

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 11—The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended)

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 11, The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Oh, sorry. Oh. Ah. Rookies. No, I'm just kidding.

Madam Speaker: Okay, we will start over again.

Mrs. Stefanson: I move, seconded by the Minister of Crown Services, that Bill 11, The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Bill 11 will establish a public–a private-public retail and distribution model for the safe and responsible retail sale of recreational cannabis in Manitoba.

Bill 11 amends The Liquor and Gaming Control Act and The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act. Under these amendments, the Liquor and Gaming Authority will be mandated to regulate the purchase, storage, distribution and retail of cannabis while the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation will secure and distribute cannabis to be sold in Manitoba through private-sector retail stores.

Madam Speaker, this bill offers a safe and responsible approach to the federal government's cannabis legalization. The private sector will do what it does best in providing choice, customer service and competitive pricing, and the public sector will do

what it does best in providing public protection through regulation, oversight and licensing. The bill will also help us accomplish our most important public policy objectives: it will keep cannabis out of the hands of our children, out of schools and away from the black markets.

Public health and safety remains our government's No. 1 priority, and I'm proud to say that Bill 11 will help protect all Manitobans as we manage this significant public policy change together.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development First Report

Mr. Len Isleifson (Chairperson): I wish to present the first report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Social–

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on December 4, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. ALLUM*
- *Mr. BINDLE*
- *Hon. Mr. FIELDING*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*

- *Mr. ISLEIFSON*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Hon. Mr. LAGASSÉ*
- *Ms. LATHLIN*
- *Mrs. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)*
- *Hon. Mr. WISHART*

Your Committee elected Mr. ISLEIFSON as the Chairperson at the December 4, 2017 meeting

Your Committee elected Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE as the Vice-Chairperson at the December 4, 2017 meeting

Report Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.*

Mr. Isleifson: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member from Seine River, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

David Broek

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Madam Speaker, in 2012, Manitoba officially declared the month of October Disability Employment Awareness Month, and, beginning in 2015, there has been one day every October that is designated as Take Your MLA to Work Day. This year was my third time that I was invited to participate in this important campaign that highlights the valuable resource that people with disabilities are to the workforce in this great province of ours.

On October 27th, I had the privilege of spending Take Your MLA to Work Day with David Broek at Esso in Beausejour, which is owned and operated by the Janzen Gas and Carwash. David has been with the supportive employment options program since 2009 and his employers and co-workers at Esso describe David as outgoing and friendly towards the customers, as well as being one of the hardest working employees on staff. This comes as no surprise as Esso is only one of David's places of employment. He also works at the Beausejour

Legion, the Howland Hotel and in his spare time changes roadside advertising signage for the local chamber of commerce.

Supportive employment options is a branch of the association of community living in Beausejour. SEO's goal is to provide necessary support to adults with disabilities who face barriers to become gainfully employed within their communities. David Broek is a shining example of the success of the supportive employment program.

David was asked a few small questions by his SEO support workers, and I would like to share some of them with you here today. First question: How would you describe yourself? David responded: Handsome, friendly and happy. Who have been the biggest supports throughout your life? And David said: My parents, everyone at SEO and Nancy from Esso. What are your future goals? David: I would like to travel to California. And what is the proudest moment in life? And David responded: That I work every day.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank David's employers at Esso, owners Heather and Curt Janzen; manager Nancy Sprott; supportive employment workers Arielle Johnston and supportive employment program co-ordinator Robyn Furnish.

I would like to encourage all of my colleagues here in the Manitoba Legislature to take part in Take Your MLA to Work Day next year, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to have the names of my guests in the gallery entered into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to enter the names of the guests into Hansard? [*Agreed*]

David Broek, Nancy Sprott, Arielle Johnston, Heather Janzen, Robyn Furnish

And my mistake, I passed over ministerial statements. Were there any ministerial statements? If not, then back to member statements.

Eyaa-Keen Healing Centre

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Madam Speaker, Eyaa-Keen Healing Centre, located in the Logan constituency, promotes indigenous knowledge and practices as the foundation of indigenous peoples' health and wellness.

In one of the events at Eyaa-Keen I met Theodore Fontaine, and through Theodore I have

met Nori Dehn recently. For the second time this year, Theodore and Nori were requested by Canada Citizenship and Immigration to provide brief orientation on indigenous history and culture to new Canadians who will take their oath of citizenship. On December 12th, Theodore will briefly address a class of new Canadians.

I applaud and appreciate the passion of Theodore and Nori in reaching out to new Canadians. Prior to leaving for Winnipeg in 1982 as an immigrant, I received a brief orientation on how to cope with new life in Canada, best practices in job hunting and where to find schools, banks and grocery stores. Sadly lacking from the orientation was a lesson on Aboriginal history and culture.

Upon arrival I acquired some information on Aboriginal peoples from new acquaintances who shared what they knew, which turned out to be prevailing stereotypes. We asked our church minister and an elder, who thoughtfully provided us with a different perspective of Aboriginal history. Hearing about Theodore and Nori wanting to share their history with new citizens sparked my personal interest.

Theodore Fontaine is the former chief of the Sagkeeng Ojibway First Nation. He attended the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School for 10 years and two years at the Assiniboia Indian Residential School. Theodore has presented his book, *Broken Circle*, to more than 250 audiences in Canada and the United States.

Nori Dehn recently retired as a principal with the River East school division. Familiar with leading the delivery of curriculum materials on indigenous history and where Aboriginal perspectives and ways of knowing and understanding is woven, she would like to continue her love for teaching, but this time imparting her knowledge to new Canadians from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

*(13:40)

I would like to request my colleagues to join me in thanking Nori and Theodore, who could not be here, for their passion in building bridges—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Shelley Faintuch

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As MLA for Tuxedo, I am uniquely blessed to represent a constituency that is home to a large and thriving Jewish community. It is

with that in mind that I rise today to honour the career of my great friend, Shelley Faintuch, who is retiring after 20 years as the community relations director of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg.

Shelley is a graduate from the University of Winnipeg, where she received the gold medal in honours French. She went on to pursue graduate and post-graduate studies at Laval University in Quebec before joining the Jewish Federation in Winnipeg. She is a human rights specialist who has fought tirelessly to educate our youth about the horrors of the Holocaust and to protect Jewish people from discrimination and hate crimes.

Madam Speaker, Shelley's work is more important than ever. As anti-Semitic and anti-Israel discrimination has increased in recent years, we must continue to educate future generations about the horrors of the Holocaust, the remarkable contributions of the State of Israel and the enduring value of the Jewish community in our province and the world.

Throughout her amazing career, Shelley has fostered greater understanding and appreciation of the Jewish faith and culture among so many Manitobans. I know I will certainly miss our regular meetings here at the Legislature, but I can assure her that as MLA for Tuxedo I will continue to speak up for the Jewish community whenever I can.

Madam Speaker, I ask that all my colleagues join me in wishing Shelley all the best as she begins this new chapter in her life.

Thank you.

End of Fall Sitting—Member Acknowledgements

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, this is my last opportunity to speak in the House before we rise for the winter holidays, so I wanted to use this time to thank everyone and wish them well over the break.

Allow me to begin by thanking our clerks, our very quick-to-learn pages, our security and all those involved at the legislative level, ensuring that us politicians somehow manage to get by between our late-night votes—which, by the way, our record is now 5 a.m.—and our, let's use the word lively, debates.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to thank you for working towards a Chamber in which we can be proud of when people come to visit.

This has been a big year for MLAs here in this House. We have had some highs: babies being born and babies being conceived. We've had some leadership campaigns as well.

Madam Speaker, we've also had some lows: several of us have lost family members, friends and colleagues. Some have fought trials and sicknesses as well.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to thank my colleagues, who have become friends of mine, for their hard work, and although we may not always agree on legislation, I sense that it's fair to say we all want what is best for our province.

And on the topic of our province, Madam Speaker, let's face it, Burrows is the best community. The most amazing, thriving people reside there, and I'm so grateful to have the honour to represent these amazing people here in the Manitoba Legislature.

In closing, I'd like to encourage everyone to stay safe this winter, make good choices and enjoy the holidays.

Thank you.

Interlake PC Riding Association

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): I stand in the House today to acknowledge all of our rural volunteers and board members that dedicate so much of their time to the betterment of the Interlake riding. They are the glue that keeps our rural life cohesive and do such an amazing job bringing forward community passion.

We all have certain volunteers that stand out in each community, but today I want to mention one group in particular, the Interlake PC riding association, which was able to join us here today. They have collectively spent years volunteering, before and after the 26–2016 election, but most recently, took on a monumental task that I want to personally acknowledge and thank them for their dedication and efforts.

The Interlake is the largest riding in southern Manitoba, but our board does not let that vast distance keep our team apart. Some board members travel over four hours, round trip, to attend our get-togethers.

There's a substantial age difference in the—ranging from 15 to 76 years of age. I'll let you be the judge of who's who. Our heritage comes from around the world and is spread throughout

the entire Interlake riding, representing all demographics mixing together to be an Interlaker, to be a Manitoban and to be a Canadian.

We are blessed with so many dedicated people from the entire Interlake region, but today this board, this association, this team deserves recognition in helping make Manitoba the most improved province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the Interlake progressive riding association.

Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to enter the names into Hansard of my guests here today.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have the names of the guests entered into Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Interlake Progressive Conservative riding association: Owen Eyoifson, Aaron Plett, John Plett, Abe Reimer, Frances Sigurdson, Heather Sigurdson

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the public gallery from Gonzaga Middle School we have 32 grade 6 students under the direction of Laurie Anne Regula, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

And also seated in the public gallery from Kildonan-East Collegiate we have 24 grade 9 students under the direction of John Thompson, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Personal-Care Homes KPMG Recommendations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, there's a certain irony in the cherry-picking that the government does with its KPMG report on health. It's trying to distract by saying that not all the recommendations have been acted upon, but the minister ought to take responsibility for everything that has been released in this report, because after we take a look there are many questions left and concerns that I'm sure Manitobans have.

The report has recommended closing rural emergency departments. It's recommended making it

harder for seniors to access home care. One way of reducing costs, it says, is by treating fewer patients. Now, it also recommended making big changes to CancerCare and to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

The recommendations that the government has chosen to act on already have caused significant damage to the health system, but the remaining recommendations are also causing concern.

Will the government tell Manitobans today which emergency departments does it plan to close. How many fewer seniors will have access to home care?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, only the Leader of the Official Opposition and perhaps those who sit around him would consider lowering wait times to be serious damage to the health-care system.

But perhaps that's one of the reasons why they made no progress while they were in government for 17 years. Perhaps they didn't feel that it was important. Perhaps they thought it was damaging to try to reduce the number of people who were waiting in emergency rooms for hours at a time. I can't believe that the Leader of the Official Opposition would actually say in this House that he believes reducing wait times for many Manitobans who are looking for care would be serious damage. Those are seriously damaging comments by the Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: It's the closing of the emergency rooms that's causing his backbench MLAs to get booed when they go out in public. That's the damage that I'm talking about that they've done in the system.

You know, the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —report that they received from KPMG on a related issue recommended adding more personal-care-home beds. We know that when there's less personal-care-home beds, long-term-care-home beds, that causes backups in the acute-care system.

Now, what was the government's next step after they received this recommendation on personal-care-home beds? Well, in February they cancelled hundreds of personal-care-home beds right

across the province of Manitoba. Then they made it harder for communities to raise funds to build new beds. Then, finally, the minister ordered an in-year cut to the existing personal-care-home budgets here.

Now, that's not progress. That's moving our system in the wrong direction. We know that the community of Lac du Bonnet raised some \$2 million which they lost as a result of this government's cuts.

* (13:50)

How is forcing the community of Lac du Bonnet to miss out on spending that money value for money?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite references Lac du Bonnet. That's the same great community where the former leader of the NDP, the now member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), went to do a sod-turning six years ago and then nothing happened. They moved one little shovel of dirt, hardly a spade of dirt and nothing else happened after that. They rolled in in their Hummers and their SUVs; they got out of their government vehicles with all the staff around them. They turned over one dirt. They took a picture. They cheered—I don't think it was booing then—they cheered for the one shovel of dirt. They got back in the Hummers and they never returned to Lac du Bonnet.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, after that sod-turning the community of Lac du Bonnet raised some \$2 million towards the construction of the PCH. This government got elected and said, you know what? Let's just cancel the whole thing, leave that \$2 million lost to the community. Not value for money at all.

Now, we're nearly nine months into—or in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —2017-2018. We know that they've built no additional personal-care-home beds this year. We also know, thanks to access to information request, that there were no new personal-care-home beds added within Manitoba last calendar year. So even though they receive these recommendations from their high-priced multinational consultants, they are not moving in a positive direction for the health-care system.

We know that these cuts are being added, you know, over and over again: the cuts to the personal-care homes, the lack of construction in new beds. These won't lead to sustainability. This will not lead to better care.

When will the minister listen to Manitobans and stop his program of cuts?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, if the member would look back at his record of the former government he would see that for many years under the former government they didn't announce or build any personal-care homes.

Now, it is true that more recently, thanks to the efforts of the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) and his predecessor, Peter George Dyck, they were able to shame them into finally starting the Tabor Home, which the member opposite was able to open not long ago, Madam Speaker. So that was progress, but for many years, of course, they refused to actually get started on this.

Our government took action early on. We've already announced 250 personal-care-home beds, Madam Speaker, and the interesting thing is that member opposite voted against those personal-care-home beds. So on one hand he comes and he says we need more; on the other hand he says we're not going to support it. He can't suck and blow on this issue. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I know there's a great deal of passion in questions and answers and I would just urge some caution in the tone that is being displayed in the House. We do have a lot of guests in the gallery, including kids, so I would urge a little bit more caution in the words that members are choosing and the tone that gets set by them.

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

Workplace Safety and Health Elimination of Advisory Council

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thanks, Madam Speaker. I know kids, when they're in school, aren't allowed to use language like that, so we appreciate your interjection there.

You know, worker safety is a life and death issue. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Workplace health and safety is about making sure that Mom or Dad, who goes to work in the morning, can come home safely at night. Yet this government has decided to eliminate the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health. No explanation, no consultation with the front-line workers or their representatives, another unilateral cut made by this government.

Now, the family of Gregory Leason knows the tragic importance of strong worker health and safety regulations. He lost his life on the job in Thompson, Manitoba. His employer was fined some \$188,000 as a result of not protecting their workers.

Now, we know that workers in Manitoba need every opportunity to make sure that their voices are heard and to make sure safety is a top priority.

Why is this government eliminating the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I thank the member for that question and, of course, safety of workers is always a top priority and it will always continue to be a top priority to both governments, to employers, to employees, to everyone. Safety is always a top priority.

I'd like to remind the member that the current five-year statutory review of The Workplace Safety and Health Act by the council is ongoing currently, right now, and we look forward to receiving its report, its final report. And Bill 10 also maintains that five-year report, so there will be—continuing to be reports. We continue to make sure that safety of employees is utmost concern to everyone.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, it's not true that it's the top priority, because in the mandate letter from the former minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, safety and health is actually several steps below reducing red tape, in terms of the five-year legislative review, besides which, I'm not sure why you'd only want to hear from front-line employees every five years. Why not have their advice on an ongoing basis as you make policy decisions?

We know that this is life or death. There's iron worker Allan Leschyshyn who died while working at the Wuskwatim hydro dam, died instantly from his injuries.

Tragedies like this are preventable and they underscore the importance of hearing from people on the job who know the risks and dangers that they face and that that advice should be taken into account. Now, instead, this government is eliminating the forum through which those workers could have their voices heard.

Will this government stop its plan to eliminate the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health?

Mr. Pedersen: The member makes my point that safety is a top concern: it's in the mandate letter.

I would also remind the member that the technical safety advisory council is also being eliminated. It remains unproclaimed. It's never had any members. There was never any use of that particular council.

So we're streamlining this. We're making sure that members, that the employees are heard all the time.

This is similar to the way the Workers Compensation Board works. It's been very effective at the Workers Compensation Board, and it will continue to be effective for the safety of all employees.

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

Mr. Kinew: Unfortunately, when you take a look at the mandate letter, safety and health is below reducing red tape in terms of listing this government's, you know, areas of priority.

But we should not be thinking about this in terms of reducing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —red tape. This is about protecting workers. This is about protecting Mom and Dad, who go to work in the morning, ensuring that they can come home safely that evening.

Now, the minister has, you know, apparently started to think about this as a zero-sum game that you can only go in one direction or the other, but we're calling on him to take a better approach, a more inclusive approach, that would allow them to hear the voices of front-line workers who know the risks that they face on the job each and every day, not just once every five years, but on an ongoing and a continuous basis.

Will the government stop its plan to eliminate the advisory council on workplace health and safety?

Mr. Pedersen: The member talks about safety, and yet they instituted a technical safety advisory council and then never instituted it. Well, how is that being safe for workers?

We have the—this workplace safety and health council is still doing their current five-year mandatory review and we're looking forward to having that report. The—we're always open to any employees to have safety concerns. It is always utmost importance that every employee gets home safe each and every—after each and every work shift, and we will continue to make sure that we work with all our—all employees across Manitoba to keep safety as a top priority.

* (14:00)

Effects of Cannabis Use Youth Public Awareness Campaign

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The government introduced Bill 11, which would see 19-year-olds able to purchase, sell and use cannabis. As the federal deadline to legalize cannabis approaches this government must ensure our youngest citizens are aware of the effects of cannabis.

MPI created a public education campaign for road safety, but it is only one small piece of the hazards cannabis can pose on young people.

Madam Speaker, a University of Ottawa study found 19-year-olds who used cannabis regularly struggled to complete tasks that measured essential functions of the brain. The Journal of Neuroscience published a 2014 study that found actual structural changes in the brain of youth who smoked.

Why has the minister failed to roll out a public awareness campaign for youth?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We have had a public awareness campaign on this since this was introduced by the federal government and we will continue to work in consultation with Manitobans when it comes to the federal government's decision to legalize cannabis in our province.

Madam Speaker, we chose the age of 19 because we wanted to provide some balance between understanding the negative impacts it can have health-wise on our youth in our province, but also

understanding that we want to keep this out of the hands of gangs.

So we believe that this is a balanced approach and that's why we have chosen the responsible approach of choosing 19 as the age.

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

Ms. Fontaine: According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse about 10 per cent of Canadian grade 12 students smoke cannabis every day. There are some 19-year-olds in grade 12. These are students who will be entering post-secondary and training to be part of Manitoba's workforce. They need to develop cannabis habits that are smart and responsible. They need the tools to recognize when cannabis is making it harder to be successful.

A public education campaign that sketches out the health effects and symptoms for youth which includes presentations in school would help Manitoba students protect themselves.

So will the minister commit, today, real dollars in respect of a public awareness campaign on the effects of cannabis?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member opposite should know that The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act actually prohibits the possession of marijuana—of cannabis in schools already, and I will remind the member opposite that she voted against that.

So when she's talking about the safety of our youth in our schools, we are taking the responsible approach by choosing the age of 19. There will be some people who are 19, yes, in schools, but the majority of those are 18, and that's why we chose the age of 19: to ensure that we provide more protection for those youth in our schools by choosing the age of 19.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The fact is is that even though the government will try to keep cannabis out of the hands of children under 19, some of it—some will still find ways to access it. We also know second-hand cannabis smoke poses real health risks to young children, and public awareness campaigns have been relatively successful in ensuring that families keep their homes smoke free.

The government had no problem rolling out over 1 and a half million dollars in ads trying—and,

I might add, failing—to convince Manitobans that closing ERs wouldn't hurt their health care or that tuition hikes wouldn't hurt students.

Why are they suddenly so silent? Will the minister roll out a public awareness campaign today or before July?

Mrs. Stefanson: We—I just want to thank—I know there's members of mothers against drunk drivers who are here with us today. We're working in conjunction with them, with law enforcement, with MPI, and we're taking a whole-of-government approach when it comes to properly educating our young people to understand the harmful effects that medical research has provided evidence that this can cause for young Manitobans and for young Canadians.

We have called on the federal government, also, to ensure that they have a robust advertisement campaign to ensure the public health and safety. We have always taken a public health and safety approach when it comes to the federal government's decision to legalize cannabis, and we will continue to do so. And that's exactly what this bill does.

Advanced Education Advisory Committee Request to Reverse Elimination Decision

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): The Premier (Mr. Pallister) continues to demonstrate that he seems to think the only voice he needs to listen to is his own or, at best, his paid outside consultants.

He certainly doesn't listen to the voices of Manitobans who told him very clearly that they wanted more one-on-one time for their kids in the classroom. And he certainly didn't listen to students who told him that hiking tuition by hundreds of dollars would be putting a post-secondary degree out of reach for them.

Now he has shown that he won't listen to those Manitobans who are most concerned with post-secondary education in this province.

Why is the Premier eliminating the advanced education advisory committee?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I appreciate the member's comments, though I would say his preamble is, at best, a very misstated list of activities on behalf of this government.

We're certainly very pleased to have put in place programs that actually enhance the access of

students to post-secondary education and—something far beyond what the previous government did.

But when it comes to the committee that he is worried about, it's one that actually his predecessor—or their—his colleague to his left actually put in place and never used.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the reality is, Madam Speaker, that this committee was actually an important link between the stakeholders and the minister, and it actually made sure—its role was to make sure that government actually listened. Students were represented there. Teachers and professors were represented there. Adult educators and learners were represented there.

But when this government—but this government has shown that it isn't interested in actually listening to those voices that does—that don't agree with it, and it blocks its ears and refuses to listen when those voices are presented.

So, we feel that true leadership, Madam Speaker, is listening to front-line workers first, listening to educators and listening to students.

Will this government reverse its decision to eliminate the advanced education advisory committee?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question.

Our government is one that has a very good history when it comes to listening to what Manitobans want to do. We certainly have consulted with Manitobans far more than the previous government did, and we continue to work very constructively with post-secondary institutions and do meet with them on a regular basis.

As for the committee, it never met.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister continues to put false information on the record with regards to the work of the committee, and I think it's important that he pay attention to the work that that committee did, and we'll certainly be talking more about that in the future.

But the truth is that this government's record of working with universities and colleges has been extremely poor where the minister says they've had

successes. The government's secret orders caused a strike at the University of Manitoba, threatening the school year, early in their mandate. And now, an important avenue for teachers and administrators to have a seat at the table with the minister and with this government to have their voices heard has been eliminated.

The government needs to stop and begin to listen to Manitobans in a meaningful way.

Will it reverse its decision to eliminate the advanced education advisory council?

Mr. Wishart: We're very pleased to be a government that is accessible on a regular basis to post-secondary institutions. We meet with them all the time on a regular basis both—and by institution as a joint table. They have every opportunity to express their concerns, and, certainly, our government has a far better record than previous government ever did when it came to consulting with anyone.

* (14:10)

Northern Manitoba Hydro Office Closure

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): December 1st was the last day that people in Thompson and 16 other communities, including The Pas, could actually pay their hydro bills in person at a customer service centre. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) doesn't spend a lot of time up north, so he probably didn't know that. If he did, he might know that many northerners and rural residents don't have access to Internet and Internet banking. Closing a Hydro office where people can pay their bills and also learn about energy savings is, in fact, a cut to front-line services.

Will the government reverse this cut that unfairly affects northern and rural Manitobans?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. Certainly, he will recognize that times change and people are not using the offices as they once did. A lot of the payments are being done differently nowadays and, clearly, I think the member, hopefully, has had time to reflect on the situation that they have left Manitoba Hydro in. As a result of decisions—the reckless decisions—that they made, Manitoba Hydro board now has to make tough decisions on Manitoba Hydro and for Manitoba Hydro's future.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this government's decision to cut 900 Hydro jobs was followed by a slew of rural office closures across Manitoba: Fisher Branch, Gimli, Boissevain, Winnipegosis, and the list goes on.

Now another office is closing in Melita. John McBride, a former lead hand at the Melita office, is worried—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —that response times to outages in southwestern Manitoba will suffer, which can be particularly dangerous in the winter time. According to Mr. McBride, the standard was an office within an hour of all customers.

Will the Minister of Crown Services reverse this cut and at least keep to the one hour standard?

Mr. Cullen: Clearly, in Manitoba Hydro, the board there is forced to make tough decisions because of the situation they find themselves in as a result of the reckless decisions made by the previous government.

Clearly, our government and, certainly, the board at Manitoba Hydro recognize safety issues when it comes to electricity and certainly they will be doing everything they can to make sure that Manitobans are protected and that services are provided to Manitobans when required.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Melita mayor, Bill Holden, is worried about how these cuts will affect the health of his community. When a business closes in a small town that can mean three or four jobs, which can really mean three or four families. Mayor Holden notes that if Melita hydro workers have to commute to the next town over, it will be tough for them to stay in—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —Melita. These are young people with families and houses, and it's just another hit to small towns if those families relocate for work.

Will the Minister of Crown Services reverse the cuts to Manitoba Hydro and keep those rural offices open?

Mr. Cullen: Again, I do respect the question and I do respect that there is going to be a challenge, certainly, with some of the communities. Some

changes and tough decisions had to be made by the board at Manitoba Hydro.

But, again, it was because of decisions that were made by the previous government that had left Manitoba Hydro in a difficult financial position. In fact, it was interference by the previous government that drove a lot of those decisions and caused the financial distress that Manitoba Hydro is in.

As a result of what we saw before, we, as a government, brought in—forward The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act. This provides the framework for discussions between government and the Crown corporations.

Northern Manitoba Communities Need for Timely Access to Health Care

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): There are still far too many people being sent home from nursing stations without receiving proper medical attention. This has to stop.

Remote nursing stations in the North are viewed as Tylenol clinics. Far too often many people are sent home without any care. Instead they are sent home with painkillers as a standby prescription. All Manitobans deserve adequate access to health care.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why the Aboriginal and Northern Health Office's budget was underspent by 57 per cent?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It is an important question.

She will know that the vast majority of nursing stations are operated and funded by the federal government. Certainly, we've had some concerns regarding the operation of those facilities. I've had the opportunity to speak to the two federal health ministers since I've been the provincial health minister about concerns around the staffing operations of the nursing station. I'm sure the member has, as well.

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

Ms. Klassen: I've seen far too many people getting diagnosed after it is way too late. We brought my mom down south, where she was diagnosed with stage 4 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. She bravely fought for a year. She had spent years going to the nursing station and being told that she was

only going through menopause. The nurses and traveling doctors never sent her blood out as she had requested.

Northern residents are still dying because of these cuts. While I respect the majority of nurses, they are not doctors.

Why is the minister willing to spend tax dollars fighting the feds with ad campaigns, but cannot stand up for those who need it most?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, first of all, Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite relaying a very personal story and a very tragic story. I'm sure it's not easy for her to relay that publicly. But I do appreciate her doing that.

We have had many discussions regarding health care in the North with the federal government. We have been standing up clearly. That was, in fact, a big part of what the push was with the federal government: to get real funding so that we could have better health care in the North.

The vast majority of the nursing stations within the North are funded and operated by the federal government. So I don't disagree with her that there should be more support. I'm sure that she's also relaying those concerns to her federal colleagues, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Klassen: We have to understand that northern residents are too scared to speak up. They're too scared to bite the hand that feeds them, especially when it comes to provincial health care.

Nearly a year ago, I spoke with the Health Minister regarding the health-care crisis in remote northern communities. Yet, I have seen no action from this government. Instead, we see funding cuts, inaction and a refusal to meet with me or members of my communities.

Will the minister commit to meeting with me and my leaders before the session resumes to discuss this ongoing crisis?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, while I greatly respect the member opposite and the issue that she raises, I would differ with her on the actions of—this government has taken over the last year. In fact, the reason that we stood so strongly against the federal government's decision to reduce the escalator funding was largely in part because we knew that

there needed to be more support in northern Manitoba.

And I know that the Liberal provincial caucus didn't stand with us on that particular fight, but we will continue to speak to the federal government about the need to not reduce the percentage of funding for health care in Manitoba and the North.

And I would hope that the member, given her question—which I think she said from the heart—would stand with us, Madam Speaker.

LaSalle School Renovation Gym and New Child-Care Centre

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, ensuring schools throughout the province are well designed is a priority for our government, and we continue to focus on improving the outcomes of students. As a government, we are focused on getting real results for Manitobans and focusing on those priorities that matter. Education infrastructure is one of those priorities.

Can the Minister of Education update this House on a recent announcement that will help the families, teachers and students in the community of La Salle and surrounding area?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question. It was a pleasure to join him to announce a major addition and renovation at La Salle School that includes a stand-alone child-care centre.

The project is—15,600-square-foot addition to the school, which is six regular classrooms and a new 53,000-square-foot gym. The existing gym will be renovated into a library and a kindergarten room the current—to replace the current undersized library, and it will be renovated into a lifestyle suite. We use every square foot, folks. The new 40-'soot'-40-seat, 3,600-square-foot child-care centre will be located adjacent to the school, and will be worked in association with the school.

* (14:20)

Health and safety of our students is top of mind, and we certainly are pleased to be part of this exciting initiative. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Healthy Child Manitoba Board Member Reduction

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): The minister's Bill 10 would make sweeping cuts to government advisory boards, committees and councils. It will have a detrimental impact on the families and seniors who rely on those boards to make informed decisions that take local circumstances into account. One such cut is an arbitrary decision to reduce the number of people recommended by parent-child coalitions to sit on the Healthy Child Manitoba board. The bill would see that number from six to just one.

Madam Speaker, these board members are parents, early childhood educators and doctors who are invested in their communities and the health of local children. Why doesn't the minister—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I appreciate the member's concern.

We're certainly always interested in listening to the concerns of parents and making sure that services are provided in Manitoba as are needed. And we are an open and accessible government that is pleased to meet with people that have a concern, especially when it comes to children.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Parent-child coalitions focus on giving parents the tools to support their child's early years development. They work with community partners to provide parenting programs, nutrition classes and tutoring services so that kids get a better start and have a better chance at living healthy, successful lives.

Much of Healthy Child Manitoba's values are realized in the work that parent-child coalitions do on the ground. They've—their input is necessary so that children across the province can have their needs met.

Why has the minister silenced the voices of parents and their children?

Mr. Wishart: In fact, we—listening to the voices of parents across the province. We're doing it on a regular basis. We have staff and we have our colleagues meeting on a regular basis with parent groups across the province in the school system and external to the school system.

We've—we have a very grassroots proposal on a basis of which we listen to Manitobans, and we are pleased to be a listening government here in Manitoba.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Parent-child coalitions engage professionals from all over their community to advocate on behalf of families. They partner with parents, school divisions, RHAs, child-care facilities, indigenous organizations and newcomer organizations to promote positive outcomes for kids. Each of these partners bring unique perspectives to the Healthy Child Manitoba board, which in turn advises government.

This government claims they listen to Manitobans, but this bill—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —but this bill silences the voices of those who know what's best for our children.

Will the minister put a stop to Bill 10 and protect the rights of these coalitions to sit on the Healthy Child board?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Well, Madam Speaker, maybe, perhaps for starters the member could read the bill.

What it does, it changes from the present number of board members from 12 and it's moving it to nine. It is not getting rid of the council. The council will continue to operate. In fact, it's best practices to have a smaller board. Board members are better able to verbalize their concerns to everyone. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Tax Brackets and Minimum Wage

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): When the government decided to freeze the minimum wage last year, it cost minimum wage workers about \$400. According to a government briefing note obtained through the freedom of information, this government's decision to raise the basic personal exemption only saved Manitobans with low incomes about \$15. That's about 4 cents a day, Madam Speaker.

Will this government acknowledge that indexing personal income tax does nothing to resolve poverty and produce a real poverty reduction strategy for Manitobans?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I thank the member for the question, and I'll take the opportunity to correct the record for her.

A government that focuses on indexing tax brackets and raising the basic personal exemption is a government that cares about affordability for all Manitobans.

The opposite approach—Madam Speaker, the opposite approach is to raise taxes for those who could least afford it. Who would do such a thing? Oh, I forgot. It was them.

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

Mrs. Smith: From the same briefing note, we also know that when the government said they removed 2,770 people from the tax rolls in 2017, well, they were wrong.

Their budget estimate overshot that mark by 600 people. That's 600 people still on this government's plan—to buy a sheet of bus tickets, especially with this transit fare hikes, that this government is downloading onto Manitobans.

Will this government commit to policies that work, like raising the minimum wage and keeping Manitoba affordable and stop the cuts? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I thank the member for the question, and now she got a number of things wrong.

Number 1: We are raising the minimum wage by indexing it. Number 2: Thousands of Manitobans off the basic personal tax rolls by virtue of the fact that we've indexed that basic level. But let us understand clearly, Madam Speaker, these processes, over time, are very, very significant in helping those Manitobans who most need the tax relief to be not affected adversely by tax—by additional tax.

The NDP had a different approach. We stand on the side of Manitobans and insist on affordability for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Access to Health Care

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health services—sorry, health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition has been signed by D. Vivier, S. McLaughlin, L. Pedlow and many other Manitobans.

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

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

* (14:30)

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) Provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

And second, to urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by James McDonald, Joan Wright and Norma Evans and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with

front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition's signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as—of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact on patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Corydon Primary Care Clinic and
Misericordia Urgent Care Centre**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The current patients at the River Heights Corydon Primary Care Clinic located at 1001 Corydon Avenue and local residents are very concerned and dismayed with the plans to move and merge this incredibly important, centrally located clinic to Plaza Drive in St. Vital.

This clinic is valued for its accessibility, superb staff and quality service. Removing the clinic from this area will have a negative impact with serious, far-reaching, negative repercussions which would outweigh any theoretical monetary savings that may result from its relocation.

This clinic is on a major bus route, within walking distance for area residents and is easily accessible for the elderly, as there are many noncongested routes for Handi-Transit, care workers and taxi services to pick up and drop off patients.

The proposed Plaza Drive location in St. Vital has a lack of any direct or consistent access by public transportation, is typically compounded by massive, ever-present traffic congestion and will result in the payment of costly taxi fares for people on limited incomes.

This move, combined with the closure of central Misericordia Urgent Care, which serviced the needs of downtown, Wolseley, River Heights, Fort Rouge, Spence neighbourhood and Polo Park, extremely downgrades access to the health-care system in areas populated by many seniors and others with limited means.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to cancel plans to close the Corydon Primary Care Clinic.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reopen the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

Signed by Haley Carr, Anna Magnusson, Craig Bailey and many others.

Access to Health Care

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

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

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

These health-care cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals or—who provide direct care to patients.

The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

* (14:40)

To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units and urgent-care centres and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts are drastically reducing the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care service to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to prevent—to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients,

such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health care–health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

And this is signed by Carey Kerr, James Box, Paul Dick and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) The–this–these health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the legislative of Manitoba–Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

* (14:50)

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care, and

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on House Business.

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Cullen: I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Tuesday, December 19th, 2017, at 5 p.m. to consider the following reports: Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015, volumes 1, 2 and 3; Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016, volumes 1, 2 and 3; Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017, volumes 1, 2 and 3.

Witnesses to be called: Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Tuesday, December 19th, 2017, at 5 p.m. to consider the following reports: Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015, volumes 1, 2 and 3; Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016, volumes 1, 2 and 3;

Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017, volumes 1, 2 and 3.

Witnesses to be called: Minister of Finance and Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr. Cullen: Would you call Bill 8 and Bill 9.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider bills 8 and 9 this afternoon. We will start with Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended).

SECOND READINGS

Bill 8—The Government Notices

Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Cox: I am pleased to rise in the House today for the second reading of Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act.

Part 1 of this bill amends The Queen's Printer Act to establish the deputy minister of the department that administers the act as the Queen's Printer of Manitoba.

This change reduces regulatory red tape by eliminating the need for Cabinet to repeatedly appoint an individual person to the role.

The Manitoba Gazette has been the official publication of the government since the very first edition on July 21st, 1871, Madam Speaker. It plays an important role in publishing legal notices, announcements and information in Manitoba. Historically, the Manitoba Gazette was only available in print to subscribers. However, in May 2014, members opposite, the NDP government, stopped producing printed copies of the Manitoba Gazette. And, currently, the Gazette is only available electronically when you pay for the subscription.

This bill is about improving accessibility of information while reducing financial barriers. Part 2 of this bill allow us—allows us to move the Manitoba Gazette to an online publication and make it available to all Manitobans, stakeholders and interested parties at absolutely no charge.

Madam Speaker, these amendments would not only allow us to move forward in a way that we provide important information and legal notices, but it will also increase the distribution as well as potentially reduce the cost of administration of the Gazette.

Globally, we have all moved to a digital era. Manitobans and Canadians are using the Internet to access all information. This bill amends provisions in 24 statutes that relate to the government's requirement to publish official notices, and the amendments replace and modernize several requirements as such, replacing references of printed issues of the Manitoba Gazette to allow for the online publication. Furthermore, in some instances, the requirement to publish a notice in a newspaper is replaced with a requirement to publish in the Gazette or another appropriate manner. However, it is important to remember that government departments can continue to publish important public notices as they deem necessary.

The department, together with Legislative Counsel, undertook consultations with all of the affected departments and has their support and approval, Madam Speaker.

These changes will be beneficial to everyone as the notices will be available publicly at all times, 24-7, in the new online Gazette, a one-stop shop for information. The online Gazette creates a central electronic repository for publishing and storing information that is easy to find, mobile-friendly and accessible. It will be easier to view current and archived government notices.

And with that, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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 members, remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I have to say, just in passing, that this is a very odd bill for a government that's already struggling with openness and transparency. This seems very odd to us.

The minister proposes to remove the statutory requirement to put public notice in newspapers when removing protections for ecological reserves. The minister knows ecological reserves are the most highly protected designation we have in Manitoba. What doesn't the minister want the public to know?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): This bill is absolutely about improving accessibility for Manitobans. This information is going to be available 24-7 on a specific website, government website, where no one has to pay for the information. At the current time, individuals have to pay \$100 if they want to access the Gazette. There is no charge anymore. And the minister talks about the ecological reserves. That does not preclude a department from posting, you know, notices or advertisements in the newspaper. It is up to the minister to determine whether or not that information should be posted, and they will make that determination, Madam Speaker. This is all about improving transparency and providing for more information to be accessible for all Manitobans.

*(15:00)

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The minister also wants to remove the statutory requirements to put public notice in newspapers when removing protections for endangered ecosystems. Again, the minister knows that endangered ecosystems need more public attention, not less.

Why is she making this change?

Mrs. Cox: Again, I will tell the members opposite that this does not preclude a department from posting or advertising a notice if they feel that it's important that it be there. This Gazette provides more accessibility to Manitobans so that regardless of if they are maybe in another part of the world, they can still get that information that relates to what's happening in Manitoba. So this is something that increases transparency.

Members opposite talk about consultations and lack of consultations. We have consulted with all of the departments, all of the experts that actually know what notices are important and which ones are not. And, with regard to the ecological reserves and The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act, we've been told by those departments that these notices rarely, rarely ran.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Is this government going to continue to advertise in print media?

Mrs. Cox: I thank the member opposite for that question. It is a very important question.

Again, I would say that in some situations, based on these 24 different statutes that will still be a requirement. So there are different rules and regulations with regard to the different statutes. But I can also tell the member opposite that we were behind all jurisdictions in publishing free online information and free online issues of the Gazette.

So this will actually put us in line with many other provinces. I can tell you that Alberta has a current issue free online. Saskatchewan has a current issue free online. Saskatchewan—current issue free online. Ontario, a current issue free online. Quebec—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Allum: Most concerning of all is that the minister is removing all statutory requirements to make public notices in newspapers regarding all development applications under The Environment Act and through the Clean Environment Commission.

Communities need to be well informed about development applications that could change their communities for generations to come.

Why is the minister cutting off communication on such an important issue?

Mrs. Cox: Thanks to the member opposite.

I am a real proponent of the environment, and I think that the member opposite full well understands that I know the importance of ensuring that we have clean water—drinking water for Manitobans, not now but also well into the future for future generations, for my granddaughter, my grandchildren and all Manitobans.

I would like to just talk to him with regard to The Environment Act. The Gazette—currently Bill 8 will amend it to say that it can be in the Gazette and other manners, newspapers in certain instances. And, again, I will say that that will be at the discretion of the department, and we do not preclude the department from determining what should be in a newspaper, what should be advertised outside of the—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Lindsey: The current distribution of the Manitoba Gazette is 60 people. The Gazette is a very technical publication not generally used by the general public, and the public shouldn't be expected to scan through this to go looking for information that's vitally important to them in their areas. And a lot of places in the province, although I realize most of the members opposite don't know where the North is, don't actually have Internet access.

So how does the minister really justify making this change which will really limit, particularly people in the North, ability to find out information?

Mrs. Cox: That's a good question. I appreciate that.

And I would like to let the member opposite know that I have been in Churchill, and I do know where it is up there in the North. And thank you for—I really don't appreciate that comment, I should say, because I do know where Churchill is.

Anyway, with regard to this bill, this bill is about providing more information to all Manitobans by having this information available in one location, a one-stop shop so to speak. And I should tell the member opposite again, maybe he didn't listen to me earlier, that it's at the discretion of the minister or the department to determine whether or not they want that information published in a newspaper or another document, whatever provides them the most ability to raise awareness about—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Lindsey: How do the changes in the government notices that promote transparency the minister and her government have promised in so many ways?

Mrs. Cox: Well, I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question. I mean, we all have, all of us have moved to a digital era. This is about modernization. This is about what each and every one of us do every day. We go online when we, in fact, want to perhaps look at your statement from your financial institution. We also go online if, in fact, you want to perhaps reserve accommodations somewhere. You go online if, in fact, that you want to perhaps buy a stock or something like that.

So, Madam Speaker, this is about raising transparency. This is about giving more individuals the opportunity to look at information all the time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 30 days a month—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): How does the minister plan to communicate with my northern communities, especially those without Internet access?

Mrs. Cox: Well, thank you, and I do appreciate that question from the member opposite because I do understand that, you know, at times it's difficult for those communities not only to receive information but to receive food items and things like that, so I understand that.

And, as I've said many times today during this discussion, this is about providing more information, and if there is not that Internet connection available, that connectivity is not there, then the minister or the department will have the discretion to decide how they will, in fact, notify those individuals because we as a government know that it's important, transparency is important, consultations, discussions are important. We had over 60,000 consultations with regard to our prebudget—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I want to know if the minister will continue to provide notifications in La Liberté en français, and if not, will all the notifications that are done by the Gazette be bilingual so that everybody can have access in both of the languages recognized in the Legislature and the courts? It's very important for these local newspapers to have these advertising opportunities that not only informs many people that do not have access to the Internet, such as we've just recently heard, but it also provides an important source of income for many of these smaller newspapers to provide services to their community.

Mrs. Cox: Thank you so much, and I appreciate that question. We know the important job that newspapers do, especially rural newspapers in reporting that information and getting that information out to Manitobans. And I do understand that at the current time there are a few law firms who do provide that information in français, and when we do receive it in that manner, it is posted in the Gazette in that manner as well. So we will continue to do that. At the current time, it's not mandated, it's not part of a government regulation that it be all transcribed into français, but we will ensure that there is transparency there, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Allum: Time and again during this question period members from all of us on this side of

the House from representing all parties have tried to make the point with the minister that there are communities, either geographically in the North, or linguistic communities, or demographic communities, that simply are not going to be able to follow along with the government's path. So can the minister tell us: How will the government ensure that Manitobans have timely access to the information that they need?

* (15:10)

Mrs. Cox: I don't know if the members opposite don't have their speakers in their ears or what the problem is there, but I have said many times that this is about improving and increasing access to information. What we will do is ensure that if it's in an area where there may not be connectivity, they don't have the ability to connect to the Internet, it's at the discretion—and we do not preclude any individual, any department, from publishing that information online. I would just like to say—or, I mean, not online but in a newspaper.

I would also like to say that this is going to make it so much easier. You go online, you do the search, you find it there, rather than having to, at times, say, you know, I think I saw something in the newspaper a week ago, and having to go—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Lindsey: I guess I struggle with the minister's answer to the question about this making it more accessible to people. She says that, well, you know, somebody will say, gee, I remember seeing something in the newspaper a week ago. How will they remember seeing something on a web page on the Internet somewhere? Is there going to be a reminder comes to their home to say, look at the Internet every day because there might be something there? Of course not. So how does the minister really think this is going to make for more transparent and better communication with people?

Mrs. Cox: I do understand the member's question. This Gazette, published online, will now be free of charge. So whereas before, individuals had to pay \$100 or, in fact, individuals in our province did not even have access to that information unless they did have a subscription, now they can actually go on anytime of the day or the night, any day of the year and actually get that information.

And as I've said many times, I mean, if there is a problem with the—no connectivity or, perhaps, another problem up north in a northern community,

we do not preclude that department from posting something in a newspaper, in a hard document. It will be provided to—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Allum: You know, it's interesting answer that the minister gave because she said does not preclude the department from publishing it, except there's no requirement for them to do so. It's just a voluntary, voluntold kind of exercise. So how can the minister ensure that leaving it up to the discretion of the department will not 'jeopardize' access to the necessary information? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Cox: I would suggest that the members opposite perhaps take the time, read the bill. Perhaps the member—the critic can share the side-by-side information. When you take a look at this information, it talks about all of the different statutes and that, actually, 11 statutes will see no change, so that it will still be a requirement to post it in the newspapers as well as the Gazette, Madam Speaker.

So there is increased transparency. There is going to be more opportunity for Manitobans to actually see this information accurately, on time, 24-7 and at no charge, Madam Speaker. We will ensure that we raise awareness with—all of the departments will work together to raise awareness to let all of the communities know about what the plan is—

Madam Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended. The floor is open for further debate.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I appreciate that and appreciate the support, always, of my colleagues. They're a fine group of people. They ask great questions. Answers sometimes not so satisfying, but we're doing our best on this side of the House to hold the government to an account—to account for a series of wildly strange pieces of legislation that keep coming and being tabled on the floor of the Chamber. And I have to say that this one is quite something.

For a government that has struggled on issues of transparency, on openness, on accountability, to end up tabling a bill that really, essentially takes much-needed information away from Manitobans

and hides it online with six bazillion other pieces of information online, asks somebody to go find it in the hope that they might see something on there or might not see something on there.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

This is surely among the most ludicrous pieces of legislation that we've seen in some time, and that's joining a long list of equally ludicrous pieces of legislation.

An Honourable Member: One of many.

Mr. Allum: Like, it's one of many, as my friend from Flin Flon advises me, and he's quite right about that.

I don't need to remind you—Mr. Deputy Speaker, welcome to the Chair—I don't need to remind you of all the difficulties that the government has had with transparency and openness and accountability since they were elected 18 extraordinarily long months ago. But I thought it would be worth it to review at least some of those problems with openness and accountability and transparency that the government has struggled so mightily with that leaves, I know, members of the backbench feeling tense and uncertain and kind of embarrassed about their own front bench and about their own government. I know, when they knocked on the doors of Manitobans, they weren't interested in this kind of nonsense. They didn't go to the doors of their constituents and say, you know what I'm going to do for you? I'm going to make sure that there's no more public announcements in the local newspaper. That's what I promise to you to get elected. And we're going to make sure that the Gazette, as we've understood it over time, that no longer exists with the 600 people who have signed up for it.

I don't believe for a moment that they knocked on the doors and said this is what we're all about. This is the kind of government we're going to give you. This is an incredibly important priority for people of Manitoba, and I'm going to go into the Legislature if you elect me and I'm going to fight to make sure that there's no public notices in local newspapers across Manitoba.

I don't believe that they did that. I can believe that some members of the front bench probably did do that because they've been working for the past 17 years in opposition learning about how to hide information, learning about not being clear and open, and we see in question period every day an absolute failure to answer questions put directly to each of the

ministers and you had a refusal to answer directly in any possible way. Our leader asks about health care every single day, and does he get an answer from the Minister of Health? Well, an answer comes back, but it's usually quite unsatisfying and quite off topic and usually beside the point and typically involves some kind of slam down or another which serves no one very well. I know it entertains the members of the backbench when he does that, but, frankly, Madam Speaker, that's not the kind of government the people of Manitoba want and it's not the kind of government they elected, and I know for the backbenchers in the Conservative caucus this is not why they ran to be in government.

And a bill like this can only come from the tall foreheads in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office who say very clearly, we don't want any information going out to the people of Manitoba. We don't want to advise them about critical issues in their communities and we certainly don't care to make public really essential environmental issues that affect their communities, their neighbourhoods, their families. And, as a result, what we have instead is a government that hides from transparency, that hides from openness, that hides from accountability. And this bill is a classic example of their own desire to hide information from the people of Manitoba. This is not really a priority. It's not all that much of a money saver as well.

And, frankly, one could argue that it hurts community newspapers, those important pieces of mechanisms of local community knowledge. You know, I had the great honour of editing two community newspapers in Ontario a long, long time ago, the Marmora Herald and the Havelock something—I forget what it was called at the time. But I knew how critically important—I knew how critically important—those local newspapers were to providing information to members of the public in those communities.

* (15:20)

I knew how important it was to convey public government information through advertising, through those local newspapers because, let's be honest, local radio can only do so much, local TV is being reduced all the time, but local newspapers remain the central medium by which people in local communities got their information, including the absolutely essential government notices on matters of important public policy.

And, in one short bill, Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act, the government has wiped all that out, and I feel bad for the Minister of Culture, Heritage, Sports and other things—I'm sure, et. al.—who's forced to have to come to the House, try to explain why this bill has been tabled, why the government thinks it's a good idea, why there is some logic to it. But we know, during the question and answer period, that she failed dramatically to do that, and I don't blame her. There simply is no logical explanation for this kind of legislation that seeks to undermine the very principles of openness and accountability and transparency that have become the hallmark of modern government.

But we certainly believe that informing Manitobans of changes that affect them is one of the most critical jobs of government. It's what's required, and the way that that's been done traditionally and into the present and the way that it's been understood in local communities, as you're flipping through the local newspaper, is to see those advertisements right there in order to inform yourself of what's going on and how you can get involved, if you happen to support that change or if you're opposed to it.

But, instead, that's not what's going to happen. In fact, all those—all that advertising in local newspapers, through one stroke of the pen, is going to be wiped out and they won't exist anymore. Manitobans won't know what to do, and I have to tell the minister, and I've been around here not nearly as long as many members, but as some members, that Manitoba citizens do not automatically go to the government of Manitoba website to find out all of their information, and they certainly are—don't go there and wade through all the levels of information that are on there in order to find the information that may be relevant to them, especially when they don't know if it's relevant or not.

That's the point of an advertisement in a public newspaper. It says, in neon, this may be relevant to you. This may be important to you, Mr. or Mrs. Citizen. And, therefore, we're informing you in the public newspaper of what this information is, and we're going to leave you with a number, maybe a website, maybe an email, so that you can have your say whether you agree with it or not.

That's not going to happen anymore, Madam Speaker, and so that critical information that is received by members of the communities in which local newspapers are published will certainly be at a disadvantage. That's one thing.

We also know, frankly, that those local newspapers, and let's be honest about this, rely on a large part of that advertising in order to make ends meet for them. Running a small-town local newspaper can be very, very difficult, as I said, that I edited two of those myself at one time in my life, and I knew that the margins were always very, very tight and that it was absolutely essential for us to utilize all those systems that were out there in order to ensure that there was sufficient revenues for the newspaper on the one hand, and then, at the same time, doing our public responsibility to provide information that is relevant to the readers and to the citizens of a given location, municipality, region, or so be it.

And so this is very troubling, in its own right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and then, as my friend from Flin Flon, who I know will speak about this in greater detail, made abundantly clear, there are simply many, many communities all across the North and in First Nations communities, as well in the North that simply do not have access to the Internet. It does not exist.

So to say, well, don't worry about this lack of printed information anymore in your local newspaper, to say don't worry about that, that it's going to be online, is cold comfort and, frankly, not relevant in northern communities all across the North. And they, who already feel a really strong sense of being left out of what happens in Manitoba, will be further left out and ignored by a government act that says to them, not only we do not care to publish this information anymore in your local newspaper, or so it is, but we're going to put it online, but if you can't access it, well maybe you're out of luck.

Now the minister says, well, not necessarily, we'll leave it up to the discretion of the department to do that. Well, I think that's a little odd because that does leave open the possibility that discretion will be used not to do anything about that information at all. And I don't think that will come from the very trusted and loyal public servants of Manitoba whom I've worked with for a long time when I was a public servant myself for the City of 15 years, I had lots of dealings with public servants at the Province of Manitoba. God knows I love those people, they were fabulous people.

So I don't think it's about them who won't be utilizing other manners, means by which to convey information that's critically important to local

communities who don't have access to the Internet. I don't think it will be public servants who will do that at all. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there will be political direction that it not be done, left to the discretion of the ministers and the political tall foreheads in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office to make these kind of political calculations that basically says what they don't know won't hurt them.

That's no way to operate a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's no way to act in the best interest of Manitobans. That's no way at all to govern. And so it's on such a bill that it really is of minor importance in so many ways, yet it takes on this monumental importance because it goes to the very heart of the government's credibility on openness, accountability and transparency.

Just having a drink of cold water there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gets a little dry in here from time to time.

But, you know, it's not just all of those things that I've tried to outline, but it's some of the substantive matters that are actually raised by this bill. And we tried to raise them with the minister in the question and answer period, all she said was I don't think your hearing devices are listening or working because you don't seem to be listening.

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was not a clear direct answer to any question. Yes, there was a speaking point, and we heard that speaking point over and over and over, I get that, I heard it, but there was an absence of any substance underneath that speaking point, which surprises me not at all, although I know the minister to be a very bright, very intelligent and valued member of this House, but to just go to the speaking point isn't satisfying for those of us on the other side of the House who want real answers to direct questions that are critically important to the people that we represent.

So we asked her a question about ecological reserves and how that will disappear from the public domain. The minister proposes to remove the statutory requirement to put public notice in newspapers when removing protections for ecological reserves. When we went on to ask her, said ecological reserves are the most highly protected designation we have in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what doesn't the minister want the public to know?

* (15:30)

And I think that speaks right to the heart of this piece of legislation, what is it that the government doesn't want us to know? In this case, the question was about ecological reserves, subsequent question was about endangered ecosystems. Why is she making a change that removes public notice in the newspaper on endangered ecosystems? Who would think that up? Who came up with that? Like, who would think that that's a good idea not to inform citizens of these very important changes that may occur when we're talking about ecological reserves, or when we're talking about ecological reserves or when we're talking about endangered ecosystems?

It also changes—the school division boundaries can proceed without informing the public and their local newspaper. Well, that's not right. I—in my community, of course, we're serviced by the main newspapers, but we're also serviced by The Sou'wester, and I know community newspapers exist in all parts of the province. And I know that we all utilize them. I read the submissions for the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) that go into her local community newspaper. I read the member from St. Norbert's, his because we're all part of it. I read the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), our leader, his pieces that show up in The Sou'wester. I know that, in addition to those pieces, are the critical pieces of government advertising that tell what the government is up to. And to have, suddenly, that taken away with the stroke of a pen means that the government does not seem concerned about having an informed citizenry, which certainly raises the question: What, oh what does this government have to hide?

And I think the answer to that is becoming more than just apparent while we're talking not only about ecological reserves where reporting was wiped out of Bill 24 without the—without a blink of an eye, or endangered ecosystems, or when we're talking about school division boundaries, or when we're talking about environmental licences and all those other things where there has been clear public information posted in local newspapers to ensure that there is an informed citizenry about critical issues that may well affect themselves, their neighbours, their families—certainly their neighbourhoods and their community.

And we know, frankly, in what has seemed like an excessively long 18 months that, really, in a relatively short period of time, the government has become the champions of hiding information, of distorting the public record, of paying fast and

'looth'—fast and loose with the critical information that makes for an informed citizenry.

We had the example of—Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know this yourself—of the KPMG reports. That has almost been forced from the government with a crowbar because that was the only way we were going to separate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) from that report, so closely did he hold it to himself. Now, we understand that, because we saw a picture of it, that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) took that particular report to Costa Rica with him, so he got to read it there. He said that was going to be reading material that he was going to look at. But, in terms of making that report public, it took a veritable crowbar to separate it from the Minister of Finance, and now we understand why.

When we saw the recommendations that were in that report that the government did not—chose not to release in a timely manner, we saw a series of hits to the people of Manitoba, the likes of which we haven't seen since when—well, since the 1990s. That's how bad it is.

And then, on top of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have that other KPMG report on health care that—trying to separate that from the Minister of Health has been well nigh impossible as well. Yes, it's—we understand that it's starting to come out in dribs and drabs, a little bit here and a little bit there. And government wants to say oh, these are just recommendations; we don't know if we're doing A or if we're doing B, if we're doing Y or we're doing Z. They're just recommendations. And meanwhile, a whole bunch of changes that are happening to our health care—citizens that is not putting patients first but, in fact, is being done for one purpose and one purpose only, and that's to serve a false bottom line that has no actual practical reality in the world in which we live. And that is having a profound impact on Manitobans of all ages in all states of conditions.

And this is not something that people voted for. And we in this side of the House hear about this all the time. You know, we do hear from Tories, and they do tell us, oh, yes, we voted for them, but, boy, I didn't vote for that. I voted for my local Conservative, but I didn't vote for that.

And this goes on and on and on, and this is an example of why there has been such a dismal record for the government in 18 short months because—or, in 18 short months, yes, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been a profound ability to communicate with the public, and that failure is because this is a

hyper-partisan government that relies on distorted speaking points to make their point to the people of Manitoba, all at the same time hiding critically important information from them, leaving the people of Manitoba, quite frankly, out in the cold.

I mean, in many ways, it's simply inappropriate that issues of broad public concern would be relegated to electronic publications that only a handful of people are going to read. It makes no sense to hide information online, deeply buried in some government department website that people aren't automatically going to look through. They are going to look through their local community newspaper. They are going to get to page 4, page 6, or page 8, and see a public notice on ecological reserves, see a public notice on endangered ecosystems, see a public notice on changes in school division boundaries, see a public notice on environmental licences and then act accordingly.

But now they're not going to know unless they're clicking like crazy through government websites and government departments in order to find that information that they don't even know exists, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's why we take exception to this bill.

Now, I know that the minister said, in talking about the bill in the—one of the answers to the first questions, that they've consulted. And they—she said, well, consulted with departments. Well, yes, that's not really consulting, to consult with departments, to consult with the very people over which you have responsibility and authority over. Yes, you talk and you have dialogue and discuss with departments; I know that from my own experience, but you don't consult with departments; you go out into the broader public spaces to do that kind of consultation.

So Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we don't feel very positive about this bill. We think it's a—it speaks volumes to the government's failure to be open, accountable and transparent, and it's yet another checkmark in a very, very dismal record. Thank you.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The—I will go against this proposed bill, and I'll give my reasons for it.

The first thing that struck me as I dug a little bit deeper into this side-by-side that was provided to me courtesy of the minister is that this is a restriction of the flow of information that current law requires. The statutory requirements that are now currently in the laws of the province, and even federally, they all

invariably require that there should be a specific publication wherein a law or a rule or a regulation, whether it changes, amends, alters or repeals an existing rule or regulation or law, has to be published. The decent way, and I think the better business practice of most governments, was to inform its people of how the rules have changed or at least how the rules will be applied.

* (15:40)

I remember that the flow of information was the first thing that—during the martial law years in the Philippines, when it was September 22nd, 1972, when we were ordered to shut down some newspapers and some radio stations to the effect that there was only one radio station that was broadcasting. All television stations except the government television channel was on, and it's amazing how that affected the whole population because I'm not saying that this is the start of martial law. It's just that I had that experience back in 1972 when I was serving as a police officer during those martial law years, and when information is being restricted from flowing from the government or from government ministries or departments, it flows only to those who are entitled to hear or read or know about the information that's being excluded.

Now, there is a lot of objection. There are some grounds that I would want to cite, but the main thing is that the amendment to this notice is—it is characterized as modernization, and this is a step back because the apparent attempts on the part of the government to release, piecemeal, the KPMG report. When they tried to, well, at least hide the total report instead of giving the report to the public, because it was the public that paid for it, they said that, well, it will only confuse you.

And it is an indictment on the part of the government that we are not that smart. Actually, these amendments, to so many acts proposed under this bill, is doing the same thing, and the optimum that the governments usefully do in providing information is to make our populace, the inhabitants of our province, to be a little bit more informed and a little bit more concerned and a little bit more engaged.

Now, the discretionary power of ministers and government bureaucrats, for that matter, in asking that certain rules and regulations be published or not in local newspapers is a very powerful tool to deprive income to those local newspapers that rely heavily on government advertisements

or government notices. And it's not really modernization, it's part of a—I don't know how much money the government is going to save by doing this, but my suspicion is that this is part of an attack on the free flow of information, that it also reflects entirely on the way that the government—the current government—the current provincial government, has tried to control information from flowing to the public's fear.

The public has the right to know and the public has to be engaged so that our populace will be a little bit more engaged in the business of government. And the reason why some of our voters do not even vote is because of the sometimes very hideous way of governments hiding information from them or, at least, colourizing information.

What I would suggest is maybe try to put this in its proper perspective by using all that we have now and adding on more in publishing information and in disseminating information instead of restricting it.

The Manitoba Gazette has been a—an official publication on the part of the government. It's like when we—when I was still practising law, no statute or regulation will become valid unless it was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, which means that we rely entirely on that hard copy of the Official Gazette. Manitoba Gazette has the same. It has the same purpose to give law offices and those who are interested in engaging the government in some type of conversation to make things official.

The attempt on the part of the government now to include everything in the information that could be disseminated by the way that a minister would want it to be disseminated is a way that really does not speak well of a government that claims to be transparent and accountable.

We have seen it with the KPMG report. The report—portions of it were released only upon prodding and upon repeated demands on the part of people who are interested that it be published. The government of the day has a very difficult situation where from the time that the KPMG report was known to be in existence, questions have been raised about it being so secret and confidential and private that we doubted whether the government was really hiding some of the contents of that report.

Anyway, I'll be voting against this bill. Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's nice to have the opportunity and rise and just speak for a moment on Bill 8. In breaking down this bill, there are parts of it that we do support. Firstly, our Liberal caucus supports the removal of the fees for the Manitoba Gazette, as \$100 can be a pricey subscription and is often a barrier in accessing information.

We believe and are in complete favour of having this information online for environmental reasons and accessibility; however, we are concerned about limitations to information that may arise.

In 2014, the former NDP government stopped printing hard copies, which sometimes caused limitations in access to information. A great deal of our province has convenient access to online printing; however, there's a big population in Manitoba that does not. And I would insist that we first have an understanding of the 60 subscriptions to the Manitoba Gazette, ensuring that those subscribed will still have access if switched over electronically.

*(15:50)

Another concern our caucus has with this bill is for our local media. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do believe in choices, but by removing the requirement of printing notifications, the local media is going to negatively be affected. This is because advertisements help pay for companies to run successfully.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill makes it so departments have the option to decline advertising in local newspapers, and I believe this government is being very clear with this bill that this will be the case because buying ad space for community notification and staying within budget, well, departments will choose different priorities.

In this morning's bill briefing—which by the way I would like to thank the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox) for hosting—this government stated that these changes will save them \$95,000. But it is kind of ironic that this form of cost savings is a complete opposite of what is currently being done in Quebec. Quebec is actually investing where our government is removing funds, and this is worrisome.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we support many parts of Bill 8, The Government Notices Modernization Act, we will not be voting in favour of it, because we see the devastation in our local media and we are worried about our communities

that may not have Internet access because we're not confident in this government's discretion.

Thank you.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that debate be adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member from Assiniboia, on a point—is it a point of order?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I want—my notification to speak was on the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, it was, you indicated—but it was the government's turn to speak, so, therefore, we're asking—the Government House Leader is requesting a—it's not a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

Mr. Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, when—in the rules, clearly states that independent members have the opportunity to speak to a bill. Now we saw one independent member speak to the bill and it seems unfortunate if the other independent members are denied their fundamental democratic rights, which is actually ironic because that is in part what this bill is about. That is my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, on the point, there was no point of order. And I just wanted to clear that there's a rotation, and a rotation of—from the different parties, and then—you're actually on the rotation, but you weren't up at that point. So the Government House Leader has interrupted the debate to ask for adjournment, and this is where we're at right now.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It's been moved by the Government House Leader—

An Honourable Member: A matter of privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just wanted to tell the member from Assiniboia that we're in a process of asking a question, and we're in the process of it, and we want to continue with that process and we'll get back to you after the question.

You can't interrupt in the middle of a question. We're in the midst of a process here.

So the thing is, it's not a point of order, and we're in the process of asking the question here. And the thing is, we want to continue with the process and

we'll get back to you after we go through the process here. And it's not a point of order. We're going to conclude it right now, and you can address it after.

It's not a matter of privilege. A matter of privilege can't be raised in the middle of the question here. We basically put it in the middle of a question.

Okay. It has been moved by the Government House Leader, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet, that the debate be now adjourned. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

The opposite House leader—Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I request a vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader, on a vote. *[interjection]*

The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Fontaine: A recorded vote, Deputy Speaker.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: First we—okay. First we have to go is—all those in favour of the debate—of the adjourned, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

An Honourable Member: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Fontaine: Sorry. I request a recorded vote, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The one hour provided for ringing the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing the division bells to be turned off, and the House to proceed with the—to vote.

The question before the House is the motion to adjourn the debate for second reading of Bill 8.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fletcher, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lathlin,

Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Smith (Point Douglas), Wiebe.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 35, Nays 17.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The debate is now over.

* * *

Mr. Fletcher: I rise on a point of privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

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