of Transcona passed a motion whereby the Transcona Historical Museum was born. That motion was made by none other than Sir Paul Martin, former mayor of the City of Transcona, who passed away just last year, as many of you would remember, and who would have celebrated his 97th birthday just a few

weeks ago. And some of his family are here with us in the gallery today.

The Transcona Historical Museum serves both Transcona and the northern part of Radisson, and the good folks at the museum routinely involve both the MLA for Transcona and myself in their events. We both support the museum and we join together in congratulating them on achieving this significant milestone.

I should mention that the main gallery for the museum is located in the Transcona constituency, but the largest part of the collection is actually located in my constituency of Radisson; specifically, there are 394,960 pounds of artifacts in my constituency, because the museum recently acquired the locomotive steam engine No. 2747. And that—it was the first locomotive steam engine ever built in Transcona. In fact, it's the first locomotive steam engine ever built in western Canada. And it's located in the—on Plessis just north of Transcona Boulevard. Museum is currently working on a long-term plan to better preserve this valuable historical artifact and encourages all Manitobans to support their efforts.

History is important, and those who preserve it are to be commended. So, please join me in congratulating the board, staff and members of the Transcona Historical Museum on their 50th anniversary.

Madam Speaker, I would ask leave that the names of all the staff, board members and supporters in attendance be included in the Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to include all those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Alanna Horejda, museum curator; Jennifer Maxwell, assistant curator; Gwen Hoare, Audrey Martin, Peter Martin, Linda Rougeau, Murray Rougeau, Beverley Smadella, Candice Morin. Board members: Chad Panting, Jack Toey.

Daffodil Month

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): April is Daffodil Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about cancer research and advancements in the fight against it. It's also an opportunity to support the individuals and families coping with this terrible disease. Every one of us in this Chamber and all of our constituents have been touched at one point in our lives or another.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, almost 7,000 new cancer cases were diagnosed

in Manitoba last year, and an estimated 2,800 Manitobans lost their lives to the disease.

Research is a powerful tool in the fight against cancer, which is why investment in CancerCare Manitoba is crucial, along with investments in necessary infrastructure projects. Projects like the CancerCare project would have brought expanded clinical trials, genetic testing and other programs planned for the new site, which are now on hold. It also would have expected to have brought in new—draw in world-renowned researchers and specialists to improve cancer treatment and to save lives, which is what it's all about.

The Cancer Society is encouraging all Manitobans in April not only to wear a daffodil but also to consider doing something special on April 27th, Daffodil Day, for those living with cancer or to further the fight against it. It's simple to make a difference: tell a loved one or a friend with cancer that they are loved; let them know about the society's information and support programs; donate to the Cancer Society or sign up to volunteer with the Canadian Cancer Society; join a Relay for Life team or sponsor someone who is participating.

As we approach the end of Daffodil Month, let us continue to support the fight against cancer. We must join together and continue to support the good work that's being done.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Isabella Dryden

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to acknowledge a very special constituent in Seine River, Ms. Isabella Dryden.

Ms. Dryden is a remarkably inspiring woman. She is 99 years young and has been a teacher in Manitoba for over 80 years. In 1937, after earning her teaching certificate at only 18 years of age, Isabella became a teacher of the one-room Errol School just outside of Lenore, Manitoba. There, she taught grades 1 through 9. She has insisted that the key to her long career as an educator is a positive attitude and the ability to adapt with the times.

After 42 years of teaching, Isabella Dryden retired; however, this was short-lived. She has been a volunteer teacher for over 34 years and currently volunteers for Creative Retirement in Winnipeg teaching computer classes. Many of her students tout her calm encouragement and ability to explain

intimidating subjects in a simple and relatable manner.

A celebration of Isabella and her astounding career and contributions to the province was organized in late March of this year at the Manitoba Teachers' Society. I was honoured to attend and listen to individuals speak to the accomplishments, encouragement and gentle manner in which Ms. Dryden taught. Everyone who attended the event that evening had been positively influenced by Ms. Dryden in some way.

Isabella is an inspiration to us all. Thank you for your continuing work in our community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Filmmaking

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to pay tribute to Manitoba filmmaking and to the premiere showcasing of the movie *Lovesick* last night. It was an extraordinary evening. My colleague the MLA for Kewatinook, my wife Naomi and I attended.

Ali Tataryn, a young Manitoba actress, is not only talented, but has done some extraordinary work in our community helping artists find affordable housing and studio space while starting numerous community projects to get children and communities involved in the arts. She plays a shy, charming, always-ready-to-change-her-mind young woman and shows a startling ability to act, developed here in Winnipeg.

Though Jacob Tierney is the prime focus of the production, Ali is certainly a star. The story of *Lovesick Dash*, played by Jacob Tierney, and his ex-wife Lauren, played by Jessica Paré, is set in Winnipeg. Through some extraordinary photography, from the Assiniboine Park polar bears and seals, to the Red and Assiniboine rivers, leading right up to the very steps of our Legislature and, indeed, inside our Legislature itself, our city plays a starring role. The beauty and marvels of Winnipeg are put on the world stage.

Congratulations to Tyson Caron for his efforts, weaving the story together like a Metis sash and bringing out the best in the actors as well as featuring our beautiful city.

Congratulations to all who helped make *Lovesick* such a success. Tina Keeper and Len Cariou did a great job keeping things moving and entertaining in the lead up to the film.

Filmmaking in Manitoba has come a long way. There will, I am sure, be much more to come. Let us all celebrate the progress.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests that I would like to introduce to you.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's gallery where we have with us today the son of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), Kevin Maloway, and his fiancée Sarah Albaneson, who are here from Comox, BC, and who will be getting married tomorrow.

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you here, and we wish you the very best as you're starting your future together.

And also seated in the public gallery from UFCW Training Centre 37 visitors, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Fiscal Performance Review Release of KPMG Report

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): This government is becoming less transparent by the day. They made lofty promises to be transparent, but have failed miserably.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) said he would publish 97 per cent of his fiscal performance review, but so far has published none of it. He claims that he only learned after he made his comments that he was unable to publish the contents of the review.

We know he has had the review for months because he boasted about taking it to Costa Rica with him when he went on one of his many vacations.

* (13:50)

So can anyone in the government explain: When did they learn that they could not release the fiscal performance review? Was it before or after the Premier was on vacation to Costa Rica? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the interim Leader of the Opposition for that

question on accountability, and we welcome questions on accountability.

Where that former government was not accountable to Manitobans, this government has made that fundamental pledge to Manitobans to be accountable. That's why in the Budget 2017 there is a very full report of the KPMG fiscal performance review.

Our government, as Manitobans know, inherited a mess. And that is why we reached out to Manitobans; we reached out to experts; we engaged a panel of Manitobans to assist us in turning this around, in bringing sustainability to our finances and putting Manitoba on a road to recovery.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The dates matter. The facts matter.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) made a promise, which he has now broken. He says he broke his promise because he did not know government contracts worked. This is a surprising lapse for someone who has been a professional politician for over two decades, but that is what the Premier has said.

The Premier says the information is proprietary to the consultant. But, Madam Speaker, when the government refused a FIPPA request for the fiscal performance review in December 2016, it did not mention third-party commercial interests as the basis for refusal. It refused the request because it would violate Cabinet confidence. The Premier's own department does not think the information is proprietary to the consultant. Their response would have indicated that it did.

So on what basis does the government—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: I thank the interim Leader of the Opposition for a question on the importance of keeping promises.

This government made a pledge to Manitobans that Manitobans pay enough taxes, and you will know that in Budget 2017 there are no new taxes, there are no increases to taxes.

We know that we will be accountable to Manitobans for how we keep our word. We know that Manitobans held the former NDP government to account for not keeping their word when they

first said they would not raise taxes before the 2011 election and then raised the PST after the 2011 election.

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

Ms. Marcelino: I don't think the students would agree with the Finance Minister.

Madam Speaker, the RFP makes it clear the report belongs to Manitobans. This FIPPA request makes it clear the information belongs to Manitobans, and that is being held by the government. The Premier's own department did not cite commercial interests as a reason to refuse revealing contents of the report. All it cited was the Premier's desire to keep his deliberation secret, to hide the report from the people of Manitoba—the people who paid for it.

This was in December 2016. This report was the subject of media inquiries in February 2017. And in late April, the Premier suddenly discovers that the information he took with him in his Costa Rican vacation does not actually belong to the government.

Will the government explain—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I didn't actually hear a question in the preamble of the interim Leader of the Opposition, but I would take this opportunity to have her reflect on the Dunsky Energy Consulting Demand-Side Management in Manitoba: A New Framework report.

Now, why does this report matter? This report matters because the former NDP government contracted for this report to be produced and reported to government. The difference between our approach and theirs—they never told Manitobans the report existed until it was uncovered. We have told all Manitobans that we will use that report that we have contracted with to put us on a road to recovery, to create the change that is so badly needed in this province.

Why did they stand on the side of failing to do this? We stand on the side of succeeding on this.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

**Fiscal Performance Review
Release of KPMG Report**

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, it sounds like the Finance Minister's standing on every side.

So, you know, Madam Speaker, the value-for-money report was paid for by the people of Manitoba, and then the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of this province said that 97 per cent of the report would be made public.

Now, this is a Premier who has been a Cabinet minister in charge of government works for tendering and for contracts. He chaired a Finance committee when he was an MP.

Is he really telling this House that he actually doesn't know the rules?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): This government welcomes any question that the opposition party wants to bring on accountability. They know their own failing record when it came to being accountable to Manitobans.

We disclosed to Manitobans, in the early fall, that we would undertake the most comprehensive prebudgetary exercise in the context of a total fiscal mess that this new government inherited, a deficit that was going to \$1.7 billion in just three years, a deficit that had doubled in the last year.

Madam Speaker, we disclosed to Manitobans what we would do. We said we would listen to Manitobans. We said we would listen to the experts. We said we would compile—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —and aggregate the data and bring it back and put Manitoba on a road to recovery, and that, Madam Speaker, is exactly what this government did.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Allum: The Finance Minister says he would welcome any question. We'd welcome an answer from him just once.

So this is a report about value for money, and so Manitobans paid for it, and they deserve to see what's in the report. They also deserve to see if they

got value for money. After all, the report cost, at a minimum, \$740,000.

Now, when we asked—filed a FIPPA request, nobody said anything about any proprietary interest. In fact, in the response that we got, which I'm going to table now, it said something completely different. It said it was all about Cabinet confidentially—confidentiality.

So, could the Finance Minister do us all a favour and explain his double standard of his double position?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Well, Manitobans can appreciate that that member is in a difficult place, somehow now wanting to jump up and down and demand accountability where he himself and his own government was not accountably, not even disclosing to Manitobans the existence of the secret reports that they were seeking.

The difference between that approach and ours: we told every Manitoban what we were doing. We told every Manitoban we'd be accountable for the results. We told every Manitoban that it would drive decision making and progress.

He asks for evidence of value for money? This is the first budget in 10 years in this province that is under its own estimate for spending in this fiscal year. That, Madam Speaker, is progress.

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

Mr. Allum: It sounds like we touched a nerve with the Finance Minister today.

Now, we've made a very simple request to have this report made public because the Premier of this province looked Manitobans in the eye and he said 97 per cent of the report would be made public. So we asked for that report in January; we asked for it in February; we asked for it in March and again in April, and I—the way things are going it looks like we're going to be asking for the rest of the year.

So why doesn't the Finance Minister do us a favour? We have 29 minutes left in question period. Why doesn't he pop down to his office, go get that report and come clean with the people of Manitoba?

* (14:00)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

It's always interesting what the member does not want to talk about. What he doesn't want to talk about is his opposition's own failure when it came to being accountable—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —to Manitobans. He doesn't want to talk about the reports that they concealed the very existence from Manitobans. He doesn't want to talk about the poor value for money that they got by overspending on East Side Road Authority.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: This member does not want to talk about millions of dollars to the friends of ministers paid out in sole-source untendered contracts.

These are the things that member wants to take a that-was-then and this-is-now approach. We know what approach Manitobans took when they kicked them out.

Health-Care Review Release of KPMG Report

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's actually impressive just how evasive both this Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the Minister of Health can be.

The Minister of Health yesterday claimed that he was implementing recommendations from the KPMG health report, but he refused to release that report with no credible reason whatsoever. We know the report belongs to the people of Manitoba. It's written there in black and white in the RFP for everyone to see, but the minister refuses to even reveal the recommendations that the report made.

What is this minister so afraid of by releasing this report to the public?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I hope that this member is now on the road to repairing the comments, the very damaging comments he made about KPMG in the fall of last year when he said terrible things about the company, alleged that it wasn't—had no Canadian roots, alleged

that they couldn't do good work, alleged that they were going to do all sorts of terrible things.

I hope that he's now moving towards an apology by now demanding something that before he discredited. I hope he's moving towards an apology for the things that he said about the company that did good work, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Manitoba—Madam Speaker, this government broke its promise to Manitobans to protect front-line services by undertaking the biggest cuts to our health-care system in a generation in just their first year on the job.

Breaking their promise of accountability and transparency can now be added to that list of broken promises. We know the minister has the report and he refuses to release it. The minister said he will act on some of the recommendations from the report yesterday, but Manitobans need to see all of them to get the full picture. They want to know exactly why this minister is willing to decimate community health care and put patient care at risk.

Will this minister stop the evasion and simply release the report?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm glad that the member now feigns a concern about patient care, because we know that during his time in government for those 17 years, as the health-care system continued to slide, as people continued to wait longer, as people continued to not get the service they needed in our ERs in our health-care system, he didn't say anything. He stood and applauded for former Health ministers who defended the system as it was, defended the fact we were 10th out of 10 provinces.

He hasn't changed his tune. He continues to defend that. He starts off his question by saying we shouldn't be changing anything; we should be happy with 10th out of 10. We're not happy with that. I would hope that he wouldn't be happy with that either, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, it's clear that this government and this minister is not actually

interested in having a conversation with Manitobans or considering the full picture.

If he wanted to have a full and a real conversation, the first step might be to actually share the information that the government paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for so that Manitobans can make up their own minds. But the minister doesn't think that Manitobans need to be informed. He clearly doesn't want to hear from them because he's already made up his mind. Cuts come first for this minister.

Why is he refusing to actually listen to Manitobans and listen to them about their health care?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I'm still waiting for this member to make up his mind. He first, when he heard about the Selinger government commissioning the Peachey report, he ran out into the hallway and he told the media that it was a good report, that you could find efficiencies and there was lots of things to learn from the Peachey report and we should be moving forward.

Then, a few days later, he changed his mind. He did a one-eighty and he said, no, no, it's terrible. We shouldn't be looking at anything in the Peachey report, a report that the Selinger government, the government that he sat in for many years, actually commissioned, Madam Speaker.

So it's interesting that on the one hand he says we should be looking at reports, releasing them and following them. On the other hand, he doesn't want to follow the report that his own government commissioned, Madam Speaker.

Reproductive Health Care Abortifacient Funding Coverage

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): We learnt that the Common Drug Review, or the CDR, is recommending provinces and territories cover Mifegymiso. This is good news for reproductive here—health here in Manitoba and across the country, recognizing women and girls' rights and need to affordable and universal access to essential reproductive health care.

The CDR reasoned the abortion pill caused little to no serious adverse effects for women and girls. The CDR also confirmed the abortion pill is significantly safer and more effective than two other drugs that are sometimes used.

Does the Minister of Health agree that—of the CDR's assessment of the abortion pill, that it is safe and effective?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): We are reviewing the recommendation from the Common Drug Review and looking at all the options.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The CDR's report also concluded that the abortion pill would only cost the health-care system \$89 more than procedures performed at an abortion clinic and \$916 less than abortions performed at a hospital.

The abortion pill will cost \$300, a significant amount, which consequently makes it inaccessible for many women and girls in Manitoba, particularly those that are economically marginalized. The simple fact is that the abortion pill is the most cost effective and safe way for abortion services.

Does the Health Minister agree that the abortion pill is a more cost effective option for both Manitoba's health care and for women and girls who need it?

Ms. Squires: Manitoba, along with all other provinces, are negotiating the price with the manufacturer through the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, as we do with negotiation of prices for all of drugs, and we'll follow that process.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Minister of Health has been dodging my many, many questions posed directly to him in respect of the abortion pill. And the question is, why? The CDR's recommendation is strengthened by Health Canada's approval of the drug last year, not to mention that it has been available for decades in France, China and the US.

It is hands down considered the gold standard in abortion medication across the globe. And ironically, New Brunswick, the province once known for the most regressive abortion policies, has become the lead across the country.

So will the Minister of Health direct his department to put in place the measures to make the abortion pill free to Manitoba women and girls?

Ms. Squires: I'm proud to be part of this team and I'm proud to work in—with all of my colleagues in

Cabinet and all of my colleagues in caucus. This is what teamwork looks like, Madam Speaker, and I'll make no apologies for standing up and being an advocate for women and girls' health in the province of Manitoba.

Non-Profit Organizations Funding Agreements

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): We have not had a very good performance by this government so far in question period. Let's hope things improve.

I'm hoping that the minister responsible can please explain to all Manitobans why various community groups are falling apart even though the Neighbourhoods Alive! funding was made available in this year's budget.

* (14:10)

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

We've had very good response, actually. I'm not sure where you're getting all your information, but we've had very good response with the communities that we're—in fact, I just received a letter today. We met with the revitalization corporations just a couple of weeks ago in response to their questions, and the letter came back saying that they are very pleased with the expected expenditures—are equal to the last budget and know that you are working hard towards finding the right solution. We actually offer to assist at this process that is focusing on solutions.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: I understand full well that the revitalization corporations, as she refers to them, would be very pleased, as well they should have been, to see that the money for Neighbourhoods Alive! was maintained in the budget. The problem is those organizations are not actually getting the money.

If you phone, as I did this morning, the Central Neighbourhoods Development Corporation, their phone number's not in service. We had interviews just this afternoon that we heard in the media from the Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews Community Association who's had to lay off all of their program staff.

What is this minister talking about when she says everything is fine?

Ms. Clarke: It is up to the individual as to what decisions they make. If they are surmising what the process might be going forward, they are expecting to do what they choose to do.

However, that decision was not made. They did receive their first-quarter funding.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Madam Speaker, that is an unfair characterization of what is going on. The minister putting the blame on the local corporations because her department has not received her permission to flow the money. That responsibility rests with one person and one person only, and that's her.

Will she stop raising red tape for the non-profit sector? Will she honour the multi-year funding agreements that this government has with those organizations, start flowing the money so that they can do the good work they're expecting to be able to do?

Ms. Clarke: I also would like to acknowledge the good work that is done throughout our province by the various groups and organizations that are working hard to ensure that their communities have good programs for all those involved.

I would really like to speak to the red tape. That is precisely why we're having to go through this process. It has become very difficult and these—the committees all agree that there needs to be a simpler process, one the—without the red tape. We are happy to do that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Lake Winnipeg Walleye Fish Population Concerns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the harvest of walleye on Lake Winnipeg has decreased in the last several years and the population of its major food source, the rainbow smelt, has crashed.

The well-known ecologist Scott Forbes is recently quoted as saying there is a real risk that we could be headed for a collapse of the Lake Winnipeg walleye.

We need excellent management, not only for lake Dauphin, but also for the Lake Winnipeg

walleye fishery, the most important sport and commercial fishery in our province.

When is this government going to take action to address the concerns over the Lake Winnipeg walleye?

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

We, in fact, take this issue very seriously and have many meetings, and actually just one this morning with regard to sustainability of our walleye and other fish within all of the lakes of Manitoba.

It's an issue that I know that the government opposite ignored for 17 years. We will get it right, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, the growth rates for Lake Winnipeg walleye have slowed, and the minister has not even adjusted quotas or mesh-size restrictions on nets. Large walleyes are about 90 per cent female, and because of their size they are now being targeted. These big mamas are the future for walleye on Lake Winnipeg. They have very large numbers of eggs and represent the walleye fish for the years ahead. Anglers who are here in the gallery today say there's been a dramatic drop in the large-walleye numbers from last year.

What is this government doing to ensure that large Lake Winnipeg walleye have some protection so that the fishery of the future can be assured?

Mrs. Cox: Again, thank you so much to the member opposite. I would have to tell the member opposite to wait and see.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, this government has already been there a year, and nothing has happened.

The NDP were, unfortunately, a disaster at good management practices in Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis. They had reports calling for urgent action in 2011, but did nothing. They talked of eco-certification, but never did it.

Instead of action, the NDP got rid of staff and cut budgets, so they couldn't even adequately monitor the fishery—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —or enforce its rules. Now, a year later, the situation on Lake Winnipeg is getting worse.

Why, when there are so many concerns and reports, has the government continued a do-nothing-but-study-and-stall approach to the Lake Winnipeg walleye?

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding with the answer from the minister, I would just indicate to members in the gallery that there is to be no applause and involvement in the proceedings that are happening here on the floor. So I would encourage all members to please heed our rules and not applaud to the questions and answers.

Mrs. Cox: This government takes the sustainability of our fish populations very seriously. You know, I've talked to our fish biologists, and we've talked to commercial fishers as well as anglers, and we know that there has been a problem as a result of the former government being negligent with regard to caring about our Manitoba fisheries and listening to anglers and commercial fishermen.

We will get it right, Madam Speaker. We—I have been out talking to commercial fishermen. I have actually talked to the Lake Winnipeg co-management board personally. I will continue to do that. In the next few weeks, we will be discussing with the management board some initiatives that we're taking to address the sustainability of our fish population in that lake.

Manitoba Film Industry Contribution to Economy

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Yesterday was National Canadian Film Day, the largest film festival in the world, ever. From the screening of Lovesick last night and the other productions happening in Manitoba, as referenced by my colleague from River Heights, one can see that the Manitoba film industry is talented and thriving. Having a robust film industry is good for the economy of our province.

Can the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage tell us what the government is doing to encourage this economic driver?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Our film industry is booming, and we are so proud to host wonderful—over 60 productions a year in the province for film and television series. And back in 1997, our government

had introduced the Film and Video Production Tax Credit. It was a \$17-million industry. Today, it is a \$127-million industry. We are very, very proud of that, and that is why Budget 2017 committed to maintaining the Film and Video Production Tax Credit.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (14:20)

Preliminary Inquiry Reform Wrongful Conviction Concerns

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Two days ago, in question period, the Minister of Justice made it clear to Manitobans that she had no idea what the Driskell inquiry was. Yesterday, on social media, the Minister of Justice made it clear to Manitobans that she has no idea what the Driskell inquiry said.

Has the minister now taken the time to review the Driskell inquiry report and its advice to government regarding preliminary inquiries?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): And it's always a great pleasure to stand up and talk about preliminary inquiry reform because that's something that we're talking with our counterparts about across the country.

The fact of the matter is the Driskell case was prior to Stinchcombe which came in, which requires that all evidence be shared with the defence attorneys and so on. So the member opposite—I'm not sure where he's getting at here, but I think he is the one that perhaps doesn't understand the issue.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable minister—or, the honourable member for Minto, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Swan: I will table for the minister page 98 of the Driskell Inquiry report which reads: "Counsel at the Inquiry"—that means lawyers—"agree that although the decision R. versus Stinchcombe was not released by the Supreme Court of Canada until November 1991, the Manitoba policy and practice during the relevant period, late 1990 and 1991, was that all material and relevant information in the hands of the police and Crown was to be disclosed to counsel for the accused."

Manitoba Prosecutions has exactly the same policy then as it had today: the Crown must fully

disclose evidence. It did not and a wrongful conviction occurred.

Why is this minister risking more wrongful convictions in the province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm glad the member opposite knows the definition of a lawyer. That's probably a good thing.

Madam Speaker, I just want to quote the former Ontario ombudsman, André Marin, when he said, with respect to our stand on preliminary inquiries, he said, and I quote: The likely unprecedented collaboration between Manitoba's Chief Justice and Attorney General represents a refreshing principled compromise to the present quagmire. It effectively makes use of the court time while recognizing that defence counsel can still have an opportunity to cross-examine key witnesses within certain parameters.

Madam Speaker, the status quo is not an option. There was a mess left for us under the previous NDP government.

We are going to do the right thing. We're going work with our counterparts across the country and make sure that we get to the bottom of this very important issue in the criminal justice system.

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

Mr. Swan: This minister didn't consult with a single criminal defense lawyer before going ahead and proposing doing away with something that is protected under the Criminal Code and the Constitution.

The Driskell inquiry cost Manitoba nearly \$3 million. Manitoba then had to pay \$4 million in compensation to Mr. Driskell. Mr. Justice LeSage wrote: The wrongful conviction would likely have been avoided altogether if a preliminary inquiry had taken place.

Will this minister continue blind along her path to create more wrongful convictions in Manitoba, or will she do her job and at least read the Driskell report?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think the member opposite needs to look at a much bigger picture. Driskell is one component. There are so many other reports that have been issued as a result of some of the challenges that we're faced with in the criminal justice system.

I will point to the Aboriginal justice commission of 2001, quote: It is clear—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —that the requirement for a preliminary inquiry causes several problems in the system. It causes delay in the processing of cases; it ties up judicial time that could be put to much better use.

Preliminary inquiries are, and I quote—and quote it again: an inappropriate and wasteful use of judges' time and talents. Madam Speaker, that was the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry—the Aboriginal justice commission.

We have a lot of work to do. I suggest that members opposite get on board and support us here in Manitoba.

Social Impact Bonds Program Replacement

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Over breakfast yesterday the Premier (Mr. Pallister) told the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce that he's going to restructure the way social services are delivered here in Manitoba, and it's not the first time that the government has gone on the record saying it will pursue the use of social impact bonds.

So will the Premier tell us today which programs he's going to replace with social impact bonds?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): We know from the opposition in terms of their years in government in terms of their progress on a number of files whether it be children in care going up to record levels in terms of 10,000–10,500 kids in care.

We have a innovative solution. It's a innovative financial solution that can help augment programming and policy, that's a part of it. We think it's an important step forward. We're willing to partner with the community to create some solutions within our communities.

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

Mr. Kinew: I appreciate that the minister has new canned lines to read about this topic, but I would just like to know which program that those lines would apply to? When it comes to social impact bonds and their use in delivering social services, sometimes it can motivate companies to cherry pick the people that they help and then consequently leaving the more vulnerable behind.

Manitobans would likely feel more at ease if there was strong legislation to prevent these kinds of problems.

So can the Premier tell the House how he plans to regulate social impact bonds to avoid the harmful outcomes that have been associated with their use?

Mr. Fielding: We know the results that we've seen for the opposition. Having government involved in every aspect from cradle to grave has not produced some results.

This government is about innovation. This government is about providing community-driven supports. This is something that's important to the community. That's something that we're going to be invested in. We're going to partner with organizations, agencies. It's going to be able to deliver outcomes for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: If the minister is unwilling to tell us which programs will be replaced, perhaps he can simply reassure the House that his government will follow through with accountability.

The reviews around the world have been mixed regarding social impact bonds. That's why we need legislation that keeps the private sector accountable to the people that they're being hired to help.

Right now the Premier wants to eliminate the legislation that keeps private-public partnerships transparent.

Instead, will he change course and will this government extend that legislation to ensure that social impact bonds are accountable too?

Mr. Fielding: I know the members opposite and including the member is searching for a platform for his election campaign, and what I would suggest is a innovative approach in terms of social impact bonds. We are bringing more money into the community. Something that the community supports is something that would be important to be a part of his leadership campaign that's there.

We believe in outcomes-based financing, something that's going to develop our industries, something that's going to develop our communities, something that's worked well in other jurisdictions and we're going to partner and make things better for Manitobans.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Government Economic Plan

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I'm proud that our government is building the foundation for entrepreneurs and businesses to flourish here in Manitoba, resulting in a stronger economy.

Last night, the Information and Communication Technologies Association of Manitoba held their signature event: The Innovators 2017.

Technology and innovation is shaping business now and into the future. With so many entrepreneurs in my riding of St. Norbert and in Manitoba, many recent graduates of our university and colleges supporting the sector have never been more important in helping grow Manitoba's economy.

Naturally, I'm a big fan of entrepreneurship having a small business background myself.

Can the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade tell the House what this government is doing to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation in Manitoba?

*(14:30)

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): It certainly was an exciting night for Manitoba entrepreneurs and innovators. We're excited about it as well.

Our government has a very ambitious vision for Manitoba and we are open for business. We continue to work on our 10-point economic plan. We've established the Red Tape Reduction Task Force to reduce barriers to doing business. And we have signed two new trade deals to help Manitoba business and Manitoba workers. Our government will establish a comprehensive access-to-capital strategy to support those new jobs in Manitoba. And we have committed as a government to make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. And we are harnessing the optimism in Manitoba businesses to make Manitoba the best province in Canada.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Taxi Industry Regulation

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): 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.

(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 is signed by many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): 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 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 has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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.

There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction 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.

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 has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Dakota Collegiate Sports Complex

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 physical, mental and social welfare of 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 the improved physical and psychological health and well-being of students.

(4) Dakota Collegiate spent several years raising money towards the construction of the Louis Riel

School Division sports complex to replace the poor condition of its playing field.

(5) Dakota's varsity teams have been forced to play elsewhere because of the poor condition of its playing field.

(6) Dakota Collegiate must put the project out to tender and break ground in a matter of months for the field to be completed in time for this coming school year.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for this project for political reasons despite the extensive community support, fundraising and engagement.

(8) It is a short-sighted move on the part of the provincial government to undercut the dedicated efforts of students, staff and the community in general.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the tireless efforts of Dakota Collegiate, its students, parents, staff and the surrounding community; to recognize the need for excellent recreation facilities in all Manitoba schools; to reverse this regressive cut and to provide the funding necessary to complete the Louis Riel School Division sports complex.

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

There are a number of conversations that are going on that are making it very difficult for me to hear the petitions that are being read. So, if people are having conversations, I wonder if you could bring the decibel down or move to the loges to have those conversations or to the chairs at the back of the room. Thank you.

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.

* (14:40)

(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 27th, 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:

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 Manitobans.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

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.

(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.

Now, this petition has been signed by Kuldeep Singh Khotar [*phonetic*], Jatinder Kaur Khokhar and Manpreet Singh and many, many more Manitobans.

Provincial Nominee Program

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 is as follows.

(1) The provincial government has proposed regressive changes to the Provincial Nominee Program that create financial and social barriers for newcomers.

(2) Starting this year, successful provincial nominees must pay a \$500 fee as part of their application, adding to the financial burden of applicants.

(3) While the provincial government's stated justification for the fee is that it will be reinvested into language-support programs, the PNP already requires nominees to have proven English- or French-language skills.

(4) The provincial government is also changing its criteria from selecting nominees with family and community connections in Manitoba to an employer-driven focus that will only select nominees with approved job offers from established employers.

(5) The shift in focus jeopardizes the PNP's successful 86 per cent retention rate as, without family or community ties, nominees will move on to other provinces with larger job markets.

(6) This change provides employers with an incentive to select newcomers based on reduced cost, leaving nominees vulnerable to exploitation.

(7) The business community and the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce have made it clear that the PNP is a successful program, driving the economy with skilled workers.

(8) According to a report in 2014, 94 to 98 per cent of nominees reported employment earnings within their first year of arriving in Manitoba and had the second lowest unemployment rate among immigrants in Canada.

(9) Despite the wealth of economic and social benefits that newcomers bring to the province, the Premier cruelly portrayed them as a burden to society by inaccurately linking provincial nominees to high unemployment rates and social assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to maintain the PNP's nomination criteria, to remove the \$500 fee and continue to invest in newcomers who build the province, drive the economy and promote diversity and inclusion in Manitoba.

Signed by many, many Manitobans. Thank you.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry provides an important service to all Manitobans.

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 have 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.

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

*(14:50)

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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.

(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 consultation 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 Manitobans.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I rise today to read a petition into the Legislature.

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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.

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

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.

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

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

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 and passenger–taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislature–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 is signed by many Manitobans, Mr. Speaker–Madam Speaker. Thank you.

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 different 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 such as 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 was signed by many, many, many, many, many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Micklefield: Thank you, Madam Speaker. After witnessing quite an entertaining pantomime on the opposite side, I'd like to read some serious business into the record.

In accordance with the provisions of rule–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, order, order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), on a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Point of order. As part of the orders of the day, members of the official opposition read petitions signed by individual Manitobans concerned about issues. The Government House Leader has just stood up and called that a pantomime and said it is not serious.

I would like the Government House Leader to apologize to Manitobans that he has just slighted with his comments right now.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, there's no rule cited, but my comments are misconstrued. I do retract them nonetheless.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Micklefield: In accordance with the provisions–

Madam Speaker: Sorry. That should conclude the matter.

House Business

Mr. Micklefield: In 'concorrance' with the provisions of rule 2, I am announcing that the following list of bills are considered by the

government as specified bills for this Second Session of the 41st Legislature: bills 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 32.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield) that in accordance with the provisions of rule 2 the following list of bills will be considered by the government as specified bills for this Second Session of the 41st Legislature: bills 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 32.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on House business, pursuant to rule 33(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forth by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino). The title of the resolution is: Provincial Government's Plan to Shutter Three Winnipeg Emergency Rooms will Undermine Patient Care and Hurt Families and Seniors.

* (15:00)

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that pursuant to rule 33(8) the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Tyndall Park. The title of the resolution is Provincial Government's Plan to Shutter Three Winnipeg Emergency Rooms Will Undermine Patient Care and Hurt Families and Seniors.

BUDGET DEBATE (Sixth 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 Fort Garry-Riverview, who has unlimited time.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Thanks to my friend for Fort Rouge for that extended applause.

First, I'm honoured to get up and continue from yesterday. Time went so quickly. I just was turning over to page two and suddenly the—it was time to adjourn the House for the day. So I'm pleased to be

able to have additional time to be able to talk about last week's budget.

As I said yesterday, I can hardly do better than what my colleagues on this side of the House have put forward on any number of issues on infrastructure, on northern issues, on justice issues, on Crown services, on health care, on education, on the arts, on mining, on agriculture, on the environment, on immigration, on missing and murdered indigenous women, on the situation facing women in this province, on families, and so in each case, of course, every member of our caucus has made a trenchant critique of the government's budget.

And my job, I think, in the remaining time that I have is to simply to sum up the official opposition's position on the budget, which is quite simply—put simply—we won't be supporting the budget at the end of today, and there are any number of reasons for that, of course.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to read into the record, and I appreciate member's patience, but it was a very important point, I think, to read into the record a opinion piece by Dr.—Professor David Canfield of the University of Manitoba who has written extensively about the deficit myth here in Manitoba, and this is not to say neither Professor Canfield nor the official opposition doesn't think that you have to manage the deficit. We certainly did so during our time in government. The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) as Finance minister at the time, 10 consecutive balanced budgets, an unmatched record in this country, and then we came upon the greatest financial crash known to modern capitalism. And in 2000 thereafter, this government, our government at that point, faced with this daunting crash inspired predominantly by voracious capitalists who tried to wring every single possible penny out of the financial system across the globe and therefore sent the markets crashing, faced with that choice we decided, in consultation with the people of Manitoba, to continue to invest in the programs and services that they rely on in order to ensure that no Manitoban is left behind. That was a difficult choice but it was the right choice. It was the courageous choice.

And on that side of the House, on the government side when they were in opposition, they voted against that kind of support for people across this province in every single corner of Manitoba. That was a—one of the many sad episodes in our political history with the Conservatives always

voting against the interests of working men and women in this province, of seniors, of students, of school-age children, of kids who require child care in every conceivable way over the past number of years and then historically through time, that side of the House, now the government side, has voted against investments in making sure that our communities are strong, safe and sustainable.

And I've said this many times, Madam Speaker, when my community is strong, my family's strong; and when my community suffers, my family suffers; and we were never ever going to let that happen.

Now, I wanted to talk about the deficit myth yesterday, and so I won't go back there unless there are some members who want to—any further elucidation on it. But I also wanted to talk just briefly about the very sensitive topic of taxes. And that's because there's a significant mythology around taxation in this province and, certainly, that's a mythology propagated by the government's side, much to the detriment of the people of Manitoba who rely on their political representatives to deal honestly and straightforward on matters of the economy at a minimum—a whole range of issues, of course, all issues, but on that one principally. And the government has hung its hat both on the mythology of a deficit out of control, which is clearly not true and it was demonstrated not to be true by a report commissioned by the Finance Minister just weeks before the budget, from Moody's, and Moody's said quite clearly that Manitoba has debt affordability. That means we can pay that debt while continuing to support the programs and services that Manitobans rely on, and then in addition to that, to invest in the very infrastructure to create a society that's worthy of the 21st century rather than taking us backwards to a society that looks awfully reminiscent like the 1990s. But, if we continue on in the direction that we're going, the no-growth '90s are going to come back to haunt Manitobans in the same way, in the manner that it happened just 17 years ago. It will—it's starting all over again.

And I caution the government's side. I caution the Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and the 12 and a half other Cabinet members and all of the additional members of the government's side not to go down that direction, not to dismantle the infrastructure of Manitoba in the way that they did in the 1990s. That's not good for my family. It's not good for your family, Madam Speaker. It's not good for anybody's family in this House, and I would encourage them not to continue in the very

dangerous direction that they're heading because they really are going to take us off a financial cliff from which it took us a number of years to recover as we rebuilt Manitoba after the no-growth '90s of the Filmon government.

One of the main mythologies, though, that we hear in the House all the time—and it's a sad one—and I know members opposite probably even do this on the doorstep. And so I want to put a simple fact on the record for them, and that simple fact is this: that Manitobans pay \$4,600 less in taxes today than they did at the end of the Filmon regime—\$4,600 less in taxes. You can talk about all the other stuff that's happened in between. The simple fact is that taxation is now much, much lower than it was once upon a time. We can point to the corporate tax rate that was, I think, 17 per cent when we came into government in 1999 and now is down to 12 per cent.

Personal—*[interjection]* We'll get to small business.

On personal income taxes the rate came down by several percentage points over our time in government. *[interjection]* And my friend from Minto was right to remind me that the small-business tax started at 8 per cent when we came into government and went down to zero—zero. So there's a mythology that gets propagated by the government's side in order to establish its austerity agenda that's simply not true. Manitobans pay \$4,600 less than they did in 1999 in taxation.

* (15:10)

Now, we can have a public policy debate about whether there was complete value in that and I think we would be interested in that kind of a debate. We're academic and—oriented on this side of the House. We love a good debate. We love using factual information to marshal a good argument. But the fact of the matter—the fact of the matter—is that Manitobans did very, very well by the NDP governments over four elections in 17 years when it came to taxation. It's a simple—it's a sad testament to the government side that within one year and one day of being elected—I think I have that right—that they're desperate to propagate a mythology that simply is not true, and I would ask them all to go to their doorsteps; we ring the bells—I know you knock your heads on the door, but we ring the bells, and—*[interjection]*—yes, because there's no knocking going on here; we ring the bells—and say, I want to be honest with you, voter, and that honesty is this: that the NDP lowered your taxes and at the same

time they built your province for the benefit of you and their—and your family. We've made a mistake by being Conservatives. We want to be New Democrats too. That would be the right way to—for them to approach their doorstep conversations, but I don't think—but I don't think that's going to happen.

Now, my friend from St. James, very astute individual, ought to know that his own Finance Minister commissioned a report from Moody's that said clearly, transparently, quite simply, that Manitoba has a strong financial foundation. Manitoba has debt affordability and that the worst thing that a government can do is stop investing in the economy of the province, and yet when the Finance Minister stood up just a week ago that's exactly what he did.

So I know the member from St. James is going to go out and correct the record. He's going to go on that inter-web thing we were just talking about a few minutes ago and he's going to get on that bookface, and he's going to make sure that he puts the proper—proper—information out there in an honest and forthright manner. And I know him to be a great individual and I'm sure he wants to do nothing less than be honest with the people of St. James, like his fantastic predecessor was, who on every doorstep made clear to the people of St. James actually what's going on, actually what the truth of deficits and taxes and economic development were—are—were and are in Manitoba and how the government is on the path to destroying every bit of progress we made over four elections and 17 years.

And I remind them that the people of Manitoba voted for us each and every time—one, two, three, four times. We had their backs; they had our backs. That's the way it ought to be and we ought not to get into crowing about winning one year after an election, because that stuff comes back to haunt you. That stuff comes back to haunt you, and if I can ever do any value to my friends on the government side, the one thing I want to be sure is don't let that stuff come back to bite you.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Be—[interjection]—forthright and—I thank you, Deputy Speaker. Welcome to the Chair. I'm sorry. I thought I heard an order. Not many can get me to be—not many to get me to pause, but I thought I heard your very authoritative voice call order, and I wanted to be sure that I was respecting the Chair, as I know all members want to do each and every day.

Even the House leader of the government side who made a bit of a blunder a few moments ago had the decency to stand up and make a non-apology apology right out of the Tory textbook—page 204 for the Health Minister because I know he likes to know what number that's on in the Tory manual of how to not apologize and apologize at the same time.

And that is true; that was a—quite a—I just want to say parenthetically about question period, that that wasn't a good day for the government side. There haven't been very many good days over the past 366, but that—today's performance in question period left a lot to be desired. Great incisive questions coming from this side of the House on the budget and on the economy and, frankly, no answers, and that's no surprise. We don't get answers very often, and today was an especially clear example of that, and I can only say wait 'til Dad gets home; he's not going to be very happy about the performance of the kids today.

An Honourable Member: Yes, wooden buffaloes flying out the door.

Mr. Allum: There'll be wooden buffaloes, as my friend from Minto says, flying out the door, as there are going to be many contestants for that particular non-award.

So I just wanted to take that issue on on taxes because I think it's important for the government side. We know because we actually read the budget, and during our time in government it was a very comprehensive budget so that people could understand the full implication of it. We wanted to make sure that government members understood that Manitobans did very well by us when it came to taxation: \$4,600 less for the average family than when it was in 1999. It's—[interjection] It's in—and so, you know, the interesting thing here, as my friend from St. James—and I guess we're doing a duo today. Yes, it's—you know, I'll be Paul Simon to his Art Garfunkel.

But he wants to raise the issue of the PST, and I said earlier that in 2009 we encountered the greatest—and he knows this to be true—the greatest recession in modern capitalism. And we made certain decisions about that in order to safeguard the well-being of the people of Manitoba. And then during that time we also faced not one, but two major floods, with the second flood costing something in the area, I believe, of—

An Honourable Member: One point two billion.

Mr. Allum: —\$1.2 billion. My friend from Wolseley helps me with that information, and I appreciate that.

So we could've turtled like the Conservatives would do, but we don't turtle. We've got a backbone. We stand up, and we say we're going to do the right thing by the people of Manitoba, and we're going to also take care of their welfare and well-being and be certain—and be certain—that Manitobans and their families have a secure, stable circumstance in which to live, and we've already seen—and I'm going to talk about a lot of these in the next little while—about the manner in which the government today has abandoned the people of Manitoba even though there is no crisis in the same way that our government faced.

So a public policy decision was made at that time to raise the PST by 1 cent on the dollar, and the people of Manitoba, as is right, came the next election, could decide about that. I didn't hear much about it on the doorstep; I don't think any of our colleagues really did at all. And—but a public policy decision was made, and it was made in good faith and it was made to ensure the well-being of Manitobans. And it's fair to debate whether that was the right tool or should it been a different package of measures. It might've been, but an action was taken. But the government side would lead you to believe that something terrible and egregious happened there. So I want to remind them that Duff Roblin, one of their heroes, Duff Roblin, a hero on that side of the House—in fact, a hero to many Manitobans; I count him among one of my—

An Honourable Member: A Progressive Conservative.

Mr. Allum: —yes, he was one of those rare species called a Progressive Conservative—actually implemented the PST in Manitoba. It wasn't a New Democrat who did that; it was the Conservatives who did that. So let's remember.

As I said yesterday, I've read a lot of history, I've heard a lot of revisionist history. And he didn't just do it by 1 cent on the dollar, Madam Deputy Speaker; he did it by 5 cents on the dollar. And so—[*interjection*] Yes, that's, you know, if—I am sure if the Finance Minister put his calculator to work he would have a über percentage increase for the—[*interjection*]-yes, it's infinity; it'd be too hard to calculate.

So let's be honest when we're in the House. Let's be clear what the facts are. Let's be honest with the

people of Manitoba when we're talking about budgets and political economy and economic development and economic growth. Let's be honest about it and not—not—go from speaking points which do members on the governing side constituents a grave, grave disservice. Don't do that. Don't let your political career be like that. It's not worth it.

* (15:20)

So I just wanted to make that point. I wanted to review that little piece of history just because we hear it all the time, day in, day out in question period; this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this Finance Minister gets up and talks about the provincial sales tax.

But, you know what the really, really difficult part of that conversation is? They've had not one but two budgets to do something about it, and they haven't had the courage, they haven't had the backbone to do it. They've just sat idly by because they want to complain about it on the one hand and dine off of it on the other side. That's not right. That's not the kind of honest, forthright governing that a government needs to do. Don't do that. That's not correct—[*interjection*]

And I hear the member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle), I'm not sure what he's trying to say to me. No, he's trying to instruct me on something.

But what I've laid on the table today so far to this point has been absolutely factually correct. And you need to be honest about your politics in order to be able to live with yourself, year after year, election after election. That's what we do on this side of the House. I challenge you to do the same on your side.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I'm sure you're getting a quite different view of the world from there, and I appreciate you taking on that important role this afternoon. I hope that I'm able to do this in the way that it ought to be done. And sometimes I'm known to have a little passion run through me. But you know I always have respect for the great traditions of this House. I have great respect for all members of the House. But all's we're asking for, all's we're begging for, all's we're pleading for is an honest debate about the reality of Manitoba's situation, not talking points dreamed up by political operatives in the Premier's office that simply are not true.

So let's get to some of the elements of the budget that I think my friends have covered quite well, but I want to do so myself. And I think we'll start, it's the

right place to start, with Health, because I don't think any of us would disagree that without your health there just simply isn't anything else.

And so that's why over four elections and 17 years we invested in the health-care system unlike any other government known to Canadians. We came in facing a fact that the former government had fired a thousand nurses; they'd chased doctors out of this province by the boatload. They had only 70 training seats for doctors at the University of Manitoba until we came along. I believe there's at least 110—[interjection]—yes.

And so what—so when we came into government, we made sure to invest in modern, state-of-the-art facilities to ensure that Manitobans had good health care, timely health care, health care when they needed it and at no point was the size of your wallet a determinant of whether you got care. At no time at—when you're in a health institution of any kind did somebody say, well, yes, let's check your Visa first before we provide any 'tind' of care. And at no point do they say, well, let's have a look at your private health insurance to see whether you're covered for that. That doesn't happen in this country, and it certainly does not happen in this province when we're the government. But we're not too sure of where this Health Minister and this government is taking us when it comes to ensuring accessible public health care for all Manitobans.

And so we think of the things that have been undertaken by already—undertaken by the Health Minister, and, frankly, it boggles the mind. Capital projects were cancelled, I believe to the amount of 80—

An Honourable Member: A billion dollars in Health.

Mr. Allum: One billion dollars—\$1 billion. I was going to give them too much credit there—\$1 billion. And one of those—there were many things that are egregious about that, but the thing that stands out for me like a big neon sign going on and off is the cancellation of the state-of-the-art CancerCare facility at the Health Sciences Centre. Who does that, Madam Deputy Speaker? Who does that? The most terrible scourge known to humankind is cancer, and so there was an opportunity—[interjection]—well, I'm not sure what the member from Thompson just said. I'm talking about the very serious subject of cancer and its scourge, that it's had an impact certainly on my family and on every family in this House, and he says, oh, I thought the scourge—I heard him

correctly—I thought the scourge was you guys, meaning the NDP.

That's not right, Madam Deputy Speaker. He's welcome to join in the conversation and take his time when his debate comes on, or he may have already spoken, but he's not right to think it's funny to joke about cancer. I don't think any of us do. [interjection] Well, I know. Then we'll give you ample opportunity to explain that at some later time then, because you're going to have to explain to people in Thompson why you have that—why he has that particular attitude.

But I want to say, who cancels a state-of-the-art, 21st-century facility that will serve the well-being of every single family in this province? Who does that? Well, only one group does that: that's the Conservative government in Manitoba.

And I'm astounded by that fact and I'm even more astounded by the fact that CancerCare Manitoba had already invested 18 or 19 million dollars in building that facility, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that doesn't seem to have mattered. In fact, the Health Minister walked down there one day and he said, you know, I'm not really too interested in this project. We want you to reimagine it, which means we want you to make it a lot, lot cheaper and a lot less useful and a lot less state of the art. They're actually wanting to take cancer treatments back to the 20th century when we were thinking ahead as a government to make sure there was state-of-the-art cancer care in Manitoba for every Manitoban that was 21st century, modern and ready, willing and able to ensure the best care possible for Manitobans. And so it boggles the mind how that government could make such a brutal, terrible decision, and I hear about it in my constituency and I'd be very, very surprised if other members haven't heard about this, too, because we know—we know—that cancer, quite sadly, touches every single Manitoban in every single Manitoban family.

But they didn't stop there, Madam Deputy Speaker. Then there was the closure of emergency room services, one in—just on the edge of my constituency along with the good member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard), that's at Victoria General. And, again, they closed that as an emergency and turned it into urgent care. She knows as well as I do because she's probably heard from her constituency in the same way that I have. They don't understand why that change is being made. But that wasn't the most egregious change. The most

egregious change happened in Concordia, and hundreds of people turned out last night to tell the government that they'd made the wrong decision. You see, the government says they listen, but will they listen to those folks in the Concordia constituency and the surrounding region who rely on that emergency room for care when they need it and they're not going to get it anymore?

And then there's the issue of Misericordia that's located in my colleague from Wolseley's constituency, but is used by—*[interjection]*—I know, by constituents in Minto, certainly in Fort Garry-Riverview, in Fort Rouge, and I'm sure in any number of constituencies in the city on the government side, and they just pulled the plug on it. It just—snap—disappeared. My son-in-law just recently had a terrible eye infection. He said, well, what should—you know, he came over for dinner, he said, what should we do, he said. Well, we think maybe you ought to get to Misericordia. They're going to take care of you. He went down there, got the treatment immediately that he needed it and there was no problem. He was taken care of, as were hundreds, thousands—probably hundreds of thousands of people taken care of by the Misericordia urgent care unit, and today we find the fact that it's no longer going to exist. That's a travesty of health care and that's a travesty of this particular government who makes these kinds of decisions and wants to make the people of Manitoba suffer for no apparent reason.

* (15:30)

Then there was the cancelling—the elimination of the QuickCare clinic in St. Boniface. Again, I put out, as we all do, information to our constituents saying on health care and where you can get it and that kind of thing. And we had noted on it that you can go to the QuickCare clinic in St. Boniface for immediate service on an issue—health issue affecting you or your family. And then it's just closed within weeks of me putting that out there. My constituents were happy to know that, happy to know that there was, so close by, there's a QuickCare clinic. And then—snap—it's gone.

This is not the way in which you improve Manitoba. The government claims that they want to make Manitoba the most improved province, but in every case that I've talked about right now it's demonstrably going to get worse and you're—they're responsible.

But you know the thing that really, really got to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I heard the Health Minister's announcement about these health-care cuts that he was making. He said, and he stood in front of a microphone and he said health care is broken.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

That's not true. That is so wrong to say that. Can it be improved? Absolutely. Is it broken? Absolutely not, and it's not broken because it ensures—it ensures that every Manitoban has access to a publicly paid system where they don't ask for your Visa card; they don't ask for your insurance policy. You're going to get your care when you need it, as soon as you need it. That's a healthy health-care system, not the kind envisioned by the government that's going to rip it down, tear it down and leave Manitobans in the lurch when they need health care.

I take offence to that and I want to give you two examples of that, because this is really important to me, and every member of the House will have encountered something like this with their kids.

My kid—is a long time ago now—but he was in—playing tag in the gym or something like that. He tripped over another kid's leg and he went flying into the wall like a torpedo. And it was actually during a federal election—I forget if it was 2004 or 2000, but he was—I was on doorsteps at that time, talking about health care for Canadians, and I got a phone call saying, you need to get to the school; Donovan's just gone straight head-first into a wall, he's got a severe concussion and could you get here right away?

So I bombed over there. I gave him the fireman's lift, we went down to Health Sciences service—Health Sciences' emergency department and within a matter of minutes he was in there; he was triaged within a matter of minutes. More, he had a CAT scan. He got excellent service because he needed right then, and that's the way the system works.

And then a totally different example—a different example: I—several years ago, about five, six, I had a bout with kidney stones and I was in freakish pain, like I was beside myself. I can distinctly remember trying to crawl down the stairs to my front door where my wife was running in from a run and she's saying to me, well, what are you doing lying on the floor, and I'm saying I'm in colossal pain. And she says you must have kidney stones, and so I said I don't know, you're the nurse. I don't have a clue. All's I know is that I'm in freakish pain.

So I was sent to Victoria—we went—she drove me to Victoria, dropped me off in the emergency room at Victoria, and within a couple of minutes, because I was in freakishly—in pain, I was given immediate service. I got pain relief and they kept me for a couple of days in order to ensure that that stone would break up, it would pass, I would be okay. It was the best service possible.

So I take offence to the Health Minister when he says the health system is broken. It's not broken. Can it be improved? Yes, but it's not going to be improved when you start breaking it down in the way the Tories are doing.

An Honourable Member: You had 17 years to improve it.

Mr. Allum: Well, as—I—you know, I know my friend from Fort Richmond shares that same institution. I know that she's got calls about it, and I know that she's had no explanation other than defer to the Health Minister, who also has no explanation for why that essential service in our shared community no longer exists.

So that's health care. That's what the budget delivered on health care, at a minimum. I think there's—my friend from Concordia had a much more extensive explanation—critique of the budget when it came to health care, and so I'll leave that for now because I wanted to move on to education, which members will know is important to all of us. Most of us, I'm sure, have kids. Most of us were students at one point or another. I was a student for, really, a long, long time. And so I think all of us value education, and I have no doubt on both sides of the House that that's true. Make that clear.

But the government has taken a number of actions to undermine a public education system that has worked very, very well and served Manitoba families and Manitoba students very, very well for a long, long time. *[interjection]*

Well, I'm not sure if the member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle), Madam Deputy Speaker—thank you—I'm not sure what the member for Thompson was saying to me. If he was talking about PISA international test results, I'm quite prepared to have that conversation with him any time. If he's talking about PCAP and test scores for Manitobans, I'm quite happy to have that conversation every time because I take it personally, and I take offence to the fact that this government, day in and day out,

degrades and derides a public education system that we're proud of on this side of the House.

Fabulous things happen in schools every single day. Shame on them for saying that it doesn't. That shouldn't happen. It should never be said in this House. That degrading deriding of a public education system is an insult to every student, every teacher, every EA, every administrator, every principal, and it should never be uttered by anyone in this House.

Well, it does—I have to admit, Madam Deputy Speaker, Hansard doesn't record volume, so I'm sorry for that. But I am passionate about it. You have to be passionate about these issues. If you want to do this job correctly, you have to be passionate and you have to be courageous and have the backbone to stand up for—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Colleen Mayer): Order.

Mr. Allum: —what you believe in. And on this side of the House, we do that every single day, no matter if we're in opposition, in government; it doesn't matter. We're the party that stands up for Manitobans—

The Acting Speaker (Colleen Mayer): Order.

I want to remind everyone that the noise levels are getting a little bit louder than should be, which makes it difficult, so I'm asking everyone to keep their talking to a minimal when you are listening to the member.

Thank you.

An Honourable Member: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'll also try to keep my passion—

The Acting Speaker (Colleen Mayer): Oh, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Allum: I understand. I have a hard time keeping track of myself, of Fort Garry-Riverview or anywhere else for that, so I'm right with you there. We're bonding.

But I want to talk about education. As I said, I feel very passionate about it, and I'm quite prepared to have conversations with members opposite on test scores because I don't think you should be out there talking about our education system in that way. I don't think you properly understand what they are, what they do or what those results mean, and I would ask you—I would beg you—not to undermine our public education system by taking that terrible myth to the doorsteps of your constituents.

But what we do know is that Budget 2017 undermined a number of critical–critical–innovations and capital infrastructure projects in our education system that our kids are going to pay for, for generations to come.

* (15:40)

The—we'll start with small class size; that's something that we felt extremely strongly about. I was not minister of Education and Advanced Learning when we launched that program; that was my predecessor, maybe your predecessor from St. Vital, the honourable, the wonderful Nancy Allan, who may have been behind that. It could have been the former member for Gimli, Peter Bjornson. I know he was a strong supporter, as a teacher himself, history teacher, you can't get any better than that, of the Small Class Size Initiative.

And, as my friend from Fort Rouge points out day in and day out, what parents always told us is that they want more one-on-one time with their child and the teacher. That is so—such a simple, simple calculation that makes so much sense. And the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) says ask any parent, do you want more—your kid to have more one-on-one time with your teacher, they are going to answer yes.

Now, I admittedly don't have a large focus group on this. The evidence for small class sizes is quite significant. And I know that my friend from St. James is a former school trustee and we'll have a debate on the evidence at some point when it's over a coffee or a glass of water or if he's willing to buy something more, that would be great, too. But I would say there is a large body of evidence out there on small class sizes initiative.

But I have a focus group of one; my oldest daughter teaches grade 1 at General Byng, and over these last few years she's has class sizes that have been under 20. And she says to me, Dad, it makes a huge difference and the reason why it makes a huge difference is because the children in my class come from different backgrounds and different socio-economic contexts that makes it important that I have as much time to spend with each of them individually as I can to ensure that they make the best progress that they can under the circumstances.

And the important point I want to say about this, Madam Deputy Speaker, because this is so important when we're talking about education, is that you have to appreciate where a child is coming from in order

to appreciate their status. We had 150,000 newcomers come to Manitoba during our time in government. That means that they are coming with different language skills than someone born and raised here in this province, and that means that there are unique challenges and we bring those kids a long, long way towards literacy and numeracy and to ensure that their student success and their self-esteem grows and develops every single day.

That's what the Small Class Size Initiative was about. That's what my daughter experiences every day in the classroom at General Byng School. And for what's it worth, she's only one voter, she doesn't live in—she lives in my friend—Fort Rouge—so it's not going to—not a vote-determining issue for me. She is really, really unhappy with the government's initiative to ditch the small class size program because it's going to mean that the kids that—who come from different background and challenging socio-economic contexts are not going to get the very kind of attention that they need, and I would know you would agree with me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they deserve.

An Honourable Member: And the school boards can address that.

Mr. Allum: And so my friend from St. James, you know, I thought we were Simon and Garfunkel. I don't know. It's turning—quickly turning into Abbott and Costello. It's quickly turning into Abbott and Costello, but if we add the member from Thompson in, we can be the Marx Brothers together if we keep it at this pace.

So the small class size, not a good decision—*[interjection]*

No more incisive a critic of capitalism than Karl Marx; no one would deny that. That's—that goes without saying.

But then we come to the K-to-12 operating budget, which was cut in half by this government in the budget, and then the capital program that was quite literally wiped out. The Education Minister gets up and he tries to present us with a challenge and he says, well, what do you want? You want to fix a leaky roof, or do you want to build a new school? And, you know what we say, you can do both. It's possible to do both, and I'll tell you why, because we did it. We did it—35 new schools since 1999, while at the same time fixing the leaky roofs and the pipes and all that other stuff. And then, in addition to that—in addition to that—we had envelopes for new shops

so the kids could get the skills in the trades that they needed before they left high school, so that they could go on to college and be job ready in a short period of time. But that's gone now—or at least, if you can find it in the budget, you need to be Sherlock Holmes, because it's not clear and it's not transparent.

We also said that you can fix the leaky roofs and you can build new schools and you can build new shops, and in addition to that, we're going to build you new gyms as well. We're going to work with community to do that. I was proud to be at the announcement of Dakota when the whole community gathered—wasn't a political event; it was a community event—alumni, students, teachers, administration, community members from all the way, all across the way, celebrating our partnership with that community to build a field of dreams for that neighbourhood. We fulfilled those dreams—we were going to fulfill those dreams, and the Education Minister, the Finance Minister, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) dashed those dreams.

That was one of the sorriest episodes in this budget, except for the fact that there was the Kelvin gym fiasco as well. I know the premier, former premier from St. Boniface was there. I had the opportunity to be there. We were joined by the community there, and teachers and alumni and students and members from all across River Heights, including Fort Garry-Riverview, because I have kids going there, and Fort Rouge has kids going there and Minto has kids going there. And they were so excited; they got together; they raised \$1 million all on their own for that gym, \$1.2 million. It was a community development initiative that in the stroke of a pen was gone. And it was gone because the Education Minister, the Finance Minister and the Premier know the cost of everything and the value of absolutely nothing.

So it's not this false, fake, phony choice that's been presented by the government. There's a possibility to be able to do all those things, to build 21st-century learning institutions and community assets that serve every Manitoban, not just a few. And I have to tell you, when I had the great honour and privilege of being a minister of Education and Advanced Learning, we opened a new school in Morden-Winkler, and I stood side by side with the now-Finance Minister. He was as happy as I was. He was maybe even more happy. And he was grateful to a government that knew how to invest in his community.

And then we opened a new school while I was minister of Education and Advanced Learning in Selkirk. Sadly, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) didn't have the courtesy to show that day, but that community was sure grateful for that. And it was a fabulous school, an innovative school, beautifully designed, light coming into a school in a way—when I went to high school, there was no light shining in there. The 1970s schools were not good learning facilities. We tried to make sure that we replaced, rebuilt and built new, new schools and new facilities in order to ensure that our kids had 21st-century learning environments. And with the stroke of a pen, that's gone too.

But it wasn't just the cut on the operating side, as egregious that was, and it's not just that they've cut the shops and they've cut the gyms. It goes on.

We made it our business to make sure that there were 21st-century science labs in schools as well. And at Vincent Massey school—I know my friend from Fort Richmond has probably toured there. She'll see the renovated science classrooms and—*[interjection]*—in The Pas, says my friend from The Pas, as well.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

An Honourable Member: Swan River.

An Honourable Member: St. Johns.

Mr. Allum: And I think you could go to countless schools across the province—in St. Johns, in Swan River, I'm told, oddly, not by the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk)—but the point is that we didn't just do it in our—this was something of benefit for people who lived all across the province of Manitoba. And, with the stroke of the pen, those shops, those gyms, those science labs, those new schools—gone.

* (15:50)

But then there's one more egregious thing when it comes to the Education budget, and it wasn't just that all those other things I just mentioned are gone. There seems to be no evidence that the government is going to continue building child-care centres in schools. Now that is a shocking, shocking revelation. Up at Harrow School, in my constituency, they're just putting the finishing touches on a new child-care centre right adjacent to the school, right there on the school property, that's going to have a number of spaces for infant care, a number of spaces for school-age children, and it's going to ensure the

continuity and the continuum of education, right from the beginning of child care, right into the K-to-12 system because, Madam Speaker, that's what we envisioned. We understood the continuum of education begins at the very earliest years and child care was no longer just about child minding; it was about an educational function provided to kids and their parents, to make sure that every kid had a chance for the best start in life that they could possibly get.

And with the stroke of a pen that was gone, too, and we're left with a false choice, a phony choice, a fake choice between building—repairing school roofs and building new schools, building new shops, building new gyms, building new science labs, building new child-care centres and all of those things I just mentioned now are gone.

That's what this budget did to Manitobans. I don't think you'll get any member of the government side's going to go bragging about that at doorsteps, but you can be sure parents are going to be asking you: What happened to that plan for the child-care centre in my school? What happened to the new gym in our community school? What happened to the new science lab in our community school? What happened to the new shops so my kid can get training in the trades before they even get out of school? What happened there? And they're going to have to try to explain, using information that are merely talking points and not the reality of the circumstance here in Manitoba.

And then we get on to the post-secondary side of the Education budget, and the darkness and the greyness of the Education budget just keeps coming by, and then the taxes associated with it.

We made it a point, when we came into government in 1999, and I know because my predecessor was the minister of Advanced Learning, and I know, Madam Speaker, you'll remember Diane McGifford as one of—a member on, at that time, the governing side.

And we said the first thing we're going to do is lower tuition by 10 per cent and then we're going to freeze it. And then, over a decade time, it became okay that it should raise by the rate of inflation only and it should stay there, and it can only go up by the rate of inflation. Fees would be capped at the same time and, in addition, we would introduce a tuition tax rebate to ensure that those, after they're finished school, aren't faced with a terrible debt sentence but,

in fact, they have a chance to have a strong start as they began life—to enter the primes of their lives.

And in the stroke of a pen, in a matter of minutes, that was gone, too.

I've had so many—so many constituents calling me on the tuition rebate. My friend from Fort Rouge just read an email about it, sent from Kevin [*phonetic*]. Yes, that's right, just today, and he's just moved back from the Northwest Territories. His wife is a ER nurse, had made the choice to move with him back to Manitoba. He grew up in Winnipeg. He—one of the reasons that drew him back was the tuition tax rebate because that was going to give them a head start when they got here and moved back to their home to be with their families, and now it's gone and he's irate. And his wife says, what are we doing here?

So then that tells you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there's no vision for public education in the budget. There's no understanding of the continuum of education from child care all the way through to post-secondary graduation, which we made it a point that that was going to be how we operated. We were going to think about the continuum of education, right from the beginning, in the early years, right through to your graduating years, to make sure that there were no dead ends, no wrong doors, but multiple pathways to student success and good jobs so they'd continue to live here in Manitoba for generations to come.

And, in a matter of moments, that was gone too, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

Well, Madam Speaker, I have to say, I've been waiting for the member from Emerson to join in. I've been missing him. I knew some additional commentary was going to be coming from him, and he's the duly elected member from Emerson, and I respect that completely. But I want to say, quite clearly, if we ever have a constituency for Bedrock, I'm going to nominate, personally, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) because he's a modern stone-age kind of guy, and he'd bring his prehistoric wisdom to the constituency of Bedrock, day in and day out. So, if there is a constituency of Bedrock, he's my man.

So, Madam Speaker, so far we've talked about the grave disservice that the government has done in propagating a deficit mythology. We've talked about the dishonesty with which they talk about taxes in this province. We've talked about their egregious

cuts to health care, which are certainly taking us not only to two-tier but privatized health care. We've talked about their egregious cuts to education, which is taking optimism and hope and the future of our young people right out from under of them.

And if that were only it, that would be bad enough, but there's so much more that's bad, it's troubling to even think of it. I have a list here that's so long, even though I have unlimited time, I would need infinite time to be able to articulate all of the issues here.

But I do want to talk about—and I know it's come up across the board by all members in making their speeches, because I think this matter, this subject, is the one that motivates New Democrats most of all, and that's poverty reduction. And last year, the government got a bit of a pass on poverty reduction because they cobbled together a half-baked budget last year and had a poverty-reduction plan that was a couple of pages long. So they had a whole year to work on poverty-reduction plan, a strong plan in the same way that we had the ALL Aboard plan, and when it came to budget day, I don't think the Finance Minister even talked, even stated the word poverty, during his whole Budget Address.

And so it comes as no surprise that the Make Poverty History folks would be more than a little upset, as we are in the NDP, about the government's failure to try to address poverty and the most vulnerable individuals in our province and in our society.

So I want to take just a minute to talk—to read into the record what Josh Brandon from the Make Poverty History organization wrote just a few days ago. He posted this. I believe I read it in the Free Press; I did, in fact. And I'm going to quote for a while and read it into the record because it's that important that the government understand what poverty advocates are saying about the failure of this government to address poverty in this province.

And so, Mr. Brandon, who I think we all know and all admire and respect, starts this way, and I'll just read it: Low-income Manitobans were hoping that this year's budget would offer a plan to lift them out of poverty. A well-funded strategy with targets and timelines for its implementation and for reducing poverty would give Manitobans confidence that their government is making poverty reduction a top priority. However, says Mr. Brandon, despite promising last year that a comprehensive poverty-reduction plan would be introduced in Budget 2017,

the government has pushed the updated strategy back to the end of the year.

And I've got a feeling it's going to be pushed back further and further. That was just a little editorial comment on my part.

So, keeping on with Mr. Brandon, he says: Without a strategy, the budget leaves many questions unanswered. But some of the details that have emerged are distressing. Social housing investments are stalled with \$20-million cut from the operating grant to Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation.

* (16:00)

Low-income workers may see no increase in minimum wage for a second year. There will be more than 500 new child-care spaces, but investments here need to be ramped up much faster. At this rate, they will take 30 years to make up the existing gap in needed child-care services.

And then he gives the government some credit. He says, one bright light in the budget is that the Rent Assist program is being maintained and will continue to be indexed according to inflation, meaning shelter benefits will continue to be available for low-income households, including those receiving Employment and Income Assistance and working poor and others not on EIA.

And I dare say, Madam Speaker, again, there's a little editorial comment on my part as I read Mr. Brandon's incisive criticism into the record, that the Finance Minister never understood what Rent Assist was. He didn't understand that it not only applied to people on EIA, but also to low-income Manitobans as well. And so he says, however, while giving the government some credit, he says, now, even while making this commitment, Finance Minister Cameron Friesen signalled possible future cuts, warning, quote, over the next year, we will be reviewing the Rent Assist program to make sure that available benefits are reaching those most in need.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

I would just remind the member that when referring to ministers that they should be referred to by their title and not by their personal name. Thank you.

Mr. Allum: An unwritten mistake, an error on my part. Thank you.

So Mr. Brandon goes on to say, for Manitobans who depend on the program—that's Rent Assist—to obtain adequate accommodation, talk of restructuring is concerning. In the meantime, there is no increase in EIA benefits to cover basic needs. A single individual on general assistance will receive as little as \$195 per month for food, clothing, transportation and other necessities, with a total income of just over half the Market Basket Measure of poverty. This is an amount hunger advocates have shown provides less than \$4 per day for food, less than half of what is needed for a healthy diet. Despite no increase in the basic needs benefit, the budget increases EIA spending overall by \$87 million, a 20 per cent increase over 2016. The lion's share of this increase, as much as three quarters of this spending, will be to cover anticipated increases in caseload volume.

Make Poverty History Manitoba is looking for 'clarification' from the department about what is causing these dramatic increases, and, in fact, we on this side of the House also want to know why they're anticipating the EIA roll to be—projecting the EI rolls—EIA rolls to be increasing this year. There's only one explanation for that: no investments, no jobs, and the most vulnerable in our society are out of luck.

From the budget, he says—he's concluding here—it appears the government is anticipating a historic rise in the new number of EIA recipients. Higher projected EIA enrolment without improved benefits will leave thousands more Manitobans at a subsistence level of income. These EIA figures are a reflection of the urgent need to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction 'strategy'—strategy. Such a strategy should be based on meaningful consultations with community groups and people with lived experience of poverty.

Madam Speaker, the government's abandonment of a poverty reduction strategy is, I think, one of the most cruel and unfair and disrespectful in a—things I've witnessed in my time as a member of this Legislature, as a long-time observer of politics 'incomony'—in Canada.

Thank—so I'll continue, Madam Speaker, because there are any number of other areas. My friend from Wolseley talked quite incisively about the cuts to environmental standards, all in the name of reducing red tape, but all that will happen is to impair the safety and well-being of water standards in this province that may have disastrous consequences for people in communities all across Manitoba. That's

not right. That's not fair. They've learned nothing from the past, and then this idea that you can deregulate environmental standards is, frankly, a shocking abdication of responsibility for a government that should be upping their game on environmental standards, not taking them backwards into a time that simply—back generations from now.

So what we're left with, Madam Speaker, I think, is that—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

We do have a member speaking in debate, and I would ask that members here in the Chamber please heed and provide courtesy to the member that is speaking. And, if there are conversations that are going on, can you please lower the volume or have a seat in the loge or at the back of the room. We would appreciate that and ask everybody for their courtesy in hearing the member speak.

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So we were just talking about environmental deregulation that's in the budget that is simply so regressive and so potentially dangerous to the people of Manitoba, I think we're almost speechless. When—and I'm rarely called almost speechless, but I have to say, leaves us almost speechless.

Mr. Brandon, in the article I just read from, Make Poverty History, talked about the absence of investment in child care. It's true there was a significant waiting list while we were in government. That's after we built thousands upon thousands upon thousands of spaces, and that's why we were going to ensure universal child care as an educational outcome, let alone a child-minding outcome. And what has the government committed to? Five hundred and one spaces and 50 home-based spaces. That's not enough. That's not remotely sufficient. That will do nothing. As Mr. Brandon said, it will take years upon years upon decades before trying to close the gap at that rate, but we know that the gap will only increase.

We've had members on our side of the House talk about housing and a failure to engage in affordable housing construction. That's social housing, affordable housing, to ensure that every Manitoban has a proper place to live. We did that. And, Madam Speaker, we did that all on our own. There was no federal government that was interested in doing housing when we were in government. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Federal government,

Liberal, Conservative, black cats, white cats, it doesn't matter. They haven't done social housing for generations. The only one who did was the NDP government in Manitoba, and that's because we know that your well-being, your personal well-being, starts at home with a good place to live, and that's not going to happen under this government either.

And then we have the terrible circumstance of the way in which Crown corporations have been treated by this government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Allum: —that has been—

Madam Speaker: Order.

I don't know if people didn't hear me, but I have asked for some courtesy to be shown to the member that is speaking. There are a lot of conversations going on here, and I think we owe members that are speaking in the House a courtesy of listening to them.

Mr. Allum: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. I certainly appreciate that. I can speak loud, but I don't think I can speak loud over—even though I'm a preacher's kid—speak loud over all of these folks, so I—*[interjection]*—it never hurts to try, says my friend from Fort Rouge, and that's probably true, but I appreciate your help in that regard.

I think the way in which the government has—dealing with Crown corporations in this province—has been a terrible disservice not only to the Crown corporations themselves, to the people who work in those Crown corporations, but to the people who own those Crown corporations: the people of Manitoba. The way in which Hydro has been dragged through the mud is nothing short of a scandal. The way in which Liquor & Lotteries has been treated—they had an excellent plan to continue the growth and development of the downtown, and in the blink of an eye, that was taken away. These are the kinds of things, the kind of actions, which undermine the very foundation of a strong economy that's intended to benefit all the people of Manitoba.

* (16:10)

The budget also includes aspects related to our electoral system put forward by the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) that are nothing short of a incredible disappointment.

I have a great respect for the member from Tuxedo; she's a long-time member of this Chamber. Like myself, I'm pretty sure she's a non-lawyer as Attorney General; I was a non-lawyer as Attorney General. I have no problem with that. I think that actually sometimes civilian oversight of the justice system isn't such a bad idea. But, when they put forward—when legislation is brought forward to ensure two things, (1) voter suppression and (2) to make sure that big money influences electoral outcomes in our electoral process, that's wrong. She knows it.

I'm asking her today to withdraw those pieces of legislation rather than making sure that Manitobans can't get to the polls and those with the most money influence the outcome.

Madam Speaker, we have a government also that has failed dismally when it comes to federal and provincial relations. I have told the story, and I won't recount it today for members, about the Finance Minister going to Victoria on the CPP and then seven days later waking up as a converted New Democrat and putting forward kind of things to enhance the CPP. So I won't go through that horrible story again.

But here we have a government and a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who has yet to sign a health accord. I'm not sure why that hasn't happened yet. I think I read a couple of weeks ago that the Premier had given up his one-man stand and that he was going to sign, and yet he hasn't. But not only that, in making sure that he hasn't signed the Health Accord, the climate change accord is also being held hostage. They haven't put a signature on that to make sure that Mother Earth survives for generations to come.

Why is that, Madam Speaker? Why can't they get along?

You know, we had a theory about how our government operated when it came to federalism, and it—we dealt with Liberal and Conservative governments in our time, and we took the position that it was our obligation to the citizens of Manitoba to make federalism work, not to be a problem child in Confederation. It's pretty clear that the Premier has a different view of how that should operate. He's making a mistake. He's doing a disservice to Manitoba.

If he can't sign the health-care accord because he thinks he can't do it, that's one thing, but he ought to get on and sign the climate change accord right now and—so that Manitoba is as equally concerned about

the fate of the global community as every other jurisdiction in Canada.

So, Madam Speaker, as my time begins to dwindle, there are just a few other points that I want to make.

You can say what you want, people are—certainly we live in a democracy with free speech. You can say what you want about our government and our time in government, but one thing I know for sure is that when we were faced with a challenge, we rolled up our sleeves and we got to work to try to address it. And what we have instead is a government that doesn't do that; instead, we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who puts his hands in his pockets and says there's nothing I can do about it.

And that happens especially in relation to the fate of Churchill. There's been absolutely no progress made on Churchill to date, not a word, not a peep, nothing, nada. *[interjection]* That's a Tory backbench saying nada with me.

I don't understand that. Say what you want about our government, we rolled up our sleeves and got to work on the challenges of today, and this government—this government—put their hands in their pockets and said there is nothing we can do. We're not going to do anything about it. And the people of Manitoba are going to be out of luck as a result.

And even, when it comes to facing the challenges, often what they do us is that they leave it to other levels of government to take care of their problems for them. First of all, they want the feds to pay more for health care, and I think that that's probably right in one sense of it. But they don't want to invest themselves; they just want somebody else to do it. That makes them freeloaders, Madam Speaker. Freeloaders, they want to spend money, but they only want to spend other people's money. They don't want to invest on the people of—on behalf of the people of Manitoba. They are quite happy to have the federal government do it, but they won't do it themselves.

But it's worse than just being freeloaders, Madam Speaker; they're also downloaders. They're also downloaders. So they say to school boards, you know, we're going to cut your budget in half. You're going to be out of luck and you're going to have to solve it all on your own. That's what you call a downloader. So they're not only free loaders; they're downloaders.

And then when it—and then even worse, Madam Speaker, when it comes to a challenge facing Manitobans that they won't deal with—and Churchill is the perfect example, but there are a multiple number of other examples—they don't do anything about it, so they're off-loaders. This is a government that's freeloaders, downloaders and off-loaders. That's not what the people of Manitoba voted for last year.

So what we're left with, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]* Well, I leave it to my friend from Elmwood, who had a very trenchant criticism of the government's budget on infrastructure, to talk about it, but there is the issue of transparency and accountability that the government went—government members went to the doorstep and they said, oh, well, we're going to be more, way more accountable and way more transparent than those bad, bad New Democrats. Only it turned out that that's not true, Madam Speaker.

We had legislation in place to make sure that public-private partnerships were held accountable, so if it was in the public interest, you had to prove it, and what happened to that? It's gone—not there—poof—gone.

We had the Health Minister commission a report from KPMG. He says, I can make that public, a few months ago. Now you can't find it. Maybe he can't find it or he says he's got it in his pocket now. I'll make him the same challenge as the Finance Minister—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: We have a few minutes left, Madam Speaker. He can pop down to his office and get it and bring it back up here. If the Finance Minister can do it, he should hop down those stairs and get it done. Go get it done. That's what my friend from Elmwood says.

We have lots of time. We're going to be here all night. Go do it now. Don't waste any more time. I'm so glad the member from Assiniboia is in the House because I'm boiling hot and so I know it's going to cool down now, and I appreciate that greatly. Thank you, my friend, because it—*[interjection]*—no; that's—no; that's—it's intended as a compliment. I'm pretty hot.

So, Madam Speaker, we've covered a wide variety of topics over the last couple of days, and what we know for sure is this is a government that has become utterly, utterly fixated on a budget

deficit, even though we demonstrated right off the hopper that it's not quite the crisis that the government wants to make it out to be.

But, as a result, Madam Speaker, they're going to do what they did in the 1990s. They might try to be able to deal with their little financial deficit, their budget deficit, but we know for sure that by the time they're done, there's going to be a massive social deficit in Manitoba and a massive infrastructure deficit in Manitoba that's not going to do anybody any good any time soon.

And we know that when you don't invest in capital projects, when you abandon those capital projects, then you abandon new jobs, and when you abandon new jobs, you abandon the demand in the economy so that we can trade goods and services with one another so that we can all benefit and all prosper from the economy.

But that's not what they want. That's not what they're asking for. Instead, they want something dramatically different. They want to fixate on a financial budget deficit that sends a signal to Manitobans that they don't care. They're here to govern for the few, not the many. They're here to govern for their pals in big business and leave everybody hung out to dry.

And so this is it. This is what I really think of the budget, Madam Speaker. I've spilled thousands of words already, but this is what I really think. This budget, like the last budget, can be characterized in three words: the revenge of the elites, because that's what's happening here. It's the revenge—

An Honourable Member: That's four words.

Mr. Allum: —four words—it was three when I started talking and then it's four when I was finished. But this is about, Madam Speaker, in fairness—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: This is a serious point for me, even though I can't quite count the number of words associated with it. This is the revenge of the elites. After four elections and 17 years of an NDP government governing for all the people all the time, we have a government that's decidedly interested in only governing for the few and leaving everybody else out of luck. And so I want to say quite clearly to my friends in the government side—I think I have a few—maybe not, maybe not—maybe yesterday I did,

but who knows now, maybe not. Either way, it doesn't really matter to me.

* (16:20)

But, Madam Speaker, for us, even though there are 40 of the government side, I said yesterday that none of us stand for election just so that we can be on the winning side or the losing side; we all stand for election to advocate and defend the interest and benefits of our constituents. That's why I'm elected, so I don't care what side of the House I'm on. I'm going to do my job; they should start doing theirs, to be perfectly blunt about it.

But this is the thing. Even though there are a colossal number of Tories in the House, and you go ahead, you clap again if you want—*[interjection]* Leave it to the member from St. Paul to take up that challenge. And we know that's because he's got nothing else to do, Madam Speaker. We're not really sure that he has any job at all. He's got a great bit raise, but we don't know—we're not really sure what he's doing day in and day out. I don't know if he's playing long games of hangman over there or just what, but, really, leave it to him to do it.

But I just want to say, Madam Speaker, if the colossal number of Tories on that side of the House think that we're going to roll over, that we're not going to fight back, that we're not going to defend the interests of Manitobans, they've got another thing coming. We're small in number, smaller in number that we would want to be—all of us have lost friends and colleagues as a result of the election, and I know we all miss them very, very much. It's—it was hard. But that doesn't mean that we don't have the backbone to stand up to these guys. That doesn't mean that we don't have the backbone to stand up to a government that's going to do incredible damage to the economy of Manitoba, as is obviously demonstrated in a budget—we've gone over point after point after point, and there's nothing about this budget that you can say, this makes us the 'moost'—most improved province. In every single case, it's demonstrably true: it makes this province worse in every single case.

So we're not going to stand for it. We're going to fight back. We're going to be on doorsteps. And we're not only going to be on our own doorsteps, we're going to be on your doorsteps too. And we're going to be talking—*[interjection]*

My friend from Flin Flon can't wait to get out there. My friend from Fort Rouge can't wait to get it

there. My friend from 'Minno,' from Concordia, from St. Johns, St. Boniface, The Pas, Elmwood, Tyndall Park and Logan—we're all going to be out there. So—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: I was—Madam Speaker, I was just distracted a little bit by our House leader—as—only for that he seemed to be leaving as I was building to the big conclusion. I can only hope that he's out looking for something, and then, if that person can hear me, come on in here and let's get on with it.

I didn't know there were folks in the gallery. I'm guessing these may be Tory folks, and I'm not sure if that's staffers—well-paid staffers sitting up in the gallery; I'm not sure about the wisdom of that. I have no doubt they're a fine group of people. I'm sure they're working hard for the government, but I have to say, as political operatives go, they need some assistance. If you need New Democrats to come and help you, we know the people that you can call so you can start building a better Manitoba for every Manitoba rather than doing a disservice to the people of Manitoba, as these folks do, day in and day out.

And yet for all of that, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*—for—here's the member from Brandon West, can't stop talking while I'm talking. He got up and spoke for six minutes yesterday and couldn't name one thing that happened that was good for Brandon—*[interjection]*

He tells me—he's telling me, Madam Speaker, that they're very happy. I kind of think they're not. They're looking for a new school and he can't deliver it. They're looking for improvements to the ACC campus on the North Hill; he can't deliver that—*[interjection]* Well, he says to me, he says, we couldn't deliver. In fact, the Brandon School Division came to us two years ago with a case for building a new school. We looked at that evidence and we got to work right away, and then he killed it.

At a minimum—at a minimum—when I think about the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), I wonder why he's so idle, why he doesn't do the work of advocating for his constituents. I see my friend from Brandon East; I quite like him, but my other friend from Brandon East was here just a week ago and—*[interjection]* Yes, some things never change with the former member of Brandon East, I think.

But I'd rather have him standing up and advocating for Brandon day in and day out than

sitting on the sidelines, the way that happens with the member for Brandon West and the current member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson). Get on board. Get to work on behalf of your constituents and build this province. Stop breaking it down. *[interjection]*

You know, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just getting onto page 3. But, you know what, I have to say, and I say this with all respect to the Health Minister, everything I learned about doing these speeches I learned from him. I learned the hard way. I was a rookie MLA and I was sitting way in the backbenches where those folks are today, and I—he was in the middle of a very long, inaccurate speech, but a very long speech, and I made the mistake of saying something out of the side of my mouth, and he went off on me on—for 20 minutes. And I learned right there and then, you want to give a long speech in this House, you riff off the silliness that comes from the other side, and I learned that all from the member from Selkirk. Thank you very much.

An Honourable Member: Steinbach.

Mr. Allum: Steinbach.

And I still built him a new school, even though he didn't show up. Well, I didn't do it; our government did it.

So, Madam Speaker, the challenge left for us today is whether to support this budget or not, and I've made it crystal clear, as all of my 'colleagues'—colleagues have in their most excellent speeches about the budget, that we won't be supporting it. And—

An Honourable Member: That's a shocker.

Mr. Allum: That is a shocker.

The only thing that's still left to be decided is what the Liberals are going to do, the independents. And I'm sure, as my friend from Steinbach says, there's probably three different positions on the budget. There always is when there's Liberals in the room: one thing inside the Perimeter and say a different thing outside the Perimeter. That's been the way that they've operated for generations. I suppose that's how they became something called the natural governing party of this country. But it's not the way to operate.

* (16:30)

You have to stand strong for what you believe in, Madam Speaker. And day in and day out, myself and my colleagues fight for a fairer, more equitable, more just, more inclusive Manitoba, where everyone belongs and everybody has a—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 34(7), I am interrupting the proceedings to put the questions necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and all amendments to that motion.

The question before the House is the proposed subamendment of the honourable member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen).

Do members wish to have the subamendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: I heard a yes.

THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (s) the following clauses:

- (t) failing to address the most vulnerable by not increasing employment income assistance amounts to 75 per cent of the Market Basket Measure; and
- (u) failing to support advancements in mental health care by freezing the overall mental health funding; and
- (v) failing to support community development and home repairs in Manitoba by freezing funding to Neighbourhoods Alive!; and
- (w) failing to support science and innovation by not updating technology systems; and
- (x) failing to develop a duty to consult on a framework for Indigenous communities; and
- (y) failing to support Justice diversion programs like drug courts, mental health courts and youth justice committees; and
- (z) failing to protect the environment by cutting funding to the Clean Environment Commission, Water Science and Watershed Management; and
- (aa) failing to invest in the promotion of practical home ownership opportunities for Indigenous families; and
- (bb) failing to support public education by cutting funding to school divisions; and
- (cc) failing to provide multi-year agreements to community development organizations; and
- (dd) failing to support the vulnerable by cutting the funding for victim services; and
- (ee) failing to support community safety by cutting funding for crime prevention; and
- (ff) failing to support people with disabilities; and
- (gg) failing to support children in care by continuing to claw back the children's special allowance while cutting funding to CFS organizations who have demonstrated positive results; and
- (hh) failing to provide funding for a suicide prevention plan; and
- (ii) failing to provide an economic plan for First Nation communities; and
- (jj) failing to invest in northern or rural health care by not increasing budgets to inflation; and
- (kk) failing to uphold the Jordan's Principle resolution as unanimously voted by this House by cutting the funding to Indigenous health, Intergovernmental Strategic Relations by almost \$1 million or 33 per cent of the total budget; and
- (ll) failing to commit funding for the Kelvin High School gym and the Dakota alumni field.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this subamendment?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the subamendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, a recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has called for a recorded vote.

Does he have the support of three other members?

He does. A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

* (16:50)

The question before the House is a proposed subamendment of the honourable member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen).

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 15, Nays 39.

Madam Speaker: I declare the subamendment lost.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question before the House now is a proposed amendment, moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Ms. Marcelino), to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Do members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a yes.

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and submitting:

therefore regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans, ignores the needs of families and seniors and fails to present a clear, strategic and inclusive vision for the future of Manitoba by:

- (a) going back on the promise to protect front-line services and making deep cuts to the services families depend on; and
- (b) closing three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in Winnipeg, leaving families in north and south Winnipeg without timely access to emergency or urgent care; and
- (c) cutting the health infrastructure budget by 20 per cent after cancelling \$1 billion in health projects, including critical facilities like CancerCare, an ACCESS centre or primary-care clinics in the North; and
- (d) ignoring the campaign promise to build thousands of personal-care-home beds after eliminating the Hospital Home Team program and cancelling personal-care-home projects in Winnipeg and rural Manitoba; and
- (e) making no real investment in health-care prevention and healthy living programs which keep families and seniors out of emergency rooms; and
- (f) refusing to raise the minimum wage for a second year, hurting low-income workers who are predominantly women, while failing to offer any job creation strategy for Manitoba workers; and
- (g) cutting millions of dollars from Manitoba's housing budget and failing to match the federal government's housing commitment; and
- (h) failing to make the communities, families and seniors live in a safer without any new commitments to prevent crime and deal with the root causes of crime; and
- (i) refusing to reverse their changes to the Provincial Nominee Program, including removing the additional fee and removing any incentives for newcomers to settle down in Manitoba; and

- (j) failing to provide any investments in promoting gender equality and closing the pay gap for women in the workplace while removing capacity within the Status of Women Secretariat; and
- (k) investing so little into Manitoba's child-care system that it only addresses 3 per cent of the child-care wait-list; and
- (l) raising post-secondary tuition fees by up to 7 per cent and deregulating course fees; and
- (m) balancing the budget on the backs of students by raising taxes on recent post-secondary graduates up to \$2,500 a year, while refusing to make investments in universities and colleges; and
- (n) failing to present any kind of strategy for training and long-term job creation in Manitoba to grow the province's economy and support youth in changing and uncertain economic times; and
- (o) making no new commitment to build new K-to-12 schools, such as Waterford Green or in south Brandon, as well as no new investments in science labs, shops, classrooms or gyms for public schools and cutting the education infrastructure budget by nearly 30 per cent, following the provincial government's short-sighted elimination of the small class size initiative; and
- (p) cutting tax credits for post-secondary students but giving political donors a tax break on donations; and
- (q) cutting spending on highways by nearly \$30 million on top of a previous cut of nearly \$50 million in the previous budget at a time when investment in strategic infrastructure is necessary to grow the economy; and
- (r) making almost no investment for northern Manitoba without a long-term strategy to grow the North's economy or a plan to revive the economy of Churchill or a plan to work with indigenous groups to create a sustainable vision for the communities in the North; and
- (s) failing to provide any real strategy to combat climate change after the provincial government brought in a regressive bill to

weaken water protection standards and environmental regulations; and

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): I request a recorded vote.

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

Order.

The question before the House now is the proposed amendment moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Ms. Marcelino) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

* (17:20)

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.

Nays

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski,

Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Clerk: Yeas 16, Nays 39.

Madam Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, we'd like to request a recorded vote.

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

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance, that this House approves in general and budget—the budgetary policy of the government.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith, Smook,

Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk: Yeas 39, Nays 16.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Today is the 14th sitting day after first reading completion day. All government bills that had first reading moved within 20 sitting days of the Throne Speech and have been designated by the government as specified, but not designated by the opposition as designated bills, are eligible to have second reading moved today. For each such bill, the minister, critic and independent members can each speak for a maximum of 10 minutes per bill, followed by up to 15-minute question period for each bill. The House is to not adjourn until these actions have been completed.

The list of bills that will follow this process include the following: Bill 18, The Legislative Security Act; and Bill 26, The Election Financing Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 18—The Legislative Security Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call Bill 18, The Legislative Security Act, and recognize the honourable Minister of Justice.

* (18:20)

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 18, The Legislative Security Act; Loi sur la sécurité de la Cité législative, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm pleased to rise and introduce this piece of legislation for second reading in the House. The Legislative Security Act will facilitate a more effective security presence in the Legislative precinct. Improving safety and security is always a worthwhile objective in our Legislative Building. It is an important undertaking.

The Legislative Building is a central symbol of Manitoba and a treasured historic structure for all Manitobans. As both the seat of the elected Assembly and home of the executive arm of our government, the Manitoba Legislature is quite unique in terms of provincial legislatures across Canada. This dual nature of roles in the Legislative Building has resulted in a co-operative arrangement between the Speaker and the Manitoba government, represented by the Department of Justice, in providing security services to the Legislative Precinct.

The proposed Legislative Security Act solidifies that relationship, reinforcing the ultimate responsibility of the Speaker for security of the Legislative Assembly and providing for a formalized partnership with the Minister of Justice to provide provision of security services on the Legislative Precinct.

The Legislative Security Act provides definitions of security roles, processes and authorities relating to the Legislative Precinct that have not, to this point, been formally covered under legislation. Previously, there has been no legislative framework for security programs carried out by our uniformed security staff on the Legislative Precinct. This proposed legislation will provide peace officer status to the security officers for the purpose of their duties under the act, and in doing so, also provide better protections for them as they carry out these duties on behalf of Manitobans.

The bill will provide a firm basis for more comprehensive and effective security practices and addresses specific concerns such as weapons prohibitions within the Legislative Building.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of this proposed legislation that will serve to increase safety and security within our Legislative Building and on the surrounding grounds.

And, Madam Speaker, the proposed Legislative Security Act contributes to the safety and well-being of all members of the House, their staff members working in this building and all of Manitobans who visit and enjoy their Legislature. I recommend all members of this House support this bill that seeks to ensure our Legislative Precinct is 'adequally'—adequately protected for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): In respect to Bill 18, if this bill was truly about greater security for members

of this Legislature, for staff, for visitors to the Legislature, of course, there would be no dispute. We believe people should be safe in this building and around this building. But that's not really what this bill is about.

In May of last year, with considerable fanfare, the new provincial government released mandate letters from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to each minister. And these letters were stated to lay out priorities for each minister. And the letter that was issued to the Minister of Justice was troubling, both for what it didn't say, but also what it did. And there was nothing in that mandate letter about addressing the overrepresentation of indigenous people in our courts or correctional facilities, nothing about expanding restorative justice across Manitoba, nothing about enhancing successful problem-solving courts, like the mental health court, nothing about supporting law enforcement or protecting the independence of Crown attorneys or judges. And, incredibly, the mandate letter says nothing about promoting crime prevention nor reducing crime, save and except a reference to reducing recidivism for social impact bonds.

The letter also contains the following item, quote: "Transfer authority for the use of the Manitoba Legislature and grounds from Manitoba Infrastructure and Trade to the non-partisan Speaker of the Legislative Assembly."

Now, at first glance, this might appear innocuous. The Speaker, whoever sits in that chair, Madam Speaker, is a non-partisan member of the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker is elected by MLAs to carry out a number of functions regarding the operation of the Assembly. But the direction to take control of the people's Legislative Building and the grounds away from a government department and responsible minister runs contrary to the political history and landscape in Manitoba.

For decades Manitobans have chosen to rally, to protest, to meet at the Legislative grounds for a host of different reasons, directed often, but not always, at the provincial government of the day. Thousands attended a protest against the creation of Manitoba Public Insurance by the Schreyer NDP government in 1971.

In 1996, maybe the biggest protest took place in opposition to the Filmon PC's government's plan to privatize home care. But rallies are held on diverse subjects, recently including missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, the end of home mail

delivery, the child-welfare system, clean drinking water for First Nations' communities, and raising awareness of injustices in other countries.

Every June the Pride Winnipeg parade begins and ends at the Legislature, and every April 20th, like today, Manitobans wanting the federal government to change marijuana laws gather on the grounds. Sometimes the protest or the rally is short; a few speeches and people disperse. Sometimes, to try and make their point, Manitobans stay longer. From time to time, people have chosen to camp on the Legislative grounds. In recent years these have included those wishing to draw attention to the treatment of indigenous people and those concerned about issues in child welfare.

No Manitoban agrees with every cause promoted at the Legislature. On the other hand, likely every Manitoban has cared at least about some of the issues raised, and a sizable proportion of Manitobans have chosen to join a rally or a protest on the Legislative grounds for something important to them, their family, or their community.

Rallies and protests at the Legislature often involve laws or policies being introduced by the government of the day. Not surprisingly, rallies and protests are often in opposition to the provincial government's directions. Dozens or hundreds or even thousands of Manitobans making their presence felt can be inconvenient or embarrassing for the government of the day. The coverage of the event by traditional media or now increasingly by social media can impact public opinion and may cause the government to rethink, adjust, or even abandon a proposed law or policy.

Provincial governments in Manitoba of all stripes have generally been reluctant to prevent peaceful rallies or protests on the Legislative grounds, even if the length of protest may be uncertain or proper procedures are not followed, and this is because the government is accountable for decisions made by the responsible minister, until this point, the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), and any decision to restrict or prevent the use of the Legislative Building or grounds can be brought to the attention of Manitobans by way of legislative means, including questions in question period, grievances, opposition motions and, of course, through the media attention that goes along with it.

If the Speaker, and no disrespect to you, Madam Speaker, controls the Legislative Building and grounds, there is no means to questioning any further

decision. Members can't challenge nor even question the Speaker for valid and meaningful historical reasons. In fact, criticizing the Speaker or Speaker's decision is a breach of parliamentary tradition and can and will result in sanctions against the member, including being removed from the Legislative Chamber.

There is a legislative committee that deals with Assembly business, known as LAMC, but it sits only a few times a year in private and operates by consensus. That's not a meaningful way to challenge a potential allegation by Manitobans. They've been denied rights that have been enjoyed since the Legislative buildings opened nearly 100 years ago.

Now, personally, Madam Speaker, the Attorney General's office is in room 104 at the front of the Legislative Building. and, as I'm sure, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) now is aware, it provides an excellent viewpoint of marchers and protesters arriving at the Legislative Building, often after walking along Memorial Boulevard or Broadway.

And I had my own experience one year when several hundred front-line workers in the justice system—correctional officers, sheriffs, court clerks, gathered here at the Legislature to call attention to their demands for improved staffing and better procedures to make the system more effective.

Was it a comfortable day for me as the minister? No. Was it right that those protesters had access to the Legislative grounds for their rally? Absolutely, and at the end of the day their presence made it—was helpful for me as the minister to track resources for the system.

We've already seen sharp limits placed by the federal government on the rights of ordinary Canadians to protest and to speak out. Bill C-51, which was passed by the Harper government and is, as yet, untouched by the Trudeau government, puts restrictions on the ability of Canadians to exercise their right to speak out. The mandate which has been given by this Premier (Mr. Pallister) to this Minister of Justice takes away government accountability respecting the right of peaceful protest in the Legislative Building and at the Legislative grounds which is a part of our civil society in Manitoba.

Why is this a priority for the new government more so than any measures to reduce crime or enhance public safety? Well, it's hard to find a good reason, so it's very easy to speculate on some bad reasons.

* (18:30)

Does this new government fear that its decisions are going to mobilize Manitobans, maybe in numbers that we have never seen, to come down to the Legislative grounds to protest decisions? Maybe it's about increased tuition fees, maybe it's going to be about cuts to home care, maybe it'll be about privatizing Crown corporations. We don't know. We're not sure what the government's motivation is. What we will do is try and convince the government to abandon their plan to divest accountability for the right of Manitobans to peaceful protest on the Legislative grounds.

And, of course, the last time we had a government that was this concerned about peaceful protests on Legislative grounds was the last Conservative government with Premier Filmon. And back in 1990 there was an incident where the Government Services minister of the day locked out—forced out and then locked out a number of protesters who wanted to use the building. These were parents and balloon-toting children demanding more money from the Province to keep five Winnipeg parent-child centres alive, from the lobby of the building. Manitobans, mothers and kids coming down to protest the government's decision, were removed from the Legislative Building.

And there was a political answer. The minister had to respond to that and did respond by changing the policy and once again allowing people to come peacefully to this building and let their views be known.

And what happened in 1996? Well, there was a group who wanted to come and protest poverty and make issues become known, and I will quote from the Winnipeg Free Press story dated May 30, 1996. Organizers of a women's anti-poverty protest say the Filmon government has refused them use of the provincial Legislative grounds for their event. The group had hoped to set up what they described as a peaceful tent village on the west side of the Manitoba Legislative Buildings for three days this week. It was to coincide with a national women's poverty march by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and the Canadian Labour Congress.

But the Government Services minister of the day, who now occupies the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) chair, said the Legislative grounds are a business site, not a campground. He urged anyone else contemplating setting up a tent should choose one of the province's many qualified campgrounds where they'd be safer and more countable.

Well, the Premier certainly hasn't changed that old folksy way, denying people their opportunity to come to a public space, an important, historic, public space, to let their views be known. And maybe this is unfinished business for the Premier. Maybe he's still angry about the fact that his attempts to kick an anti-poverty group, who wanted to camp on the Legislative grounds, has stuck in his craw for the last 21 years, and now he believes this is his opportunity to stop that from happening.

This is a public building, this is a public space and Manitobans should have the right to come down, as long as they are not threatening other people, as long as they are not going to afford any difficulties and it should be the government of the day who is publicly accountable for those decisions.

And I'm sorry that Bill 18 would take that away and, again, no disrespect, Madam Speaker, but it is the political action which can prevent a hard-hearted government from taking away rights that Manitobans have enjoyed for nearly 100 years.

I would tell the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) it is a shame, and that's why we'll be opposing this bill.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): It's nice to get a few words on record, and my comments are very short.

Times have changed here at the Leg. I can remember visiting the Leg. just as a child and doors were left wide open; there were no magnetic locks.

With that said, our party commends the government for bringing this bill forward. I feel it is a very proactive step towards the safety here at the Leg. Right now, security guards at the Leg., they can check bags but they cannot seize any kind of prohibited material if they encounter a problem. It's critical that the Leg. remain accessible and wide open to the public and visitors. More than anything, it's important that people feel safe visiting and working here in this historical building. Thank you.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I would like to put a few words on this legislation.

First of all, and I feel proud of whenever I go back to India and people talk about how easily to go inside a Legislative Building over here, how the politicians are approachable and when those politicians come over here and they easily can come inside, meet any minister, anybody they want. There

is no VIP culture. And so there are not that many restrictions over here.

Sure, we want to have safety, but we have to see whether we are not eroding democracy. And, as the member from Minto said—because with due respect to the Speaker, and if something happens and somebody's pushed away from the Legislative Building outside from protesting, and that will be kind of an erosion of the democracy, and we—nobody will be able to criticize the Speaker.

So I think the way it was it was really good. It was under the Infrastructure Minister. Security has been before; it should be now. As far as, I think, goes about the checking the weapons, because our environment has been changing, why it has been changing some incident happened over here when people start playing politics, use religion for their political advancement, when people start using their identity politics to put it on the other people to bring themselves up, in those cases, people likely to become violent, although they should not be violent, still, things could be resolved peacefully.

But you never know what kind of people you are dealing with. Everybody cannot be calm. So we must have to first learn how to understand other cultures. If we start understanding other cultures, then those differences won't be there and we will be understand each other. Imposing your own culture to other people, that takes away a right of other people. That creates violence. That creates what happens around the world.

So we must first think to understand other cultures, should not think, I am the best, my culture is best, and I am going to change—I am the only person who can take care of the women's rights, who can take care of the minority groups, because when things come from the mind, that does not help. Things should come from the heart. When it comes from the heart, then you can maybe make improvements—then you can really make an improvement. Otherwise, our behaviour will create kind of an animosity. You may like to support some group, but there's somebody supporting that group who is stubborn and think he's the only hero, that creates a problem.

Therefore, we must have to first start intercultural understanding, intercultural study. That's why for a few times, I pointed out, maybe we should have some study on the—all the religions in the schools—maybe it's optional—or some study about the culture, on the option.

Let me give you, Madam Speaker, one example how things could be misunderstood. In Indian culture, there's arranged marriage. And arranged marriage—other people may laugh at it, but it's successful. It has been working century to century. And in arranging a marriage, there is a middleman. And when there a middleman, that middleman always will indirectly, not directly, will find whether those young persons, a young woman and young man, they are sexually active or not. That's their duty to find it out. That same thing could be understand in this culture as kind of harassment.

People must have to understand different cultures and their differences, and then on that basis should make decisions. That's why there's so many problems are being created, because we are so stubborn. We don't want to understand other cultures. If we don't understand other cultures and these kind of problems, that's why we have to tighten more security—more security—I would enjoy the way we are now. People can come easily in; people can go easily out.

And—but people, on the other hand—people can be protest—if they want to protest about something, they should be able to be on the grounds. They should be able to protest. Therefore—also, I will point out that security on about weapons, Sikh, they wield their ceremonially knife. And if they're not exempt, if they're asked to put their knife over there, their religion will be violated.

* (18:40)

So we have to understand that. So those provisions, when we are putting in, it also should be exemption on the basis of religion. So, if we can put those—I think this is not something about which party's issue or which party—it should be non-partisan. There should be all the parties sit together—even my counsel can sit together too—and we can come up with a really reasonable security system. And I'm really think we should have still this—I think this responsibility should be under the Infrastructure Minister and the way it is. Sure, we have to be more vigilant when people come, and, sure, you can check all those weapons, and, sure, we can have those officers who have extra authority; but, again, I think maybe I will urge the minister to think about that before transferring authority to the Justice Minister and to the Speaker, with due respect, because that will take away our democratic right, our right to discern, criticize and it won't serve any purpose. I request, I urge that, that we think again; we don't

have to rush about this. And it is not a matter of prestige; it's a matter of how we can make this system better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Bill 18 suggests that there will be an agreement reached by the Speaker and the Minister of Justice with respect to security to the Legislative grounds and the Legislative Precinct, as it's defined.

Will this agreement be made public?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question.

I, first of all, want to correct the misinformation that he put on the record earlier about what this bill is all about. And I'm in absolute shock that the member for Minto would ask a question about why this is a priority for our government, suggesting that this shouldn't be a priority.

Well, I will tell the member opposite that the safety and security of the members of the public who enter into this building, who enter on the Legislative Precinct, we want to ensure their safety. The safety of all Manitobans is paramount; it's of uttermost important to us. Members opposite should care about the safety and security of Manitobans as well.

Mr. Swan: Perhaps the minister wasn't listening. The question is whether the agreement referred to in the bill between the Speaker and the Minister of Justice respecting security will be made public.

Could the minister please answer the question?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I'm in a state of shock again, Madam Speaker, that the member opposite, who's the former Attorney General of the Province, would stand up and say that—and suggest that issues that are of public security and safety should be made public for everyone to see.

These are procedures that will be done and agreed to between the Speaker and the Minister of Justice, and these will be about how we move forward with respect to security measures around the building. To make everything public, then we may as well just give, you know, those criminals out there the opportunity to walk into the building and do whatever they want.

So the member opposite suggesting that this should be public—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Swan: Well, if the agreement, then, won't be made public, will it be kept completely secret, or will MLAs or at least House leaders of the various parties be given indication of what's contained in that agreement?

Mrs. Stefanson: The purpose of this bill is to ensure the safety and security of all those who work in the building. That includes all the MLAs; that includes our Executive arm of government. That includes every single Manitoban who wants to come and visit their building.

And I will remind the member opposite that in this bill, it has nothing to do with restricting those members of—from coming and rallying and holding public protest on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature. Everyone has the right, the peaceful rallies and so on. But this will be put in place to ensure the safety and security of not only those that work in the building, but those who visit the building. That is of utmost important for our government. I would hope members opposite would agree.

Mr. Swan: Well, I'll take that as a no.

Could the Minister of Justice please put on the record very clearly today that a lack of photo identification by any Manitoban will not bar them from being able to enter their Legislative Building?

Mrs. Stefanson: I know it's been a long day for the member opposite, and there's been many people outside on the front steps of the Legislature exercising their right to hold a rally, a peaceful protest, on the—in—on the Legislative grounds, and that's what Manitoba's all about, and that's what the spirit of this is all about.

But we need to ensure the safety and security of Manitobans, and that's what this bill is all about. We will continue to act in the best interest of all

Manitobans who have every right to come and visit their Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, the purpose of this question-and-answer is to allow the opposition critic and any other members to ask questions of the minister and get answers about the bill.

The question which I have asked and not received an answer to—I'm asking the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) to put on the record today that a lack of photo identification, which is an issue for many Manitobans, will not bar people from having access to the Legislative Building.

Could the minister please answer the question?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, ID requirements and so on, anything to do with respect to various aspects of security within the Legislative Precinct—so that's the building and the surrounding ground and so on—will be part of the agreement that will be agreed to between the Speaker and the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Swan: All right, so the minister has now just told us that the variability for a Manitoban who doesn't have photo ID to enter their building is going to depend on a secret agreement between the Speaker and the Minister of Justice.

What does somebody do if they don't agree with an order to have them leave the Legislative Building or the Legislative grounds? What can that person do to question that decision?

Mrs. Stefanson: You know, again, the member opposite wants to—and he said in his opening remarks that, you know, we're trying to take away people's right to be here and to protest, to rally, to have peaceful protests and peaceful rallies here at the Legislature.

You know, I was—I've been here most weekends, and in fact, the weekends are the times where we're most busy in the Manitoba Legislature. You've got families coming in who are holding wedding photos, and you've got schools coming through during the week. You've got others who are visiting from out of town on the weekends as well. These people have access to the building, and they will continue to do so.

Mr. Swan: The minister's correct that to now there has been a very, very broad ability for people to get a permit to come and have a protest, for people to enter the building. But the minister has a bill before the House to change that.

The question is, how can someone challenge a decision made not to give them a permit for the use of the grounds? What can an individual do, or a group do, if they're refused a permit? Who can they appeal to? Who can they speak to to try and get that decision reversed?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the intention is not to unreasonably restrict access, but to ensure the safety of all Manitobans. We know that Manitobans come to the Legislature. I've had many people come to me and say—and in other provinces and in Ottawa and so on, there's much more restrictive access to the building. And they—and many of them like that just because it's—you know, they feel safe coming into the buildings.

*(18:50)

We know with the horrific acts that have happened in the past and in Ottawa, in London more recently, we need to ensure that Manitobans, when they come and visit our building and visit our Legislative Precinct, they deserve to be safe. And that's exactly what this piece of legislation does.

Mr. Swan: So, just to be very clear, the minister, then, is saying that if an organization or an individual applies for a permit and they are not given that permit in accordance with the secret agreement between the Speaker of the House and the Minister of Justice, this minister is confirming that there is no ground for appeal and no ground for review.

Could she just confirm that for the record?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, the member opposite spoke in his opening remarks about the ability for people and that somehow this legislation restricts people having the ability to come and hold peaceful rallies and protests in the Legislative Precinct, and he is absolutely wrong. Accommodation Services currently has that—it's under their purview, and that will continue under their purview. People will call Accommodation Services, request the ability to be able to come in with various groups and organizations, and that is through Accommodation Services that that will take place. That will not change as a result of this legislation.

But, Madam Speaker, it does say that certainly the purpose of this legislation is, first and foremost, the priority is to protect all Manitobans who want to come and visit our Legislative Building.

Mr. Swan: Well, let's take the exact situation from 21 years ago when the now-Premier, then

Government Services minister, refused to allow an anti-poverty group to camp on the Legislative grounds.

I'm asking the minister again: What ability would a group like this have to challenge the decision to deny them access to the Legislative grounds which Manitobans have enjoyed for very close to 100 years?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, and I'll reiterate again. I mean, the member opposite is just wrong in his assertion that people don't have access. Accommodation Services does an incredible job in terms of allowing people and organizing various groups and organizations. We know that when there's peaceful rallies—we've all attended them on the front steps of the Legislature—you know, Accommodation Services will make sure that there's a podium there, that there's a sound system and those types of things to allow even more than just public access for those groups and organizations, but giving them the tools that they need to get their message across to the people that choose to come. So those are very important things in our Legislature, and those things will continue, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Swan: Well, this minister can't tell us whether you need photo identification to enter the building after this bill passes.

Can this member—minister put on the record: Will you require photo identification to get a permit to have a rally or protest at the Legislature?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, I will reiterate again that that falls under the area and the purview of Accommodation Services. That will continue. Those will—those groups and organizations will continue to go through Accommodation Services to book their various rallies and so on on behalf of their groups and organizations. That will continue. That won't change as a result of this legislation.

Mr. Swan: Right. Well, we still don't have an answer on any of the questions we've asked so far. So let's try again.

This bill will allow security to remove people from the building or even from the Legislative grounds on a definition of security, which is not contained in the bill and which, of course, is going to be secret based on the agreement that'll be reached between Justice and the Speaker's Office.

Let me try one more time: If somebody is removed from the Legislative Precinct, what remedy

do they have? Who do they go to? How can they appeal a decision if they disagree with the decision for them not to have access to their Legislative Building or their Legislative grounds?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Accommodation Services is responsible for booking those rallies and protests as it—with respect to the Legislative Precinct and the grounds. I've answered this question several times, the member opposite. So my answer doesn't change. That is under the purview of Accommodation Services. That will continue, and it will not change as a result of this legislation.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The question that I have is very specific.

Upon arrival at the Legislative Building, will there be a screening area? And how—where will it be?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question. That is a very good question and will fall under an agreement that will be reached between the Speaker and the Minister of Justice. Those are the types of things that will be discussed about what we can see moving forward.

But I do know, certainly from our perspective, and we are concerned first and foremost with the safety of not just those—this is a workplace for many Manitobans who come to work every day—but not just for those who work here, but those who visit our building. And there's many, many Manitobans, including school groups and so on who want to come through. We want to ensure, first and foremost, the safety and security of those Manitobans.

Mr. Marcelino: So will there be any dress codes for visitors?

Mrs. Stefanson: You know, Madam Speaker, I don't even know where to begin with that one, but I will say, and this—it really, it's not a funny thing. I mean, this is about the safety and security of Manitobans who come and visit this beautiful building of theirs. And we need to keep that into perspective. It's a workplace for many Manitobans. It's a place for schools to come and learn about how the democratic process works. It's a place for families to come on weekends and maybe have a chance to see some of the fossils in the walls—*[interjection]*—and some of the fossils that work here.

But, Madam Speaker, I think it's important to know and understand that this legislation is all about

the safety and security for all Manitobans who want to visit the Legislative Precinct.

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

Debate will remain open on this bill.

Bill 26—The Election Financing Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: And, as agreed to, we will also now move to Bill 26, The Election Financing Amendment Act.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 26, The Election Financing Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: It's an honour to rise and put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 26, the proposed amendments that will modernize election financing laws in Manitoba and establish clear and appropriate rules for election-related spending.

The annual contribution limit for individuals will be increased from \$3,000 to \$5,000, and the Chief Electoral Officer will be required to adjust this limit for inflation while limiting the cash contribution limit to \$25.

All fees paid to attend political party conferences or conventions will be considered contributions. Previously, only those fees that exceeded the reasonable expenses of the conference or convention were considered contributions.

Self-employed persons will no longer be considered to have made a contribution when they volunteer services for which they normally charge.

The definition of election communication for third parties will be expanded to include communications that take a position on an issue associated with a political party or a candidate.

Further, Bill 26 increases the spending limit on election communications for third parties from \$5,000 to \$25,000 during the election period for a general election. It also establishes \$100,000 spending limit for election communications by third parties during the 90-day period before the start of the election period of a fixed-date election.

* (19:00)

Election communication spending limits for a by-election are set at \$5,000 for a by-election. These limits would also be adjusted for inflation. As well, promotional materials will no longer be treated as election communication expenses for third parties or as advertising expenses for registered political parties.

Advertising expense limits that used to apply to candidates and political parties during the year of a fixed-date election outside the election period will now apply to the 90-day period before the election period of a fixed-date election.

The number of names of the preliminary voters list that will be used to determine the minimum election expense limits for candidates and parties.

These amendments represent a made-in-Manitoba approach to election financing based on transparency, consistency and balance.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, it's a pleasure to speak about Bill 26, the second of two bills the government entirely failed to call for debate. So, as critic, of course, under the rules, I'm limited to speaking for just 10 minutes.

Why so late with Bill 26? Well, it's possible that the minister's embarrassed by this bill, or maybe the government just didn't want anybody to notice because Bill 26 sets out what this minister's and this government's priorities truly are.

This minister has been in charge, as Winnipeg has experienced, very likely, the largest year-over-year increase in crime in modern history. And we'll have to wait for the final numbers, but I've printed off the City of Winnipeg Police Service crime stats, and these numbers are ugly. In this government's first year in office, the reported crimes listed by CrimeStat are up by 14 per cent, including a 46 per cent increase in shootings, 28 per cent increase in commercial robberies, 26 per cent increase in non-commercial robberies, 24 per cent increase in break and enter, commercial; 11 per cent increase in break and enter, residential; and somehow an 18 per cent increase in car theft.

And there's nowhere to hide. There's nowhere—no one to blame unless she looks in the mirror or maybe over to her right. But, instead, this minister spends her time finding ways to suppress the votes of inner city residents and northerners, to prevent

dissent in and around the Legislature, and, of course, to let the rich donate more to political parties. She's doing everything except protecting real people in our community. And the government has made it very clear, and even more so with this budget, that there are winners and losers with this government. And I guess it's fitting Bill 26 is the last bill we'll talk about today because I guess it is their crowning achievement.

Let's talk briefly about some of the losers under this government. Well, those would be students, students that are going to face higher tuition costs, increases of 7 per cent per year or more, frozen support for the universities and colleges and, of course, the death of the tuition tax rebate, which has been a huge factor in making Manitobans remain in this province and attracting people from other provinces to start their life in Manitoba. And, of course, for every \$30 that this government is pulling out of the system, they're putting \$1 back in and trying to suggest that that's good for Manitoba students.

Well, who else is losing? Well, in a big way, seniors. After they went and they pulled rebate cheques out of their mailboxes, this government is now closing half of Winnipeg's emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre, closing QuickCare clinics and privatizing health care relied upon by seniors more than any other group in our community.

Who else is losing? Well, the working poor. This government froze the minimum wage last year, and there's no word on this year. Raising the minimum wage by even 25 cents an hour would give workers \$10 more per week. Instead, they're getting \$10 per year in tax relief, a fraction of what high earners like the minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) get.

Who else loses? Well, civil servants, those employed directly by government and those indirectly by other agencies and authorities, including teachers and nurses, maybe now anybody who's—who works in an area funded by the provincial government. This government's opposed wage freezes for two years, and at the same time we know there's going to be worse working conditions in our schools, in our hospitals and other public institutions across the province.

Who else loses? Workers who want the protection of a union. Thanks to this government, in the past year, it's now harder to organize, and now for health-care workers, they're going to be told they

cannot remain in the union they joined and they want to represent them.

So who gains? In other words, who is Bill 26 for? And I tried to come up with some ideas. There's not enough time, maybe. It's a small amount of people but across a number of categories. Certainly, accountants and consultants are going to be really happy with this new government. They've now discovered you can put in a bid for work, for a report that's to be released publicly, and somehow, even though it's contained in the request for proposals, somehow, either the government or the accounting firm can declare that proprietary, pocket the government's cash and keep the report secret. And I suppose that makes you very happy if you're a consultant and you want to deal with the provincial government.

You know, I was going to include the consultants who were paid \$4.2 million pursuant to an untendered contract from Manitoba Hydro to Boston Consulting Group, but, of course, every penny of that \$4.2 million left the province of Manitoba. And, you know—but maybe next year we'll expect this government will emulate Brad Wall in Saskatchewan, and maybe next year they'll be allowing money from outside Manitoba to influence elections again.

Who else are winners? Well, those livestock producers on the margins who'll now be free to pollute our rivers and lakes. And nothing says aim higher than spraying pig feces onto a frozen field. And I'm not talking about those responsible producers—the great majority of those producers, in fact, who've invested in equipment and who are interested in pursuing sustainable options. And we stand with those producers, but, in fact, this government is undercutting those producers by weakening regulations and, again, allowing marginal producers to pollute our environment. And those protections now are going to be removed from law. They're going to be left to the whim of Cabinet, and that should not give any Manitoban any confidence.

Who else is winning and who else might just give \$5,000 to the Manitoba PCs? Owners and investors in private health-care companies. This government is their best option. This is their dream, as this government pulls resources out of the public system—fewer nurses, fewer nurse practitioners, fewer technicians, fewer emergency rooms, fewer QuickCare clinics, further—fewer ACCESS centres—while those who want to make a private profit from

health care can rush in. What a bonanza for the Manitoba PCs.

And who else—and I know the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), she'll probably get up and be all upset about this when we have what should be a question-and-answer period. Investors in the cannabis industry are going to be big donors to the Manitoba PCs. You know, for all the Minister of Justice talks about public safety, she still won't agree that the best way to manage the future sale of cannabis is similar, not identical to, but similar to the way that we now manage the sale and distribution of alcohol as a controlled product: public distribution and sale by a Crown corporation that has social responsibility and accountability with regulated private opportunities.

With alcohol, of course, we've got a myriad of private opportunities, to have bars, lounges, clubs. With cannabis, I expect there will be a move for licensed, private clubs, shops and other options; with inspections and fair and reasonable regulations for safe use and to keep cannabis away from youths as much as is reasonably possible—just as we do with alcohol.

But I'll tell you what, there's going to be big money flowing into the Manitoba PCs in support of less rules and less regulations. And just like the Liberals, who told us a year ago they wanted booze sold in every 7-Eleven and every corner store in Manitoba, because they thought that was good for communities like mine; that's what those who stand to profit from the unlimited, unregulated sale of marijuana will be looking for from the PCs.

Look, there'll be private profits from what the federal government is doing, and we support this. But there's got to be public gains through taxation, sale and distribution to cover additional costs.

And, of course, we know the Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox) gave a few people a jackpot when she decided that it was a good idea to loosen inspections of water systems. And she told us this was good for private business. If you're running a private campground or somewhere else that supplies water, you know, instead of having to get your system inspected every five years as was suggested by the Walkerton tragedy, which I'm sure the member is aware of, they want to change that and loosen that to 10 years. And I suppose they want them to send the money they're going to save along to the Manitoba PCs. But those small businesses better save that money for their insurance premiums,

because, unfortunately, the cost of poisoning Manitobans is rather high. Although, I suppose, the members chucking across the way believe that's just a cost of doing business.

I guess lawyers will support this—big money for wrongful convictions. You know, we'll take away the couple of hundred dollars that a private lawyer gets on a legal-aid certificate from doing a preliminary inquiry and will give hundreds of thousands of dollars to lawyers to do wrongful dismissal cases, or even better, the big jackpot for lawyers, a judicial inquiry, and let's have 14 lawyers in the room all charging the Province.

They'll be seeking donations from business owners who benefit from a holiday on paying employees a fair wage. Unfortunately, the biggest beneficiaries, large chains like Walmart—of course, all those savings are going to flow out of the province in terms of profits to elsewhere, but there'll be some local business that hire minimum-wage workers in retail, food services and labourers. And, of course, they'll be looking for money from small businesses, because they made it harder for these same employees to be represented by a union—those working retail, food services and labourers, primarily young people, women and new Canadians. And now, if every employee signs a union card, there's still going to be a chance for that employer to threaten and intimidate employees before the union can be certified. And, if members don't believe that, go read the Manitoba Harvest decision from just a few days ago.

* (19:10)

But the biggest winners of all those who finance and arrange private-public partnerships, they are going to make out like bandits at the public's expense. And I'm sure they'll be happy to write a \$5,000 cheque to the Manitoba PCs who are going to stop smart shopping, take off the obligation to make sure that any P3 is in the public interest and allow that money to be circulated among, as the former member for Brandon East used to say, the Family Compact. That's what this government's about.

We want the minister to do her job, make our streets safer and stop trying to help those who already have—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Maples.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Yes, Madam Speaker, I would like to put a few words on this bill,

and I think any time we are bringing these new conditions and we are eroding the democracy because I am really worried what's going to happen. It will create the system where corruption will start because if the people with the deep pocket—they can run in the election—are the people with deep pockets, they can support the other candidates. So it means democracy will be cut in half.

I think with the other—removing that part about what they call vote tax, I don't think that was a vote tax. That's why democracy advancement fund—if that was the first attack on the democracy and that was the first attack to taking of the rights of the ordinary people, and, if we take those rights of ordinary people, there are only two ways they can run in the election.

Number 1, if they have people who support deep pocket and other people who get elected by chance and because they get elected by chance and next time they will try to have corruption—try to have bribery, try to have manipulate the system and a corruption system is certain.

I am telling that on the experience on the basis of world's biggest democracy; that's India. But it's not democracy, because there are people buy votes—buy and through the corruption, people, politicians collect the money because they have to run in the next election.

So we have to be very careful when we making these changes. Also, this change from 3,000 to 5,000 and next time it will be 10,000, next time 15,000 and slowly, slowly ordinary people lose their right for democracy, and I hope we have to be very careful maybe that a contribution should be back and the—every party should have that advancement—democracy advancement fund and that's something to think about that.

Thank you very much.

Questions

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

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Could the minister table any report or any statement from the Chief Electoral Officer saying that a 66 per cent increase in the annual political donation limit was necessary or even a good idea?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, you know, the member opposite, the member for Minto, stated in his opening statements, who is Bill 26 for?

Well, I will inform the member opposite that Bill 26 is for Manitobans who want the choice: the choice in what political party they choose to donate to. And we know that members opposite didn't like being—we know that members of the public didn't like being forced, under the previous NDP government, of having to contribute to political parties that they didn't support by way of a vote tax. So that is why, Madam Speaker, we did away with the vote tax, because we heard loud and clear from Manitobans that it should be their right and their choice as to who and what political party to support. It should not be up to the NDP party.

Mr. Swan: Well, if the minister doesn't want to answer questions in a question-and-answer session on bills, maybe she should get out of the way and let someone else do the job.

I'm going to ask the minister again if she would table any report or statement from the Chief Electoral Officer saying that a 66 per cent increase in the annual political donation limit was necessary or a good idea.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I know the arrogance of the member opposite continues within this House, and that's just the way that he is. And he's going to get, you know, personal about these things, and that's fine. That's his choice. And he can do that and he can continue to do that.

But I will tell the member opposite that this contribution limit has not been looked at since it was brought in by the previous NDP government back in 2001 by Gary Doer at the time. And we are looking, at this point in time, this is an appropriate contribution limit; it's, in fact, the fourth lowest in the country. There is nothing wrong with this contribution limit. We believe it's within keeping with inflation. And we will continue, after the next election, the Chief Electoral Officer will then have the ability to increase it by the rate of inflation.

Mr. Swan: So, just so I'm clear on this, there is no statement by the Chief Electoral Officer anywhere at

committee, in writing, anywhere, that suggests that a 66 per cent increase in the annual political donation limit is necessary or a good idea. Could the minister just answer that question?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I have a tremendous amount of respect for the Chief Electoral Officer. We worked with her in the election 'fina'—or The Elections Act, also a bill before the Manitoba Legislature. And we listened to many things that the Chief Electoral Officer had to say and advice that she had.

But we don't just stop at the Chief Electoral Officer when we are talking to people in Manitoba and consulting about bills in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. While I have a tremendous amount of respect for her, we certainly heard from Manitobans that they didn't like the NDP dictatorial approach by forcing Manitobans to contribute to political parties that they didn't choose to contribute to.

That was the NDP way. This is our way. This is what Manitobans asked us to do.

Mr. Swan: Well, I thank the minister for confirming that indeed the Chief Electoral Officer had never suggested this was a good idea.

The minister talks about consulting. Could she tell me, then, who did she consult with to suggest that the maximum annual political limit should go from \$3,000 per year to \$5,000 a year? Who did she consult with? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: We consulted with all Manitobans in the last election. When we heard loud and clear that they didn't like the fact that the NDP were taxing them by the way of a vote tax, forcing them to contribute to a political party that they didn't choose to support. We heard loud and clear from Manitobans they didn't like that approach.

We take a different approach. We believe in choice for Manitobans to be able to contribute to political parties that they choose to contribute to. That's our choice, and that's our approach. That's what Manitobans—that's what we heard from many Manitobans.

Mr. Swan: Well, what the member likes is bigger tax deductions for the very rich who can make these kinds of donations.

We now have a budget that's been presented to this Legislature which is going to give the largest

donors in Manitoba an additional \$333 in provincial tax credits every year.

Does this minister believe that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —one couple who donate \$5,000 a year get a \$666 a year tax break while a working poor person gets \$10 in the same budget?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (19:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, when it comes to the vote subsidy we—I just want to quote The Globe and Mail editorial board from April 17th, 2016, which stated, and I quote: "Parties have proved they can raise more than enough money without the need for millions of dollars in involuntary donations from voters. The Conservatives"—in Manitoba—"have vowed to end the subsidy, if elected. Good." End quote.

That was The Globe and Mail. That is, in fact, what most Manitobans believe. That's what we heard in the last election. That's why we're taking this approach to offer that choice for Manitobans.

Mr. Swan: So, when all the consultation that the minister says that she's done, how many people did she go to and say we're going to give the very richest Manitobans a tax break of \$666 per year to donate to their favourite political party? Who, exactly, did she consult on that? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: And I know that members opposite, you know, they took the easy approach. They felt that they were—they didn't want to go out and ask individual Manitobans for contributions to their political party themselves, so instead they taxed them. They introduced a vote tax to line the pockets of their political party.

We chose, as a party, a very principled approach. We chose not to accept that vote tax because we believe it was wrong, and we heard from many Manitobans who felt the same way. They felt that a vote subsidy and a vote tax was wrong. I know members opposite don't like to go out, and perhaps it's a lot of work for them, to go out and ask for donations from Manitobans, but we believe it's the right approach. It's the Manitoba way. Members opposite should get on board.

Mr. Swan: Well, in the course of her consultations, did the member go around and tell poor Manitobans that they'll now be subsidizing the political donations of these very wealthiest Manitobans?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, members opposite like to take a lazy approach to raising money for their political party. Perhaps they don't like to go and ask members of the public for donations to their political party because they're afraid of what the answer might be, and that answer might be no.

So, instead, they took the approach of going to Manitobans and not giving them the choice. No. No choice at all. What they decided to do was force them to support political parties that they didn't want to donate to necessarily.

We take a different approach. We respect Manitobans' choice. We respect the fact that not all Manitobans necessarily want to support our political party. Not necessarily every Manitoban wants to support the NDP or the Liberal Party. But we respect the choice of Manitobans, and we will stand by Manitobans in that choice each and every day we are in government.

Mr. Swan: Well, we have an increase, or lack of an increase—the minimum wage is zero per cent. We've got a zero per cent in additional funding for universities and colleges. We've got about 1 per cent increase in funding for education, and, of course, we've got zero per cent increase for Legal Aid Manitoba by this very minister.

How can this minister justify increasing the maximum donation limit, in light of all of those other factors, by 66 per cent?

Mrs. Stefanson: And we looked at other jurisdictions across the country; in fact, we're the fourth lowest jurisdiction with respect to contribution limits. There's many provinces who don't, in fact, have a contribution limit at all, but we respect the fact that we looked at the contribution limit. It had not been touched since 2001. That's quite some time. We felt it was time to review it and revisit it, and we believe that we've taken the responsible, practical approach. We've looked at other jurisdictions across Canada. We've spoken with Manitobans. We've respected their point of view that they want choice

when it comes to which political party that they choose to donate to.

So we took all of those considerations into consideration, and that's what landed us where we are today. So we're listening to Manitobans; we're looking at other jurisdictions. This is the responsible approach.

Mr. Swan: Well, the minister keeps talking about all these Manitobans that she's talked to that say increasing the maximum donation limit from \$3,000 to \$5,000 is a good idea. I asked her a few minutes ago if she would tell us who she's consulted with. She admitted she hasn't consulted with anybody since the election.

So could the minister please tell this House, and for the permanent legislative record, exactly which Manitobans told her that this was a good idea? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: I have already answered this question for the member opposite.

And, you know, we have spoken to Manitobans. We went through an election. It's the anniversary of the election yesterday, a year after, you know, being elected into office with some 40 seats in our side of the House because our members worked hard. They went door to door. They asked for the opinion of Manitobans, and they were told loud and clear that Manitobans wanted a choice when it comes to which political parties they choose to donate to. So that's a very important part of this.

Our members here listened to those Manitobans. They reached out to those Manitobans. I wonder, maybe, Madam Speaker, why members opposite don't want to reach out to Manitobans because they're afraid of what they may hear.

Mr. Swan: Well, I know it's been a long day for this Minister of Justice, maybe make it easier. Maybe she could just table right now anywhere in the PC Manitoba election campaign platform that said that their platform was going to be to increase the limit for annual donations from \$3,000 to \$5,000, and along that—with that would be an additional tax break of \$333 for an additional \$1,000 in donation. If she could just table that, then we could just—maybe just call it a day. *[interjection]*

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, members opposite, not sure what they're afraid of. They're afraid to go out and ask Manitobans for their support. What they would prefer is that we continued with the old-style approach of the previous NDP government in continuing with a subsidy, a vote subsidy, a vote tax for Manitobans.

We know that Manitobans rejected that approach. They voted for an approach where they were offered a choice as to which political party that they wanted to donate to. We heard loud and clear from Manitobans who respected us for not accepting that vote subsidy, as the NDP party did, and we heard loud and clear from Manitobans that they wanted a democratic approach to this, that they wanted a choice. And so that's exactly what we're giving them.

Mr. Swan: Well, I thank the minister this evening for being unable to answer any questions, for being unable to acknowledge that this was anything that was promised or made public by the PC Party in the last election. I want to thank the minister for making it clear she has not spoken to anybody except maybe the crowd in the Manitoba Club and maybe the Premier (Mr. Pallister) about this.

But I'll just end with one question to the minister: How much tax revenue is going to be lost by these tax credits going to the very wealthy for their political donations? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, I want to thank my critic for his comments tonight and his false assertions that he put on the record tonight. That's his approach. That's—we see that each and every day in the Manitoba Legislature, his approach to asking questions and to putting false information on the record.

That's not the approach that our government takes. We respect Manitobans, and we respect the opinion of Manitobans. We respect the choice of Manitobans.

So, we will continue to work with Manitobans to move our province forward. We take the responsible approach. We respect what Manitobans have to say, and we thank them each and every day for their hard work and dedication towards making our province a better place to live, work and raise our families.

* (19:30)

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

Debate will remain open on this bill.

And the hour being past 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 20, 2017

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