

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 13—The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister for Crown Services, that Bill 13, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, this bill will allow certain health profession regulators to publish information regarding disciplinary matters of their members. It'll also allow a health profession regulation to incorporate by reference standards of practice created by the college itself, thereby increasing transparency and reducing red tape.

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

Bill 14—The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 14, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Again, thank you, Madam Speaker.

This bill will enable the ongoing implementation of a standardized fee structure for land ambulances as we reduce the fees that are charged. It'll also formally establish the responsibilities and authorities of the provincial medical director. In addition, it'll enable the Department of Health to discontinue regulating paramedics when the profession transitions to self-regulation, thereby fulfilling our election promises.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lucy Fouasse

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Since 2011, Community Futures has hosted a contest called Just Watch ME! This contest is organized by the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program, which offers assistance to people living with disabilities start businesses in rural Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

This year winner for the prairie edition is Lucy Fouasse, from St. Malo. Lucy is the owner of a little steps miniature wellness farm where she offers equine-facilitated wellness services for children and youth and, as such, it's fitting to honour Lucy and welcome her to the Legislature today on a day when my colleague from Fort Richmond earlier introduced a bill recognizing the importance of service animals and those who provide their services.

According to Lucy's business description, she offers counselling services through the use of animals, helping to build skills such as communication, confidence, self-awareness and youth resiliency.

Lucy encourages everyone to look deep inside and focus on their strengths rather than their limitations. By offering day camps, wellness camps and school workshops, Lucy's service animals focus on developing the qualities of leadership, anxiety reduction and emotional regulation in children and teens.

Lucy is the proud mother of two and a small business owner in St. Malo, and recognizes the community support which helped her succeed. She is also proud to offer unique services to rural-based communities that otherwise may not have access.

Therefore, I would like to recognize and congratulate Lucy for being the 2016 winner of the Just Watch ME! contest, thank her for being a dedicated advocate for both those living with disabilities and entrepreneurs in rural Manitoba, and

ask all honourable members to join me in the House today to congratulate Lucy.

Madam Speaker, I request leave to read the names of—into the record. With Lucy today: Angèle Fouasse—

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

Mr. Graydon: Her daughter Angèle; her son Caleb; two youth volunteers, Jolaine Desrosiers and Josianne Desrosiers, both youth volunteers.

Thank you.

Provincial Nominee Program Fees

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, new immigration to Manitoba starting for over a decade has helped drive Manitoba's population to a record 1.3 million people. These immigrants and new Canadians help boost Manitoba's economy and wholesomely contributed to our province's rich diversity. We need to ensure unnecessary barriers aren't put in place to deter potential future productive Manitobans.

Recently, Madam Speaker, the Conservative government announced it will be introducing a \$500 non-refundable fee for applicants to the Provincial Nominee Program. We believe this move, along with other changes to the application criteria, will reduce the number of applicants to the program. Some 130,000 people from many countries of the world have made Manitoba their new home over the past 10 years. They have contributed meaningfully to our economic and social life. To impose such a fee on the applications would surely have a devastating impact on these numbers.

Manitoba has one of the most successful provincial immigration programs in Canada. Across the country, people recognize our nomination program as the gold standard. We have a high 80-plus per cent retention rate, and up to 98 per cent of newcomers are employed within their first year here. The Conservative government's proposed changes would hinder, not help, those who are looking for, and are hoping to contribute to, Manitoba's vibrant culture and economy.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. The Conservative government should withdraw their proposed changes to the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Recognizing Local Museums

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I rise in the House today to recognize all of Manitoba's local museums, particularly those in my constituency of La Verendrye.

Museums play an important role in preserving and maintaining Manitoba's history. The artifacts they preserve help us conserve our past and our heritage. This makes them a valuable part of our education system. Not everything can be taught in a classroom or is easily communicated in the form of a textbook or website. Sometimes, you need to see history for yourself in order to understand it. You can only do that in a museum.

This past weekend I had the privilege of attending the annual Sprague museum fundraising supper. This year, their theme was honouring local war veterans. I must give the committee credit for all the volunteering and hard work that has gone into compiling and maintaining these records in their local museum.

There are over 150 local museums in Manitoba and La Verendrye has at least seven. Most museums don't cost very much to visit. Mostly a donation and a visit to a local museum is one of the best ways to learn about the history of your town or of your region.

I would encourage all Manitobans to visit and get others to join them in visiting their local museum. By learning about the past, we are able to better understand the present. A knowledge of history makes us better citizens today and will help us to build a better tomorrow in the province of Manitoba.

I would like to thank all the volunteers across Manitoba, and especially in La Verendrye, that have put countless hours in building and maintaining these museums for future generations to enjoy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I ask for leave to list in Hansard the communities that museums are found in La Verendrye.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to list the communities? *[Agreed]*

Communities: Anola, Cooks Creek, East Braintree, Hadashville, Sarto, Sprague and Whitemouth

* (13:40)

First Nations Mental Health

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): It is no secret that I have committed to speaking up for Manitoba's most vulnerable. I'd like to share a letter today.

Hey, Cousin, maybe I haven't taken the time to tell you how much I love you. I watched you grow up. I watched all my cousins grow up. I know I was 10 years older and I had to leave for high school when you were just entering school, but from the day of your birth I was there. Maybe you don't remember, but I do.

I grew up with your mom and dads. They were teenagers when I was 10. I used to think no one would ever be good enough for them. One by one they all found their soulmates. Then all my precious, beautiful cousins started coming.

Coz, I couldn't come home when your little sister took her life. I couldn't come bury her. That would make it real. I still feel like I abandoned her. I didn't know she was so unhappy. I didn't know how bad it was for her, postpartum depression at its worst. Cousin, you still have her sweet name tattooed on your neck. It's so beautiful.

Tragedy struck again when the mother of your own children took her life. Three little boys now living forever without their momma.

I stayed with you until you awoke from your attempt. When I—when you woke, I told you that I had prayed the entire time. I told you your sons needed you; I told you your parents need you; I told you our family needs you.

I love you, Cousin. We already lost Ida, I don't want to lose you too.

While most MLAs in this House attend celebratory events, I attend wakes. That is the reality of my Kewatinook.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Robert Sopuck

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize Robert Sopuck, the Member of Parliament for Dauphin-Swan River-Neepawa. My friend and constituent was recently named the International Legislator of the Year by Safari Club International at their convention in Las Vegas.

Safari Club International is an organization composed of hunters dedicated to protecting the

freedom to hunt and promoting wildlife conservation worldwide.

Bob, who lives in the Lake Audy area, is a lifelong hunter and angler and an avid outdoorsman.

As a legislator, Bob has shown an unwavering commitment to protecting the rights of law-abiding firearms owners and defending the rural way of life, particularly Canadian hunters, anglers and sport shooters.

In 2012, Bob was instrumental in founding the Conservative hunting and angling caucus. The caucus serves as a vessel for MPs to address the common concerns of their constituents and move forward with legislative solutions that respect hunters and anglers.

In 2016, Bob led the charge against Bill C-246, legislation that, under the guise of animal welfare, sought to fundamentally alter our relationship with animals, endanger traditional animal use, such as hunting, angling and trapping, livestock raising and medical research, among other things.

Bob said hunting is about respecting the traditions of our ancestors and passing down that enjoyment to the next generation. In his words: This lifestyle needs to be defended every step of the way, and I am proud to be one of those defenders.

I would ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating Bob on this prestigious award.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Minimum Wage Increase Request

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): During the last election, the Premier and his members knocked on the doors of Manitobans and promised over and over again that they would protect the services of Manitobans and the people who provide them.

Yet, now the Premier has made significant cuts to health care, education and infrastructure, cuts that mean less services and less people to provide those services.

Manitobans are disappointed in the Premier's actions and they are tired of having the Premier pay himself while they get less from his government. He took a 20 per cent increase in pay, then turns around and freezes the minimum wage and makes cuts

that will do lasting damage to schools, roads and hospitals around the province.

Will the Premier return his own 20 per cent raise and do the right thing and raise the minimum wage this year?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, I can't call the member's preamble an alternative interpretation of the facts, because it isn't factual. It's untrue, and because it's untrue, it doesn't really deserve a response.

But it does give me the opportunity to say that the members opposite, in fact, gave themselves a 20 per cent increase to their Cabinet pay when they ripped up the balanced budget law which required them to be personally accountable for running a significant and ever-growing deficit.

They gave themselves this break at around the same time that they took taxes away from Manitobans—additional taxes, which, by the way, they had promised Manitobans when they knocked on their doors and looked in their eyes that they would not raise. They made those promises, they broke them, and while they did that, they gave themselves a raise in pay, Madam Speaker.

These are the facts. And we are demonstrating integrity and leadership and respect of turning the province away from the rocky shore they steered it toward and building ourselves a new province that's on the road to recovery, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier did promise not to privatize MTS, but he did.

Madam Speaker, the Premier took money right off the kitchen table of Manitoba families in order to put a 20 per cent salary increase into his own pocket. The Premier promised that he would protect the services of Manitobans and the people who provide them, yet now we see these were false promises. He has announced significant cuts to health care, education and infrastructure.

Manitobans are tired of paying this Premier more and getting less—less health care, less education, less infrastructure.

And, worst of all, the Premier hasn't even been around to see the damage he has done. He will be away on an eight-week vacation, without email in

Costa Rica. It's not fair, Madam Speaker, and it's not right.

Madam Speaker, will the Premier commit to returning his 20 per cent salary increase and do the right thing and raise the minimum wage this year?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, we await with great interest, as do Manitobans, a single idea from the now official opposition as to how they would restore some sense of sustainability to health care, or education or the fiscal management of the province—not one idea.

Madam Speaker, the reality of the situation is that because of NDP gross overspending, repetitive overspending, and waste, and duplication and mismanagement, we have seen not one but two credit rating downgrades in our province. And what that does, of course, is it takes about \$30 million a year away from front-line workers and the services they provide—health care, education, the vital services that Manitobans count on—it takes it away and gives it to happy moneylenders in Ontario and New York.

These are the people that the members have been working for, such as the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), Madam Speaker, who disclaims any association with those decisions because he's new, but owns the decisions as he continues to prattle on from his seat.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The session has resumed, but there's no budget. The government is trying to hide its plans for cuts from Manitobans, yet we already know that this government is making across-the-board cuts to health, education and infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans are tired of paying the Premier more, tens of thousands of dollars each year, and getting less services and investments from this government—services and projects like personal-care-home beds that the Premier has cut and cancelled.

Seniors and families deserve these services and deserve to have them protected.

Madam Speaker, will the Premier start aiming higher? When will he return his raise and actually give Manitobans who need it a raise? When will he raise the minimum wage?

* (13:50)

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, when we prepare a budget, we do it with sincerity and with a great desire to see the effects be positive for the people of Manitoba. And we also do it recognizing that, for the process to have some credibility, two things have to happen.

First of all, we have to consult genuinely with Manitobans, something the previous government failed to do. And we have done that and we will continue to do that.

Secondly, the numbers have to make sense, and the end result has to bear some resemblance to the prediction. And that we endeavour to do, Madam Speaker, because we want to restore integrity and a sense of faith and confidence in Manitobans that the system matters and that they have involvement in it.

Now, the previous government made a prediction in their desperate last days. They said they'd run a deficit of over \$300 million, and they got it up close to \$900 million, Madam Speaker, almost triple—almost triple—the amount. They were so out of control with their spending throughout the previous decade, but in the last year in particular, they put us on a road to rocks as opposed to progress.

We are now building a new road, Madam Speaker, for Manitobans, with Manitobans' help. And that is a road to recovery.

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

Provincial Nominee Program New Application Fee

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): While the Premier protects his own 20 per cent raise and his eight weeks away, he has zeroed in on those who need our support the most. A freeze to the minimum wage, talk about rolling back housing benefits for low-income Manitobans and a new fee for provincial nominees. Now, a \$500 fee might not seem like much to the Premier, but I can tell him it is.

It's not fair, Madam Speaker, and it's not right. And it really speaks of the priorities of a premier who would take tens of thousands of dollars in a raise while forcing newcomers to pay more.

Will the Premier give back his 20 per cent raise and cancel his plans for a \$500 fee for new provincial nominees?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well again, Madam Speaker, because the NDP is out of ideas, they prepared talking points for the interim leader that are not factually accurate. They are fibs; they are falsehoods. They do not represent the actual facts of the matter, and so I won't respond to those false charges.

But what I will do instead is recommend that the NDP take advantage of the opportunity to discuss a major issue that apparently they are on the verge of discussing in nine days: the remaking of their brand. I understand that there is some consensus emerging around the fact that they should remove the D from their name and be the NP now, as opposed to the NDP.

I understand also that the member who asked me the questions has said that their process of leadership selection is not democratic, therefore they should remove the D. *[interjection]* Also, the president of their party has said the process of selecting a leader—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —is not democratic. *[interjection]* He also has said that—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —they should take the D away. Kevin Rebeck has said that their campaign to take the D away is not democratic, so I guess he agrees with them. And long-time advocate Sel Burrows has said that the fix was in in their nomination meeting in Point Douglas and it wasn't democratic. Madam Speaker, there's a consensus that they should not only take the N away because they're not new, but take the D away as well.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just indicate to all members here that there are a couple of words that I just heard that are considered unparliamentary, and I would just ask caution with all members when referring to these words in the House that they are considered unparliamentary.

Premier's Comments

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier stood in this Chamber and said that provincial nominees have high rates of unemployment and dependency on social assistance. We know that's not true. The Premier is guided by facts that don't exist. It's disrespectful to the many men and women and their children who are helping to drive the Manitoba economy.

I have asked before and I ask again: With the—will the Premier put on the record one shred of evidence to back up his assertion that provincial nominees are a drain on Manitoba, or will he continue to duck and hide?

Mr. Pallister: Another false assertion, Madam Speaker, that is untrue, and I would encourage the member equally to put one shred of evidence for I ever said such things as she continues to put into the record, because I did not.

What I have said is that the wait times for the Provincial Nominee Program are atrocious, that they dispel the hopes and the dreams of wonderful people who we need in this province to contribute to our growing diversity, to our abilities to support one another.

The partnership that Manitoba rests upon, fundamentally, is one of celebrating diversity and of celebrating new entrants into our province. And that is something we on this side of the House understand, appreciate and will continue to fight for, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, what the previous administration chose to do was to prolong those waits for those people, and this was most unfortunate. They also chose, when they got here, to give them tax hikes each year that were larger than the fee that has now been introduced in order to encourage recirculation of money to help those who come into our province have the services and the opportunities to enter the workforce more rapidly than they have had that opportunity in the past, Madam Speaker.

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

Cap on Applicants

Ms. Marcelino: The Provincial Nominee system has been set up to work with applicants, allowing them to do things like upgrade their language training while their applications are under review.

Under this new government, the cap on provincial nominees remains in place. Not one more provincial nominee is being allowed into Manitoba as a result of this government's actions, not a single one. Instead, the government is prepared to reject many applicants rather than working with them.

My question is simple: How many applicants are being rejected as this government purges the current list?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, there are a number of things that contribute to a province's ability to attract new people, and certainly one of them is the tax environment, the regulatory environment would be another, the quality of services another. We concern ourselves with each of these as we endeavour to make sure that this is a province that grows, that prospers.

On the road to recovery, Madam Speaker, there are many challenges, many challenges, of course, made greater by the inadequate mismanagement of the previous administration, who should be called, I think, the P party for pay more, because at every respect, they made Manitobans pay more for their mismanagement and they made Manitobans pay more for the patronage that they demonstrated in giving untendered contracts to party pals. They made Manitobans pay more when they gave themselves salary increases and they introduced a vote tax subsidy for their political party. They made Manitobans pay more when they demonstrated on a regular basis that they didn't care about the results, they just cared about getting credit.

And the reality is that we here on this side of the House put province ahead of patronage, partisanship and the pain that was caused by the previous administration, Madam Speaker, and we'll cure it.

Personal-Care Homes Construction Promise

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): A year ago this Premier (Mr. Pallister) stood in front of Park Manor personal-care home in Transcona, alongside the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski), the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), the member for River East (Mrs. Cox). There he promised to fast-track 1,200 personal-care-home beds in our province. He called it a crisis, in fact. He promised to get on it right away, not in five years, not in 10 years, but, rather, proceeding with action. This is what he said.

Now it's a year later, and the Premier hasn't built one single bed.

Will the Premier explain to families why he's failed to build a single bed? And why did he pull out the rug from underneath the communities like Transcona?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Certainly we have committed to providing up to \$133,000 per bed. That was the election commitment. It was in the campaign.

I know that'll confuse the member because it was actually committed to during an election, and this is a party, the former government, that has a difficult time fulfilling election promises.

We made that commitment during the campaign. We've got a number of proposals that we're reviewing based on that commitment, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the minister knows full well that at that level of funding that they have effectively cancelled these shovel-ready projects, these PCHs in communities like Lac du Bonnet, in Transcona, in Bridgwater.

We've also learned that the Health Minister has told—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —community groups that they have to come up—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —with these millions of dollars of funding on their own or there will be no funding at all from this government.

* (14:00)

As a result of this government's actions, it's now impossible for these community groups to build any personal-care-home beds in our province.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) tell this Chamber why he broke his promise to fast-track the construction of personal-care homes, and why is he refusing to build any new ones?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, when I was first appointed Minister of Health, I was informed that, in the Department of Health, there is something called a capital cap. The capital cap is \$189 million. That is the amount that the department is allowed by Treasury Board to pay for principal and interest on capital projects.

I asked at that time, where was the capital cap at. I was told that it was, essentially, right at the cap.

So I said, well, how did the NDP plan to build a billion dollars of projects if they were already at the cap? I just got blank stares back in response.

I wonder if the member could fill in the blanks.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, this Premier called the issue of increasing the number of beds the most important we have to face in this province, and, yet, the minister offers no solutions and no additional funding.

Not only has he embarrassed the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski) and the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes) in their own communities, he's undone the work, years of hard work, that has been done by community groups to build these projects.

Will the Premier stand up today, answer to his caucus members, but, more importantly, answer and apologize to the community groups who have worked so hard to raise money to build beds for the families in Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, five years ago the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) visited Lac du Bonnet—it might have been the last time that he visited Lac du Bonnet—and he turned a shovel. He put a little hole in the ground. That was the groundbreaking for the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home. Nothing ever happened after those five years.

Now, if that's what the definition of shovel-ready is, where the premier goes and turns over one spade of dirt and then does nothing else—they made a commitment. They turned over a shovel. They did nothing else because they'd reached their capital cap.

That is not what I would consider compassionate to seniors or any other Manitoban.

Northern Health Authority Funding Cut Concerns

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The northern regional health authority serves over 74,000 northern Manitobans. That doesn't include the people of Churchill, who are covered by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. That means these deep cuts at the WRHA will also affect Churchill.

This government has already abandoned the Port of Churchill: What steps will this minister ensure that he's—he does not leave the health-care needs of Churchill in the cold?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, the pressures that exist in health care today exist

because the former government, over the past 17 years, never tried to actually address the issues of cost sustainability within the health-care system.

The analysis that I have right now is, if the Department of Health continued to spend in the trend that it was spending, that in 15 years, there will be two departments left in government: Finance and Health. Every other department would have evaporated.

We have to take the steps necessary to ensure that health care is sustainable, not just for today, but for the future, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The northern regional health authority also serves 26 First Nation communities, including some of Manitoba's most remote First Nations.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) is forcing the NRHA to cut non-insured services, which means cutting services like mental health supports in parts of Manitoba where rates of substance abuse and mental health issues are much higher.

Why didn't this Premier or this minister consult any of these First Nation communities before they ordered the RHA to make these cuts?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, we know that the former government never consulted communities about the unsustainability of health care, about the direction that it was going, knowing that they wouldn't be able to do many of the promises they made, knowing that, ultimately, they would reach the point where the health-care system wasn't sustainable at that point.

Madam Speaker, we also know that there was a lack of consultation by the federal government, the federal government that decided to, unilaterally, without consultation, without negotiation, reduce the escalator for support for health care, which also impacts the North.

Madam Speaker, that is the kind of lack of consultation both by the former provincial NDP government and the now federal Liberal government which hurts people in the North.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The priorities of this Premier are clear. The Premier said no to a health clinic in The Pas and

in Thompson. These clinics would help the region provide better local health care.

Now we have learned that the government is forcing the northern regional health authority to cut millions, and the minister will ultimately make a final decision onto where to cut. Will this minister tell this House today what areas he has identified for cuts?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, there is more money currently being invested in health care in Manitoba than there ever was under the NDP on an annual basis. I suspect that after the next provincial budget, there'll be even more money invested into health than there is today, and certainly more than there ever was under the NDP.

If the member opposite has concerns about the funding and the investment that is going into health care now, what would she say about the dark days of the Selinger government when funding was less, Madam Speaker?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Public-Private Partnerships Changes to Accountability Act

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): The media is reporting that this government is looking at using public-private partnerships to build schools, but not before they repeal the law that guarantees Manitobans accountability on P3s.

This is a mistake. The minister has only to look at Nova Scotia to see why. That province built 39 schools using P3s, but their Auditor General found many problems. The subcontractors in those deals didn't get criminal record or child abuse registry checks, didn't live up to the safety provisions or even require first aid to be on site, as they were supposed to.

Why doesn't this Minister of Education tell the Premier that if they are to use P3 deals to finance schools, they need the P3 accountability act to stay on the books so Manitobans know they're getting a fair deal?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I think Manitobans want to know that this government is doing its best to make sure that their taxpayer dollars are well used. There's some good examples, other places in the country, where P3s have been used effectively and with no

problems. And we are certainly examining the possibility that they would be appropriate here in Manitoba. I'm not ashamed of that. I think we should be proud of the fact we're trying to make the best use of taxpayer dollars.

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

Mr. Kinew: When it comes to costs, P3s are often more expensive than public construction. *[interjection]* In Nova Scotia—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kinew: —of the \$726 million—*[interjection]*—that was spent—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —financing these P3s, \$326 million of that was spent on interest costs alone. When we have historically lower interest rates paid by governments, that doesn't make any sense.

Also in Nova Scotia, some of the P3 developers ended up contracting services back to the school divisions. So the government there paid \$52 million, only to be told that school divisions were the cheapest provider of services in the first place.

Will the Premier walk back the plan to repeal the legislation and commit to sharing an apples-to-apples comparison of costs with Manitobans?

Mr. Wishart: We're certainly interested in looking at the possibilities of financial tools like P3s being of use to Manitobans to make sure that we can get the infrastructure that the previous government never built.

The previous government, if you look at how they did on education infrastructure, came in a resounding 10th out of 10.

* (14:10)

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

Mr. Kinew: And so I guess the minister thinks he's going to do better by doing nothing. So it's not just about the P3 deal itself, it's also about ensuring that the terms of those deals are lived up to.

Nova Scotia's Auditor General found that services promised under their P3 deals were routinely flouted. In some cases, the Auditor General in Nova Scotia said that ignoring those provisions put the actual safety of students in classrooms at risk.

We should never put the safety of students in classrooms at risk, so when will this minister get his government to reverse course on repealing our act so Manitobans can be sure the government and private partners are accountable?

Mr. Wishart: Certainly we are looking very carefully at the option. That may include things like P3s—financial tools like P3s. We're a very open and transparent and accountable government, unlike the previous one.

Mental Health and Addiction Strategy Timeline for Implementation

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Traditionally, leaders of political parties answer other leaders, including interim leaders of other political parties. This is the second legislative session since I was chosen as the interim Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party, and this Premier has not once shown the respect to answer my questions.

I stand up today as the first First Nation female interim leader in this House and ask the Premier to respond.

How much of the funding will this government commit to the prevention of suicides in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, I—with great respect to the member, I—her assertion's simply not true. That being said, I would encourage her to engage her two colleagues in her caucus in an effort to join us in encouraging the Liberal government in Ottawa to do its part in being a partner to health care and the funding of health care in our province, not least of which on an important program such as the—she has raised in her preamble. I appreciate her sharing in this place very much and I thank her for her comments.

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

Ms. Klassen: I thank the Premier for his demonstration of respect by answering my question today.

There is federal money on the table for mental health. Mental health is a huge field and one that has never been properly addressed, serviced or paid attention to here in Manitoba.

This government today has the ability to change that narrative and Manitobans need help today.

Premier, can you please give me an understanding of why, after 17 years as the

opposition critics, it'll take this government until the end of the year to produce a draft for their mental health and addictions strategy?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's question. I also add my thanks to her for the difficult statement that she made earlier. I know that it wasn't easy, but I think it is helpful for all of us as members to hear those personal stories—*[interjection]*—that are often shared—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —by members—that are often shared, Madam Speaker, by members on a variety of different issues.

We continue to hope that the federal Liberal government will come to the table in terms of real negotiations for Manitobans. And I'm sure that the member opposite hopes that as well, so that we can ensure that we have long-term, sustainable funding for health care going forward. We've been looking forward that true partnership and that real negotiation. It hasn't happened yet from the federal government, but we still remain hopeful, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Klassen: We have been pressing this government for better funding supports for our indigenous people here in Manitoba.

Can this Premier (Mr. Pallister) tell me, today, what portion of the health-care funding will go to implement an effective plan to prevent suicides?

Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, of course, at this point, there is no health-care funding to speak of, in terms of where it might be going to in terms of separate additional funding from the federal government. But we do know overall that that funding is not going to be going up at the rate that Manitobans might have expected.

Certainly, we know from the federal government previously, and as indicated by many of the federal Liberal members, that they expected that the health-care premium that'll be coming to the provinces would continue on at 6 per cent. Only after they got elected did they change their mind and say that that wouldn't be happening, there'd be no negotiation.

So I would hope that the member opposite would join us in continuing to call for a real partnership in health care, not just for tomorrow but for the future, Madam Speaker.

Interim Supply Legislative Debate

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): On this side of the House we are eager to debate legislation on the Child Advocate. This is legislation that improves the lives of children in care, and yet the opposition seems to be putting an extraordinary amount of emphasis on debating a routine supply bill.

I'm wondering if the Government House Leader could remind the House the purpose of the Interim Supply.

Madam Speaker: The—*[interjection]* Order, please. Order. The honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): I appreciate the question.

Interim Supply authorizes temporary funding for governments before a budget is passed. It's a well-established routine mechanism that is important to securing services. We look forward to passing interim supply—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Micklefield: —so we can move along to other legislation and also to the budget. We know members opposite are looking forward to debating that, and we certainly are as well.

Charges Under The Wildlife Act Release of Information Authorization

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, earlier this year the Premier made further unfortunate comments about indigenous Manitobans while at his mansion in Costa Rica.

Within hours of his comments being reported in Maclean's magazine, the Premier's office was in full damage control mode. His staff obtained and then released to the media information about the number of charges under The Wildlife Act in 2016 and also the names and communities of any of those charged.

Did the Attorney General authorize the release of this information to the Premier's staff?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to finally rise and answer a question from this—from my critic.

Madam Speaker, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has worked harder in the last 10 months since he became Premier of this province than members opposite did in 17 years. And I will say to this member, of course, he was the previous Attorney General, the minister of Justice in the province, that created some of the most incredible backlogs that we're faced with today. That's why we're conducting a criminal justice system review to ensure that we get to the bottom of fixing the problems that were left to us by members opposite.

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

Mr. Swan: Yes, it'd be helpful, Madam Speaker, if the Attorney General could listen to the question.

The Premier's staff were somehow able to obtain the names and the communities of Manitobans charged—charged, not convicted—of a particular offence under The Wildlife Act, which was then quickly released to the media. We know the Premier's staff did not drive to every provincial court office and gather this information by hand that day.

The question is: Did the Attorney General authorize the release of this information to the Premier's political staff, and, if not, who did?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank for—the member for his question, but, of course, he continues to just put false accusations on the record.

And I know, Madam Speaker, that this member was asking questions, trying to prolong Interim Supply yesterday. And, of course, by doing so all he is trying to do is prevent civil servants from getting paid further and he's obstructing the very proceedings of this House, and I think that's unfortunate.

And the member asked a question yesterday. He asked a question about the current adult jail population, and we would—and I would say that the answer to that, as of this morning, is 2,424.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, the Premier's staff chose to release to the media the names and the communities of Manitobans charged with, not yet convicted of, a particular offence. The only reason this was done was political management of the Premier's unfortunate comments.

This batch of specific information will be contained in the prison database, which is used by Crown prosecutors. This raises questions about the independence of the Prosecution Service from the Premier's office.

And I'll ask again very clearly: Did the Attorney General authorize the release of this information to the Premier's staff? And if she didn't, who did?

Mrs. Stefanson: I know the member opposite wants to continue along the lines with his smear campaign, Madam Speaker.

But we know that why he doesn't want to ask the real questions of our criminal justice system, because we're faced—because he was, in fact, the Attorney General at the time for many years that created much of the backlogs that we're faced with today.

But he had a chance to stay in the job and to do—and to tackle the very issues that Manitobans are faced with in the criminal justice system today. And what did he do Madam Speaker? Instead, he quit.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Collective Bargaining Agreements Renegotiation Concerns

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, this Premier refuses to come clean about his plans to reopen contracts, to force wage cuts, pension rollbacks for public sector workers.

But he has the opportunity today to actually provide some certainty for workers who are worried about where their next payment, their mortgage bill, where's that coming from.

Will the Premier today rule out reopening already-signed collective bargaining agreements?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Yesterday, this Chamber had before it The Interim Appropriation Act. It's a simple and straightforward convention of the Legislature to make sure that, into a new spending year, government has the authority to continue to meet its obligations in respect of

employee wages of which the member for Flin Flon is just speaking now.

Now, if that member and the members of the opposition were really interested in the issue of paying civil servants, they would not have obstructed that process yesterday.

Let them indicate now that they will stand with us and move this important bill to make sure they will not stand between civil servants and their paycheques.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this issue really is no joke. It will impact tens of thousands of Manitobans and their families, and their families need clarity.

Will the Premier stand up and back up from his comments that he made just last week outside this House? Would he like to reconsider his previous answer?

Oh, wait. He didn't give an answer.

Would the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) like to back up and give an answer to the people in this province and assure them that he will not open collective bargaining agreements?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I thank the member for the question.

He asks for clarity, and yet his colleagues had no difficulty whatsoever going to the doors of Manitobans prior to the last election, walking, knocking and looking people right in the eye and giving them the promise that they wouldn't raise taxes.

These are working families. He was talking about working families earlier and expressing some concern for them, yet that concern was never evident in the actions of the NDP members, who promised they would not raise taxes.

He speaks about pain. The pain that was caused to Manitobans when those taxes were increased on their own home insurance, on their benefits at work, was real. The pain that was caused and inflicted on Manitobans when their taxes went up on hundreds of items with the PST being hiked without their chance to vote on it, this is real pain—[interjection]

The member beside him says he's not for P3s but it's a P3 party over there—pain, patronage and paying. That's the NDP; that's what they stand for. It's amazing to me they're not supporting P3s when that's

all they've done is given pain, patronage and extra payments to the people of Manitoba over the last 17 years.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

Manitoba telephone system is currently a fourth cellular carrier used by Manitobans along with the big national three carriers: Telus, Rogers and Bell.

In Toronto, with only the big three national companies controlling the market, the average five-gigabyte unlimited monthly cellular package is \$117 as compared to Winnipeg where MTS charges \$66 for the same package.

Losing MTS will mean less competition and will result in higher costs for all cellphone packages in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government do all that is popular—possible to prevent the Bell takeover of MTS and preserve a more competitive cellphone market so that cellular bills for Manitobans do not increase unnecessarily.

This petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the House will consider Interim Supply this afternoon.

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider their resolutions respecting the interim supply bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

* (14:30)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Interim Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

We have before us for our continuing consideration two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Yesterday we left off during consideration of the first resolution. The floor is open for questions.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: The Opposition House Leader has a point of order.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. In accordance with the rules, the opposition yesterday requested that the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) be made available for a few questions, that the minister of rural development be made available for several questions, and I believe the Minister of Growth, as well, and now we are being told that the government's not going to comply with our request.

Mr. Chairperson: The Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Yes. This is no point of order, Mr. Chair. The opposition do have the right to request ministers. However, the government are under no obligation at all to provide ministers at the request of the opposition. Questions can be submitted in writing or perhaps during question period, and we can make every attempt to have the minister respond in an appropriate manner.

I would encourage the Opposition House Leader to consult chapter 4, section 61, subsections 1 and 4, for further information.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes. Just one moment, please, so we can consult.

That's—point of order that the Opposition House Leader had pointed out, in—when it comes to Interim Supply, it is negotiated between the—both the government party and the opposition party. And when the opposition can request ministers or people that they want to speak—is required, unless the

individual minister can't be here, then some other minister can answer them on behalf of their—because of—they cannot be in the House. And this is like any question period. It's up to the government to who's going to have one of—the minister to answer on behalf of another minister.

Ultimately, there's no point of order. But there should be a negotiation between the two, the opposition party and the government house—the government party. And if you want to, we can recess and the opposition leader and the Government House Leader can discuss in more detail. We can have a recess if that's—

An Honourable Member: It's not necessary.

Mr. Chairperson: It's not necessary. Ready to go.

Opposition House Leader, are you ready to go, too? Okay.

Questions

Mr. Chairperson: So the floor is open for questions.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Yesterday, we asked the government if—the Finance Minister if he could give us the fiscal performance review.

Did he bring it with him today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): So the member for Fort Garry-Riverview spent quite a lot of his time yesterday asking about the government's fiscal performance review. We had that discussion yesterday. It was a fulsome discussion. I think we agreed to disagree. We indicated clearly as a government that our practice does not depart from past practice. We have received this advice as advice to government in the same way we have received the considerable advice from Manitobans through our in-person meetings in the lead-up to the budget, through our online portal, through the budgetary online tool that we created, and through the civil servant portal that allows civil servants to also comment on the upcoming budget.

The discussion, the member's insistence to return to this point, will not produce a different response from this minister.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): To the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), I had asked a number of questions yesterday of the Minister of Finance, which he said the Minister of Justice would be able to answer. And before she steps out the door, I'd like

her to answer a few questions. *[interjection]* I didn't—wasn't calling her absence.

Now, I'll have to ask the Minister of Finance again, because he told me yesterday in the course of his comments that I could get these answers from the Minister of Justice.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

* (14:40)

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: Point of order has been called by the Government House Leader.

Mr. Micklefield: No member can reflect on the presence or absence of another member in the House.

Mr. Chairperson: On the same point of order, the honourable member for Minto.

Mr. Swan: On the point of order, I clearly said before the member walks out the door; I didn't comment on whether she was in or outside of the Chamber.

Mr. Chairperson: It is a point of order when it comes to, when anticipating that person's leaving the Chamber, you're actually saying that the person is ready to leave. So it is a point of order when it comes to the absence of an individual member of the House or minister.

Mr. Swan: I will actually withdraw that, apologize for that.

* * *

Mr. Swan: So I will ask the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson). Yesterday, at the end of the afternoon, here is what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) had to say to me: Well, time is quickly elapsing but if the member is looking for a commitment to provide these answers, certainly we'll provide him the answers.

I asked a number of questions of the Minister of Finance yesterday, which he was unable to answer, but also unwilling to undertake to answer. This morning I provided a letter to the Minister of Justice setting out five questions, and I'm wondering if the Minister of Justice now has the answers to those questions.

Mr. Friesen: I heard the ruling that you gave only moments ago in this House, understanding that when it comes to questions from members either in the House or at committee or in this resolution that we're

now hearing, members have opportunity that is provided to them as full members of this Chamber. That member knows from yesterday's discussion. He should know better than I; he's sat in this Chamber much longer than I, and he has tremendous access granted to him as a member to ask the questions that he refers to now.

That member heard me say to him yesterday that his best opportunity to have gotten those answers yesterday would have been in the previous question period yesterday. He did not even have to wait until this interim appropriation resolution that we are now hearing. He could have asked it sooner.

His next best opportunity, I stated to him yesterday, would have been to ask that in question period today directly of the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson). He had the opportunity. He decided to forgo that opportunity.

I heard earlier this afternoon that member rise in his place, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan). He asked three questions of the Minister of Justice. Not one of those questions pertained to the questions that he now feigns indignation on and claims that he wants so desperately. If he wanted the answer so desperately, why did he not ask them?

Nevertheless, he also does not point out in his place right now that the minister stood this afternoon and answered his question; the same question he posed yesterday, she answered earlier today.

So let us understand that what he is trying is some tortured form of theatre. I don't have the patience for it. Mr. Chair, I doubt you have the patience for it.

On the other two questions which he refers to, the first was this: How much overtime for sheriff's officers is included in this Interim Supply bill that we are going to be asked to vote upon? The answer would be: It will be managed from within.

The third question would be, he asked: Please provide the number of additional correctional officers that have been hired to deal with this huge increase in the number of people in Manitoba's jails. The answer for him is: The department will manage and continue to manage from internal resources.

Now all of his questions have been answered. I will give the floor back to that member, and I think at this point he should claim that he is fully satisfied. His answers have been provided; his questions have been asked even though he decided to forgo the

opportunity that he has as a member to ask them in question period. Nevertheless, those answers have been supplied to him.

Mr. Swan: If this Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) doesn't have the patience for Interim Supply, then I would suggest he find another line of work. Interim Supply is the opportunity for the—for opposition members to ask questions about the spending of the government, spending in the current year, and the anticipated, the request for \$4.7 billion from this government to run their operations for the next four months.

If the Minister of Finance has problems with me asking reasonable questions about the money his government is going to spend, then he should submit his resignation today and go back to whatever it was, or whatever he would like to do, if he doesn't want to answer these questions.

There are a number of questions that were asked. I now have—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order.

Mr. Swan: I now have the answer to one question, the current adult jail population. I'm told that it's 2,424, which is greater than it was when the election occurred in the last Estimates as of June 9, 2016. I'd also asked for that population to be broken down by facility, which I have not received.

I will now take the Minister of Finance's comments at his word. The question was how many additional full-time positions have been added in corrections. I have heard the minister's answer. He's now said zero additional positions to deal with the increased population. I will take him at his word, and I thank him for that.

I'd also asked the actual overtime incurred by Custody Corrections in the current fiscal year to date, still waiting for an answer. I've asked if any additional full-time positions were added in Sheriff Services in the current fiscal year to date, still waiting for the answer on that. And, finally, I asked what is the actual overtime incurred by Sheriff Services in the current fiscal year to date, still waiting for the answer on that.

If the Minister of Finance wants to provide an undertaking to get those answers, then I am fine with that. It would be much better if the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) would answer those questions, but she's choosing not to. So, instead,

I will have to ask for an undertaking from the Minister of Finance. He's now provided some of that information. He knows he can easily obtain that information and, more than that, Mr. Chair, he knows he has an obligation to provide that information. He should stop feigning indignation. He should stop obstructing what this committee is intended to do. Give the undertaking and let's move on.

Mr. Friesen: The member continues to try to dazzle the Chamber, and these men—these members with his considerable intellect and skills. He is underwhelming in those efforts. It was my word to him, feigning indignation.

He is incorrect when he says that zero officers were added in the answer in—to one of his questions. I simply stated that the department will continue to manage. They will manage that as the department has managed it in the past. The member does not admit that the problem actually grew under his watch when he was the minister of Justice.

Let's be clear, Mr. Chair. I have endless patience for the Interim Supply—The Interim Appropriation Act that we have yet to hear this afternoon. It's the theatre that—the theatre of the absurd that the member starts down, this line-by-line consideration that I grow weary of. No, it's his prerogative. We can continue down this path. We can burn the entire afternoon this way, and he can ask every question.

But he understands as well, he has another opportunity of which we have not yet spoken. The opportunity is that time that he has as the critic responsible for Justice to hold the Minister of Justice to account in the Committee of Supply following the budget where he would be in control of the proceedings and could ask questions until such a time as he would adjourn that Committee of Supply by ceasing to ask further questions.

He holds the throttle on that process. But he likes this better, because it's a silly game he plays. He would like to go line-by-line all afternoon. So we can do this. And then every time, what we'll do is we'll simply point out to him that he would be better off, that this committee's time would be better used, the members of this Legislature, their time would be better used, the clerks of the Chamber's time would be better used—Chairperson, I submit your time would be better used.

I think that the interests of Manitobans would be better served by the co-operation of the members

opposite to hear this resolution of an aggregate request for supplementary funding, to advance the process, to go to the bill stage, at which time we would return to the Chamber. Of course, right now we are in the committee stage, so I should correct myself earlier and say that this is the committee stage. I think our time would be better spent in showing respect for the process.

Now, I cannot force that member to show respect for that process. He understands that The Interim Appropriation Act is an authorization for aggregate expenditure. He can continue to ask questions line-by-line, but the better way to do that is to do it in question period. The better way to do that is in the Committee of Supply. The better way to do it is the committee stage. The better way to do it is walking down the hallway with the minister. He could ask the question then.

* (14:50)

He can also submit written questions to the minister, and those questions can be answered or returned to him. Why won't he take those opportunities that are afforded to him as a full member of this place? Because it's grandstanding that he wants to do this afternoon.

So it's up to that member. I'll cede the floor to him. He could decide how we want to use our time. We have a request in front of us for \$4.7 billion of interim appropriation, approximately 35 per cent of the total amount authorized by the 2016 appropriation act. That member understands the way that percentage of total expenditure is worked out to anticipate a date in time by which the budget may be passed. And, of course, if not by that time, another interim appropriation would be necessary to cover off these expenses. Of course, we also know that this interim appropriation also accounts for part of the expenditure. It accounts for the capital expenditure amounts paid out of the consolidated fund for inventory, acquisition and disposal and, of course, it includes an amount to address that portion of long-term liability under The Financial Administration Act. This is the business I would like to attend to. It's the business that our House leader spoke of earlier to say we would like to attend to this afternoon. I leave it to the member for Minto to decide with his colleagues how they would use to use this time. My only caution is that he should do so judiciously, understanding that it is a—the people of Manitoba that we represent in this place.

Mr. Swan: Well, I want to react to a comment that my friend, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) made the other day. I've known the member, the Finance Minister, for some time, and I—frankly, I like the Finance Minister, but, certainly, over the past year—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Swan: Certainly, over the past year, something rather dramatic has changed. I'm disappointed today. I'm disappointed today to have a Finance Minister admitting that he doesn't have the patience and doesn't have the temperament to go through the budget process in the province of Manitoba. And whether the Minister of Finance likes it or not, Interim Supply is an opportunity for members of this House who represent our communities; who, on this side, have a duty to perform as the members of the official opposition, to ask questions about government spending.

And I had a finite number of questions, which I tried to get answers to yesterday. The member—the minister promised that he would provide those answers. We've got partial answers, and I'm waiting for the rest of the answers.

The minister suggested that I could just sort of sidle up to the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) and ask any question I want anytime and just get the answer. We saw on question period today that this Justice Minister has difficulty providing answers, even when it's in question period. So I don't think that is an obligation that gets put on opposition members. If we have questions, and we put them on the record, we're entitled to get answers.

The member does say that we could ask questions in writing. I did crystallize the questions that he refused to undertake to provide yesterday. I crystallized them and handed them to the Minister of Justice's office this morning, and I'm still waiting for some of those answers.

I'm sorry that it's inconvenient for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) that the opposition members are doing their job and asking questions. I'm sorry he's frustrated that we believe it important that we be allowed the chance to question money being spent by the government in a \$4.7-million request for funds under the—\$4.7-billion request for funds under Interim Supply, and I'm sorry that he has been exposed as not having patience for doing his job.

So I expect we're not going to get anything further from the minister this afternoon. We'll take other steps to try and engage and obtain that information. I'm still hopeful that he will go to the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) and request that information so that I can do my job as I'm entitled to as a member of this Legislature. But I'm disappointed, certainly, in the Finance Minister, and I think we're going to be spending a lot of time in here in the next couple of months discussing financial matters, discussing the budget, and if he believes that questions from opposition members are a problem and are irritating to him, I have grave concerns about his ability to manage the finances—or should I say, even more concerns about his ability to manage the finances than we've seen so far.

Mr. Friesen: Oh, I will ignore the personal attacks for the member of Minto. I assure him that I have three teenagers, and so his efforts pale in comparison to get under my skin. I have some considerable training on that account, as others in this Chamber do. So he can test my patience and I will convey to him that I have a great deal of patience.

But I will stand opposed to any assertion he makes that somehow that I don't have the patience for the proceedings of this place. I have tremendous respect for this institution—a tremendous—a respect for our clerks and those who enable us to do our job, those who are assisting us in this room today and those who assist us outside of this room.

And I would also remind that member that arguably no minister has sat with their critic longer than the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) and I did in the 20—or '15-16 Committee of Supply. I think we may have even rivaled the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the official interim Leader of the Opposition. So it doesn't seem to demonstrate the impatience with which he includes—accuses me of.

So, first of all, I would say that to him. But, moreover, I wanted to point out something else subsequent to a question that that member asked yesterday. He asked a question about a special warrant brought by our government and attempted to convey or construe that somehow the presence of that special warrant was evidence of poor planning, it was evidence of desperation. It was the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) who raised it yesterday talking about an OIC and a special warrant at the end of the year. What the member for Minto should understand is that the special warrant arises as a result of a

supplementary request for expenditure. And that supplemental request for expenditure comes, of course, because no government can laterally transfer between appropriations, amounts as the year-end ensues. Now, of course, a department could transfer amounts laterally within sub-appropriations but not between appropriations because appropriations are how those amounts are voted.

Now, the member for Minto should know that. But he should also know, having seen that OIC, that the special warrant, the request itself, was less than any amount brought by the NDP when they were in government: less than any amount in the 2014-15 fiscal year; less than any special warrant they brought in the 2011-12 year, the year of the flood; less than amount they brought as a special warrant in 2009-10, '08-09, '07-08; less than '06-07; less than '05-06; less than '04-05, as a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, the special warrant amount authorized by our government recently was less than any special warrant amount brought by the previous NDP government in the last 10 years. That's significant. What it shows is progress.

So I want to indicate clearly for the record that I reject whatever jargon the member for Minto to attach to his hastily assembled accusation yesterday. What it shows, I would suggest, is evidence of progress. No government has an easy job, making departments hit their targets. No minister has an easy job of it with their deputy minister and department, you know, shepherding that work throughout the fiscal year. Pressures exist, pressures emerge, program expenditure comes up; there are volume and price pressures in each department. But this special warrant amount, to which the member for Minto referred yesterday, is less than any amount brought by the NDP government in 10 years. It shows progress; it shows results; it shows intent.

What I would want to demonstrate is that we understand we will be judged by our efforts, we will be judged by our results. Members should understand that, they will—we're also judged for their results. They were judged for their lack of progress; they were judged by their overexpenditure, their increased debt, their increased deficit, their lack of fiscal discipline.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there any further questions?

* (15:00)

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: The first resolution respecting the operating expenditures of the Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$4,700,000,000, being approximately 35 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2016, to be voted as set forth in Part A, operation expenditures of the—Operating Expenditure, of the 2016 Estimates, being granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

All those in favour of passing—[interjection] No, sorry. Okay, it's passed.

The second resolution respecting capital investment for the Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$520,000,000, being approximately 75 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2016, to be voted as set out in Part B, Capital Investment, of the 2016 Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 2018.

Does the minister have any opening comments?

Mr. Friesen: I see that we have proceeded to the second resolution, and I am pleased that we have done so. I live in hope that our deliberations on this matter, while significant and important, could perhaps come in significantly under the time period that was ascribed to the previous discussion.

The members should all understand that this sum is a higher percentage, of course, of the total amount of The Appropriation Act of 2016 when it comes to Part B for the resolution, and, of course, the rationale for that is unchanged from previous years. We understand how the construction season works in Manitoba, and we understand that if government was to limit—were to limit the Part B appropriation or interim appropriation to a lesser amount it could affect the value that we receive in the construction year. It would prohibit the timely commencement of projects. And it could actually result in cost overruns.

So I want to invite the conversation on this resolution. And I want to invite, moreover, the

discussion on the bill at which time it is introduced, and hopefully that is this afternoon.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the official opposition Finance critic have any opening comments?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

Does the—the floor is open for questions. Any questions?

No—

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolved—okay.

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: RESOLVED that the sum of—not exceeding \$528,000,000, being approximately 75 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act of 2016, to be voted as set out in Part B, Capital Investment, of the 2016 Estimates, be granted by Her Majesty for the—majesty—granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the business before the committee.

The committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Concordia—no, sorry, to Kildonan, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, out of the Consolidated Fund, sums

not exceeding \$4,700,000,000, being approximately 35 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2016, to be voted as set out in Part A, Operating Expenditure, and \$528,000,000, being approximately 75 per cent of the total amount authorized by The Appropriation Act, 2016 to be voted as set out in Part B, Capital Investment, of the 2016 Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

Point of Order

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, in accordance with our rules, the opposition requested the attendance of the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) for some questions from the members on our side and other specified ministers, and the government doesn't seem to be complying with our request.

I would suggest that this is a point of order that merits major consideration.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, there is no point of order. The members opposite have every right to request a minister, but we are not obligated to provide a minister. They are free to ask questions in question period and also have the provision and opportunity to write questions. Committee of Supply is another opportunity.

We will endeavour to get those answers to them in an appropriate manner and in a timely fashion, but we are not obligated to provide ministers in this setting. It is no point of order.

* (15:10)

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that this is not a point of order because the opposition can request certain ministers, but it is up to the government to decide which ministers will answer, similar to what is done in oral questions. It is during the concurrence process where certain ministers are required in Estimates but not during Interim Supply. So I would indicate that the member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, with respect, I challenge your ruling.

Madam Speaker: I understand that the member cannot challenge a point—or cannot challenge the ruling on a point of order.

We will proceed, then.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion presented.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017; Loi de 2017 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Madam Speaker: Pardon me. It has been moved by the minister—the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Friesen: I'm pleased to be able to rise this afternoon and put some brief comments on the record pertaining to this bill. I would indicate for the record that one, years from now, searching in Hansard would only have to back up a few pages to see considerable debate that has already been had on this Interim Supply bill from yesterday's proceedings, so I will not belabour the points I will make.

I will simply indicate at this time that The Interim Appropriation Act is designed to do exactly what it indicates, which is to provide government the authority to spend in a new fiscal year at a point in time when a budget has not yet been passed. And so this provides a portion of the appropriation that was previously voted in the previous fiscal year. It provides that 'intering'—interim spending authority. It does not permit new program spending, and it is pertaining to Part A.

The request before us this afternoon is a request for \$4,700,000,000, and this represents approximately 35 per cent of the total amount voted in The Appropriation Act, 2016 in Part A. The amount of capital investment authority requested is

\$528 million, representing approximately 75 per cent of the total amount voted in The Appropriation Act, 2016 for Part B, capital investment expenditure.

I indicated moments earlier this afternoon that, of course, a greater percentage of the Part B, a requirement is needed at this time reflecting the start of construction season in the spring. It would pose problems for government, and, if it were the case, that government was to request an appropriation to a lesser amount, it could delay project starts, it could delay the tendering process, it could delay a completion of projects, and I would submit that that would add to costs.

So, for the purposes of efficiency and effectiveness and economy, we have before the House today a request for a greater amount of the total. And, Madam Speaker, the amount of future commitment authority included in this Interim Supply bill is for \$475 million. This authority provides for the commitment of Part A and Part B expenditures to ensure completion of projects or fulfilling of contracts initiated but not completed during the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017. When Bill 8 reaches committee stage I can provide members with a section-by-section explanation.

Madam Speaker: Do the members have any questions on this bill?

An Honourable Member: No.

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

Questions

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to ask the minister as to why the government has delayed the release of the budget 'til April 11?

*(15:20)

Yesterday he went on at some length to explain four dates—one, by the way, was only out by a day—where that the NDP in the last 17 years brought in budgets even later than their day. What he failed to mention yesterday was, in all of the other years—in other words 13 years—the NDP brought in a budget

earlier than April 11. And, in fact, back in the days, like 20, 30 years ago, budgets were actually—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I didn't quite hear a complete question in the member's preamble. We had a good discussion yesterday in which I pointed out that even though the member for Fort Garry bemoaned the fact that the budget was coming on April the 11th, it is in fact earlier than almost every year in which the NDP brought a budget in previous years. So it is one of the earliest budgets we've had. I think out of the last five budgets that were delivered in this province, this is perhaps the second earliest one to come. There is no argument that the opposition can make that says somehow that this isn't a good time to bring a budget. We'll be pleased to bring that budget on April 11th.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): We know, of course, that Interim Supply does not provide for the funding of new programs, that's understood. I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance though about funding of existing programs that have been frozen by this government, and in particular Community Places and Neighborhoods Alive!. Does the Interim Supply bill, will it allow for the continuation of those two very, very important programs, certainly in my community and many other communities across Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: That member knows very well that our government has made no secret of the fact that after years and years of NDP overspending, outspending their plan budget each and every year, that it is very important at this juncture for us to take a good hard look at programs. We are doing that program review that we believe that all Manitobans will benefit from that.

But let me also indicate that the editorial today in one of our papers said that while the NDP hammers away at Tories they have no credibility because they won't explain how they would maintain current levels of spending without raising taxes or borrowing more money.

Mr. Swan: Well, I'd actually like to give community groups in my own area and others some satisfaction and some comfort that Community Places and Neighborhoods Alive! are still going to remain. I did ask the minister a specific question about continuing Community Places and Neighborhoods Alive! which have both been frozen. The minister headed off on a different tangent. I'd like him to answer the question.

Does this interim bill include money for these two vital programs?

Mr. Friesen: The member for Minto should understand that The Interim Appropriation Act that we are debating this afternoon does not authorize new expenditure, it does not reflect on new programs, it reflects only backward. It takes as its standard, as its backdrop, the Appropriation Act of the previous expenditure year. So this authorizes government to continue to pay the bills, to pay its civil servants, to pay for contracts that it incurs year over year, multi-year contracts, as well as addressing things like environmental liabilities and gives authority whereby if we didn't pass this we would not have the authority to continue to operate.

Mr. Maloway: One of my community groups in my constituency got in touch with me the other day to say that their notification for their Neighborhoods Alive! funding—they were notified by phone that it was going to, I believe, cease on March 31st. The question I have to the minister is: How is that going to be affected by the, by this particular bill?

Mr. Friesen: I repeat for the member of Elmwood that this government is doing the important work, work that will have benefit for all Manitobans of looking at system sustainability, a work that that government proved ineffective and ineffectual at. It is important that we stabilize spending. That means program review, and there are benefits to all Manitobans as a result.

But I repeat again, today's editorial said that the struggling opposition party doesn't have credibility with the public because it won't explain how it would maintain current levels of spending without raising taxes or borrowing more money. What is the answer of the opposition party to those claims today?

Mr. Swan: Well, the answers we're trying to get from this minister, whose job is to answer questions in this House, are from groups like the community improvement organizations in the west end of Winnipeg and the north end of Winnipeg and in many other communities across Manitoba. And they want to know that the Neighborhoods Alive! program is still going to continue even though some very, very frightening communications have come out of this government.

So the question that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and I have been asking are not things we've made up on the spur of the moment, these are

real questions being asked by real people about real programs.

Can the minister please take this seriously and give us some satisfaction those programs are continuing?

Mr. Friesen: There's tremendous value in many—in so many community groups that apply for these programs, not just in that member's neighbourhood but in mine as well, and that's why it's important to sustain these programs over time.

Now, those members never saw an expenditure that they didn't like and they didn't care about system sustainability. The result of that kind of overexpenditure is now an almost 900 debt service charge every year. That is \$20 million just year over year more than last year. That's \$20 million that cannot go to programs like Community Places as a result of their failure to ensure that revenues and expenditures were matched up. We'll do that hard work over time for the benefit of all Manitobans and for the programs that we must maintain, strengthen and keep.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to follow up on a question by the member from Flin Flon. I'd like to ask this minister whether the government's intention is to rip up existing collective agreements and impose mandatory days off like the old Filmon Fridays.

Mr. Friesen: So it's clear that, really, all the opposition has left is fears and disinformation, and so they continue to spend—to spread fear and disinformation. That's not the path that we choose. We've said very clearly from the outset that we need all hands on deck; we need all Manitobans in the conversation.

That member never makes a statement about how sustainable or unsustainable he thinks an almost \$900-million deficit is in a province with a \$15-billion budget. He never makes statements about that. He simply says spend more. We care about system stability, we care about going in the right direction, we care about showing progress for all Manitobans that will allow us to have affordability for all Manitobans.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We know, of course, from leaked documents that this government has insisted the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority fight \$83 million in cuts. We know that there's—there was overspending within the regional health authority in other areas, which created an overspending in the Department of

Health, and we understand the reduction in overspending has been alleviated only by cancelling capital projects by this minister and by his government. So I'm going to ask the minister whether the government's going to reverse these cuts to health care and give the green light to important health-care projects such as CancerCare Manitoba.

Mr. Friesen: The member for Minto (Mr. Swan) neglects to indicate that the \$66-million RHA deficit is anything of a concern to him. It's a concern to us because it threatens the front-line services we depend on in health care. I note that the CEO for the WRHA received the efficiency targets that were set out and said yes, we believe there's all kinds of areas and opportunities for us to do better. He cited in particular the area of procurement, where he thought there were unexplored opportunities that now they could do better in, saving money. I stand with the CEO for the WRHA who has a far more optimistic view of the targets that were given to the RHAs.

Mr. Maloway: Well, the fact of the matter is that a social services agency, a non-profit agency in my constituency servicing the constituents for quite a number of years now, contacted me the other day and said that they had received a phone call—not a letter, but a phone call—from the government indicating that their Neighbourhoods Alive! funding was, I believe, going to cease at the end of the month. Now, I'm saying, is that any way for this government to treat long-term agencies like that. This agency has something like 23 employees and is that any way to treat these people by simply communicating with them by phone and not by letter. I don't think this is acceptable.

Mr. Friesen: I know that the members of the opposition are always careful in their questions, the way they construct them, to avoid any conversation that includes contextual cues. Cues about sustainability, cues about overspending—they steer carefully around those rocks. And by doing so, they signify that the only thing that matters is spending more, but their record was one of spending more and getting less.

* (15:30)

I point that member again to that headline today in our local paper, saying that the opposition doesn't have credibility because it won't explain how it would maintain current levels of spending without raising taxes or borrowing more money. And, of course, that was the only path they knew: raising taxes and borrowing more money. That's what got us

the \$900-million deficit that we're facing now and the only—almost \$900 million of debt-service charges.

Mr. Swan: Well, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) and I and many other people are very concerned about the future of the Dauphin jail project. I had attempted to ask the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) that question in Estimates and she directed me to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). The Minister of Finance has refused to answer questions.

I'd like him to put on the record today: Have we now lifted the veil of secrecy and can the minister please confirm that we'll be now proceeding without any further delays to build a new jail for the community of Dauphin?

Mr. Friesen: What an absurd question coming from a member whose party had 17 years to build the Dauphin jail and promised again and again and again, drove out to the community again and again and again.

The Minister of Health indicated this afternoon, in response to a question, that they were out there in Lac du Bonnet with their shovels in hand turning over the dirt with absolutely no plan to authorize the expenditure. Why? Because they knew that they had reached the capital cap in health care, which disallowed them any more latitude to spend.

They made false promises to Manitobans. They had no intention to follow through. I take no lectures from that member about this subject.

Mr. Swan: The Minister of Finance needs to calm down. I wasn't asking about a health-care facility; I was 'akshing' about a correctional facility. Of course, the member and his colleagues voted against expansions of the Headingley Correctional Centre, the Brandon Correctional Centre, the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, The Pas Correctional Centre and the new Women's Correctional Centre. But I digress.

Could the Minister of Finance please focus and give people in the Parkland and give hard-working correctional officers some comfort that this government has been listening to what they've been saying and that we will now proceed with the construction of a new, larger, modern, safer jail for the community of Dauphin?

Mr. Friesen: I would invite that member to reflect on what he thinks the opinion of correctional officers

and the opinion of the Parkland area is on their failure to follow through on their fundamental commitment four, five, six times to build that facility.

Oh, I know what their opinion is. That party no longer holds those seats in that area of Manitoba. I would say that's the strongest judgment on the false promises offered by that group to that area of the province.

Mr. Maloway: I was quite surprised the other day to see a news story on the media dealing with the CancerCare construction being cancelled, and I'd like to know whether this government would consider reducing—reversing its cuts and give the green light to the important health-care project like CancerCare, which is certainly an increasing number of people with cancer every year, and it's certainly not something that we should be doing here in cutting a facility like cancel—CancerCare.

Mr. Friesen: Well, of course, I've said already that the members on that side have little left besides fear, so they want to, of course, agitate and then try to make Manitobans afraid. But it also belies a failure to understand the weight principle and interest factor into Part A, Expenditure.

The member doesn't understand that by rapidly accelerating capital growth after the 2008-2009 year, taking a sustainable infrastructure program up to that time under Gary Doer of about 425, \$450 million per year, ramped it up to \$1.7 billion and we now all pay the price of the principal and interest inside that cost, money that takes away from front-line services.

Mr. Swan: You know, many poverty advocates were shocked when this minister and this government said they were now going to review the Rent Assist program. I'd like to ask this minister: Does he recognize the importance of preserving and strengthening programs like Rent Assist in helping low-income Manitobans find and keep safe and affordable housing?

Mr. Friesen: I tell the member and all members on the other side, stay tuned for the budget on April 11th, because we are setting forward a plan. We are pleased to show Manitobans the progress that we have made on all their behalves, progress that was not made under the previous NDP government, whose motto was spend, spend, spend, tax, tax, tax, and then whatever happens to debt—credit rating agencies' opinion of us or the service charges, well, they weren't as concerned about those matters.

We are concerned for our own sakes, for the sake of our children who are left with the bill that they left behind. We must stabilize the province's economy for the benefit of all of us. Affordability matters. We are happy to report to Manitobans on April the 11th how we're doing.

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

Debate

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I was asked to speak today, and it is with great pleasure that I respond.

The main thing that really bothered me about the proposal to keep on cutting by the current Conservative government is that there was a 20 per cent pay increase first even before they have finished at least a year on the job. The 20 per cent pay increase for all the members of Cabinet is something that is—something to behold because at the same time that the increase in pay for members of the Cabinet was approved by the same people who will receive them, there was a freeze on the part of minimum wage increases that were supposed to be automatically given to those who make less. And it shows the disparity and the big difference between the points of view and the ideology of the current government as opposed to those who are most vulnerable.

When I was working for 7-Eleven as a store clerk, the pay then was \$7. And I was working eight hours a day because it was something that I needed to do to survive. I did it for so many months. And, after 90 days of probation, I was told that I should report to the office because the field rep wanted to speak to me. And I thought that I was getting fired for something that I did, but I was not. I was told that I'll be given an increase in pay because I was such a good employee. I was given 15 cents per hour extra. And I had to spend, for my taxi—for my taxi cab fare to get to the office and it was really—I was happy for it. Fifteen cents. It meant that I was getting an extra \$1.20 a day.

* (15:40)

Now, but I digress. I guess some of the folks from the opposite side do not even know what it means to receive minimum wage. And, when I say that, I say that with some fear that I might be wrong. And I was told that I was wrong many times already, and I always will insist that maybe some of those who received minimum wage from way back, maybe

they already forgot how difficult it is to make ends meet, and that when minimum wage is frozen, when the rate of minimum wage is frozen, it affects the spending pattern of some of the most vulnerable people in our province.

And it's the same trajectory that we have in all the cuts that are being proposed. There are cuts that are being forced on all of us, meaning CancerCare, the CancerCare facility that was proposed that would have accommodated more patients for treatment in one of the most fearsome decisions on earth.

When my mom was told that she had liver cancer, it was one of the most dreaded days—dreadful days when we were told that we have to report for chemotherapy. My mom wanted to not go there to the clinic where the chemotherapy would have been administered because she said: Will I lose my hair? And for those who were touched by cancer, an extra facility that would accommodate more people because of the lack of space currently in the CancerCare facility that we have—it's a world-class facility, I might say, compared to others, but it was a result of some foresight. The planning of how it evolved from the Manitoba treatment and cancer research foundation to CancerCare Manitoba, it was something that was a joint venture, a joint effort on the part of the private sector and government.

And it seems that this government does not care too much about cancer care because the cut was there, and there were cuts to community clinics and cuts to personal care homes, meaning that none will be built; none will be forthcoming for those who were expecting it. None will be built for those—especially for those areas that are underserved, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) won't even see the consequences of these cuts because two months of the year or eight weeks in a year, he won't be here. He won't see it. He won't even see the consequences of the cuts that he proposes.

And our concern, on this side of the House, is that if you are not here and you are someplace else, then it's possible that you might miss some of the nuances of those consequences, like deaths in the family and, of course, suffering for those who are most vulnerable.

And the question remains: Is a government or a chief executive of a government who is absent, is he as effective as somebody who's on the ground and dealing with the problems, the day-to-day problems of Manitoba?

Now, I hear some snickers, and I—snickers, those are not chocolates. Those snickers, as in they were more of a mockery of what I'm saying. And I understand why it should come from members of the opposition. I understand that for some of those members of the opposition who are snickering, for them, it is something that could be laughed about. It's funny. It's funny for some of them. I don't know why. Maybe because they believe that they are not vulnerable. They believe that it will never happen to them. Well, I pray that it never happens to any one of you, my friends.

This Interim Supply bill does not provide any specific clarity as to the programs that affect the daily lives of those of my constituents in Tyndall Park. I received an email from the operations manager of Tyndall Park Community Centre, asking for help regarding the door of the community club building. And I told him that maybe he should apply to the Community Places office, which happened to be with the Growth, Enterprise and Trade, or is it now with local governments, or where is the office for that? I don't even know, and I am supposed to know. The website of the government of Manitoba has not been changed. It still remains coloured green and orange, which appears to be the same website that the previous government had. And there are some resources from government. There are some offices that still maintain—if you googled it, they still maintain the same websites, especially those for Conservation and for—I don't know about Finance. Maybe they have changed so many things. But what has not changed is the attitude from the Conservative government when they got elected in April 2016. And I was happy for those who were elected, because they represent a new breed, or so I thought.

It was a mistake. It was a huge mistake. Manitobans now see that. That most of those who were elected are of the same ideological strain, from the same cloth, from the same Conservative cloth, that would—*[interjection]* Well, the member from La Verendrye was saying, only good; I beg to disagree. It's amazing how folks from the side of government kept on making standing ovations for comments that are hurtful from even the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or even from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) today.

* (15:50)

The inability of the Minister to Finance to put in a budget on time was—it—he is defending it as if it was the same thing as when the previous government

was doing and, therefore, he can also do it. It shows that there's that arrogance on the part of government, that they can keep to themselves the spending that they want to do without disclosing anything.

When questioned about the value-for-money audit that they saw, they, as in I think everybody on the other side or from the government side, were so proud of announcing, the value-for-money audit. When the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) tries to hide behind confidentiality, unavailability, privacy, secrecy and then mouths off with accountability, transparency and accessibility, when he tries to hide behind the curtain, it's a curtain on the part of government that they were the ones who paid for it. Therefore, they are the only ones who could see it and read it. And it's not right. It's the people of Manitoba who paid for it. And, as members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, I believe and I respectfully submit, Madam Speaker, that we are entitled to at least take a look.

How many pages of that report are available? What it contains? Or at least a summary. And what are the main features of the report? And, when the Minister of Finance says, we will show it to you when we want to, it's a measure of the arrogance—it's a display of arrogance that, well, we are in government, you're not, tough. And I heard that, in not so many words. I heard that in the answer, I heard that in the way that his body language shows that I can do anything I want.

And it used to be different. The Minister of Finance, when he was just a member, was very likeable. He's very likeable, and I guess I still like him, except that his behaviour, I'm searching for some reason to like it—like him some more. And I don't find it any more.

The value-for-money audit, the report, there are questions that were not answered when the critic for the finance—for Finance, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) was asking a question about if it was available or at least how much was paid for it, there was no answer forthcoming. Was it \$4.2 million? If it is \$4.2 million, it is a very familiar number. It was leaked that it was 4.7, and nobody will deny it nor admit it. But then, when asked, he deflected. He deflected the question by using the useful language of the politician, the traditional politician that he has become. He says, well, I'll tell you when I am ready; I'll show it to you when I can, when I want to. And that's a traditional answer that I refuse to accept from a Minister of Finance who

accepted his 20 per cent. And 20 per cent is something that all members of Cabinet will be receiving. And I don't envy them because I know that they work hard for it and I know that they work really hard for it. Except that when there was an announcement about the freeze on minimum wage, it does not make sense any more that everybody else who was making anything will be frozen except members of Cabinet, but I understand why. They call it the thirst; a thirst for more. I won't call it greed. I'll just call it thirst.

Now, there are some notes here that I would want to make mention. I still have nine minutes and 57 seconds. The WRHA, meaning the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and Churchill is one unit of the regional health authority that has been melded into one, and there will be \$83 million that have been ordered to be cut. Those cuts, even if we were to just assume that a portion of those cuts will be from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the people of Churchill, all 952 of them, will suffer. Because they rely on the air ambulance. They rely on the services of the hospital and clinic that they have.

And when I was there, the mayor of Churchill was very adamant that we need to put more effort in populating Churchill. How? By opening up economic opportunities. And I believe that this government has ignored that. And now that there's a cut to the WRHA for \$83 million, I fear for what the effects might be for Churchill.

The Health capital cuts that have been cut are the PCH, the personal-care homes across Manitoba, including two in Winnipeg and one in Lac du Bonnet. And personal-care homes is a very personal concern for me, considering that I might be using them soon.

The mental health and the brain health of Manitobans is also a very important concept that we need to protect from cuts. The—there are no attempts to establish more beds for patients who are suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's. And it's in the news that those cuts to personal-care homes will affect the intended odds of about 10 for every personal-care home that was planned before.

* (16:00)

My dad, before he died, was at Calvary Place, and on the third floor of Calvary Place—was it the third floor or the second floor?—there were about eight patients who were suffering from dementia. Three were very violent. Not my dad—he was just

keeping away from those who were violent. And he just kept silent. And during those days that we were visiting with him, which was almost every day, my dad exhibited the severity of his Alzheimer's disease when he told me that—when he asked me that question, who are you. He was asking me who I was, and it shocked me. It shocked me that my dad would not recognize me, and these are some of the examples of what I saw at the same Calvary Place.

And my dad died eventually, but not from his Alzheimer's, and it was, I think, a blessing in disguise that he left this world because he was very unhappy, especially when somebody lost his dentures and he was unable to bite into anything anymore, and if you are one of them who would be unable to understand how dementia could destroy your loved ones' lives, or the quality of their lives, I beg you to maybe take a closer look at how we treat—how we treat the most vulnerable, how we treat those patients, how we treat those elderlies, because all of us, if we age enough, meaning 20 years from now, who knows? Maybe the member from La Verendrye might need help like my dad did, and maybe I'll be looking at his face and I'll be asking the same question: Who are you?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, it is disappointing that not a single member of the 40-member government caucus is interested in getting up and talking about this.

You know, I'm going to repeat some of the comments that I know some of my colleagues have made, and, frankly, I do want to start with something I'm not happy to do, but it's to express disappointment in the way that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) is handling his role. And that has been played out very clearly yesterday and today, but, frankly, almost from the first moment that he took on the job, a difficult job, we know, a time-consuming job, not an easy job any time, but we've seen this minister respond with a lack of patience, with frustration, and an inability to answer important questions, even simple questions, even clear questions.

And I think back, Madam Speaker, to one of the first things this Minister of Finance had to do, is he had to go and visit various bond-rating agencies outside of Manitoba. If he exhibited the same impatience, the same frustration, and the same inability to answer important questions, even simple ones, as he's shown this House, it is no surprise the

Pallister government started off their time with a credit downgrade from bond-rating agencies who must have wondered what this new government was going to do.

And, of course, we know that under the previous administration in 17 years we had two credit upgrades and one downgrade, left the Province's credit rating better than we found it, which, of course, this new Pallister government not only can't say—it hasn't just remained the same; it's gotten worse and it's gone down since this Minister of Finance has put his fingerprints all over it.

And, again, I'm not happy with having to start that way because you may be surprised, Madam Speaker, to hear at least three members in the House saying we like the Minister of Finance, but I don't like the way that he's taken on this role and has refused to answer even the most basic questions, and I hope he doesn't treat bond-rating agencies, investors, companies, the same way that he treats members of the opposition asking important questions on behalf of the people that we represent in this Legislature who've entrusted us with the job of official opposition of asking important questions.

And these are real people doing real work in real neighbourhoods and real communities. And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that right now among those agencies there is a climate of fear. And, in fact, they know this is a Premier (Mr. Pallister) that is so vindictive and a Cabinet that is so vindictive that they are actually scared to raise their voices right now, because they don't even want to talk about what might be in the budget in the fear that standing up and speaking is going to get their agency cut or cut worse than others.

And I've heard from agencies, not just in my own area but across the province—those that are funded by the Department of Families, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, the Department of municipal affairs—all these different agencies that are very, very scared for their employees and, in some cases, even for the existence of their organization after this Finance Minister stands in this House, on April 11th, and delivers a budget which we are increasingly certain is going to be bad news for the great, great majority of Manitobans. *[interjection]* And I know the member from Morris will have a chance to debate this. And I know the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) is hurting, because he thought he was going to Cabinet; it wasn't going to happen.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Swan: There may be a few spots opening up over the next couple of weeks, so perhaps he should either speak—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Swan: —or he should hold his tongue, Madam Speaker.

In my own area, I look at organizations like the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews Community Association, and I'll tell them when I'm talking about what they do, the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) wants to chatter away and heckle. He doesn't want to hear what they have to do, just like the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) doesn't want to hear what they do, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) certainly doesn't hear—want to hear what they do, which is to build community, not to rip it apart. Not to rip it apart, like this Conservative government is making it very, very clear—is their top priority.

Their single-minded goal is to cut spending without worrying what the impact is going to be on real people; the impact on real neighbourhoods, on real communities; and, frankly, the economy. Because organizations that are funded under the Neighbourhoods Alive! program, for the information of the member for Morris, those organizations have been proven to multiply the investment. First of all, they leverage the investment from other levels of government, from foundations, from private business, and they do good things in their communities. And, further, those community organizations do a great job of improving the life of people who live in those communities.

And I know the Minister of Finance was upset. Perhaps I was only talking to these two organizations. He should know that the Neighbourhoods Alive! program is not just in the inner city of Winnipeg; it also represents a number of suburban communities and also a large number of smaller communities across Manitoba, like The Pas, like Portage la Prairie, like Dauphin, like Thompson. And those organizations do real work helping real people. And it's unfortunate that their funding has been frozen.

And, even today, when I tried to get some kind of answer out of the Minister of Finance so that I could go back to those organizations and say, just hold on, don't worry, there's going to be a budget, but the Minister of Finance has given us some indication

that he respects your work, that he cares about the work you're doing, well, I can't do that Madam Speaker. I could print off Hansard and send that around to the organizations in my community about the questions I asked and the absolute lack of answers from the Minister of Finance, and they will not be impressed. And it's only going to increase the climate of fear that this Premier and this Finance Minister have been spreading across the province of Manitoba.

Now, these organizations and programs are concerned they're going to be left scrambling to pay their employees or even just keep the lights on. And, once that capacity goes, once an organization is destroyed, it's very, very difficult to ever get that back.

And we want to see this government stop stalling and start governing with focus, with commitment and real transparency—not just the transparency the Premier gets up as he tries to hide his latest adventure in Costa Rica—real transparency from this government. And that would mean reversing massive cuts to our health-care system, which we know are already on the table for this Pallister government.

* (16:10)

We're talking about a huge cut: \$300-million investment for CancerCare in the city of Winnipeg. Serving people in Winnipeg, but also people from all across the province of Manitoba, to try and make their cancer journey a little easier—and a little easier not just for the patients but for their families and for their communities. And we know that despite the work of the CancerCare foundation, despite the business case they were able to put forward, and despite the need for Manitobans, that's now cut. And what will happen if the government doesn't make that investment in CancerCare? Well, they're still going to have to provide the services. The services may well be provided in a less efficient manner, in a less professional manner, in a less comfortable manner, in a way that's going to result in lesser care for Manitobans and a higher cost for the taxpayer.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I'm having some difficulty hearing the member, and I would also ask that all members, when they are speaking in debate, that they please direct their comments through the Chair. I think that might help us move forward with probably some better attention paid to the comments that are being made. Appreciate that.

The member from Minto.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And, of course, we have cuts to personal-care homes, as my friend, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) mentioned just today. Of course, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and some of his candidates at the time were quite happy to stand in Transcona and promise immediate action on a care home. Well, now, of course, not even a year into their mandate, the community in Transcona realizes that that's not going to happen. And the Minister of Health today stood up and repeated his recent remarks that, oh, there was the fine print. When we promised those 1,200 care beds, they had to be built at a cost that no community organization across this province could actually facilitate. So their record now is zero—zero new personal-care-home beds, and, unfortunately, there's no sign that's going to change any time soon.

And, of course, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), there he was getting his picture taken with the former premier in Lac du Bonnet, and he now has to stand by and watch as his Premier and his leader puts cuts to make sure that that facility in Lac du Bonnet, which has been called for by the community, which the community did fundraising for, which the community led, is now off the table, and that's a shame for the member for Lac du Bonnet, but, more importantly, that's a shame for the people of Eastman who now have lost something they were counting on.

We know there's been cuts to community clinics in The Pas and Thompson, and I'm very proud of my colleague, the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), standing up in this House and asking questions on behalf of not just people in her community but people across the North who have a need for health care, who have to travel great distances, often, to receive that health care and who are frankly most impacted when a hard-hearted government comes in and starts swinging the axe.

We know there's been cuts to community clinics in St. Vital and St. Boniface. What do those community clinics do? Well, they keep people from the emergency room. There are many, many cases which could be dealt with by nurse practitioners or a doctor in a community clinic that would otherwise be headed into the emergency room and having to wait and take up valuable time of those professionals. This was a great way to reduce the pressures on our emergency rooms, but instead we have a government

which seems quite inclined to make cuts and increase those pressures once again.

And we know, of course, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), of course, has decided to spend taxpayer money on obtaining government reviews. And we know there's a fiscal performance review. They've got it, but this minister and this Premier have refused to provide it to Manitobans. They should release their KPMG health review so Manitobans can actually see what they spent money on. And, you know, Manitobans have spent millions of dollars on the Premier's reviews; claims he's going to base his budget on these reviews, but he won't show them to us. And he won't show them to Manitobans before the budget because he's more concerned about himself. He's more concerned about himself than the needs of Manitobans.

And, you know, what other money has been spent on consulting reports? Well, we asked time and time again in this House, at committee, of the Minister for Crown Services (Mr. Schuler). You've talked about this report you're obtaining from the Boston Consulting Group. First question: Was it tendered? Secondly, how much is actually being spent on that report? And for reasons I guess we can now understand, neither the Premier nor the Minister from Crown—for Crown Services was prepared to give the answer to either of those questions. And I expect it must have been as much of a shock for Progressive Conservative members as it was for New Democrat members to find out the contract, one of the first things done under this new government's watch, was untendered. Hydro didn't even go to the marketplace and say, all right, here's the work we need done, who's going to do it? An untendered contract. And I feel, frankly, for some of the conservative backbenchers—of course, who, on the campaign trail, were talking about how there would be no more untendered contracts, and they get the rug pulled out from under them in the first weeks of this Pallister government.

And what do they spend? Four point two million dollars—that was like over a hundred thousand dollars for every page of the report. And I asked Mr. Sandy Riley when we actually had the chance to go to Hydro committee and ask him questions, I asked him the question, well, was it tendered, and he told me from the first three minutes of the committee hearing, no it wasn't. And I said, well, Mr. Riley, how much did you pay for the report, and he said \$4.2 million.

And I asked him, well, Mr. Riley, did anybody from the Boston Consulting Group go to any of the sites, did they see the hydro dams being constructed, did they visit where bipole is now being constructed, and he said no, he didn't think so.

And I know members opposite have been quite vocal for many years to talk about where the line is going, and I asked Mr. Riley, I said, did you or has Boston Consulting Group gone to any of those 16 communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to talk about the fact that they uniformly opposed the bipole being built down that line. And he said no. No. And I said, do you have any evidence to support what members are saying about bipole, and he said no, no, I don't.

So there's \$4.2 million out the window to an American company on an untendered contract to tell us something we already knew, which was that Bipole III was absolutely necessary to be built, that it could not be delayed, that Hydro needs that project done, and so we have the Hydro construction continuing.

What we've seen so far from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is certainly worrisome. Rather than making smart investments in health and investments in education, rather than working to make sure life is affordable for families, rather than taking a balanced approach to grow our economy, the Premier is only focused on cuts. And that is becoming more and more clear every day, every question period, every time he makes a public statement which often his staff then have to try to fix afterwards. Every time we hear him speak, it becomes more and more clear that he is fixed on cutting the services that my family relies upon, that my colleagues rely upon, and that the folks who put us in this Legislature, whichever side of this Chamber we sit on, those services that they count upon.

And layoffs and deep cuts to important services like health care and education and social services have severe long-term consequences that will hurt Manitobans. And we've already seen it.

Thanks to this government's efforts to cut infrastructure projects, we saw thousands of full-time jobs lost last year. And of course, once someone loses their job, hopefully we keep them in Manitoba, sometimes we don't, but what do we do, we lose someone paying taxes, someone contributing, somebody reinvesting their money whether it's in restaurants, whether it's in buying a new truck,

whether it's improving their home, we lose that. And we've lost an awful lot so far in less than a year.

And what we were trying to tell the Premier is that he needs to stop going in the wrong direction. He needs to listen to what Manitobans are saying and he needs to change his damaging obsession with cuts and he needs to start concerning himself with the betterment of the people that he represents as the Premier of the province.

Now we know that education funding is always the canary in the coal mine, Madam Speaker, and the education budget comes out before the budget, the main budget, and it is always a good sign, a good predictor of what is coming when the budget finally makes its way out. And we saw this government at the end of January provide its funding announcement, which is going to mean for the 2017-2018 school year reduced funding for more than half of the school divisions in Manitoba.

Not even a freeze, not an increase at the rate of inflation or the increase in expenses, an actual dollar-for-dollar decrease in funding for more than half of the school divisions in the province of Manitoba. And this government's—well, they will say it's an increase of 1 per cent; tell that to the 20 school divisions that are going to be losing money.

* (16:20)

This cut to education—in fact the worst increase, or decrease if you will, according to schools since the dark days in the 1990s, has parents and students and teachers very, very, very worried, and Manitoba teachers and Manitoba students need more supports not less supports, not cuts to what they rely upon to make sure we have a strong education system. And, of course, what will happen? Well, again, we're back to the '90s.

The government's refusal to give school divisions a fair increase means that school boards are going to be forced to make do with less and shift tax hikes to property owners. The same taxpayers that this Premier stands up and claims to represent every day in this House.

We know already that in St. James-Assiniboia School Division, which actually has a pretty healthy business community which helps to spread out the education cost, they're proposing a 5.6 per cent tax increase; Pembina Trails School Division, 3.5 per cent tax increase; Louis Riel, 4.44 per cent tax increase; Seven Oaks School Division, 5.68 per cent increase; River East Transcona School

Division, a 3.5 per cent increase. And, you know, when they started—when the divisions started to crunch their numbers and present what the impact was going to be, they didn't get any sympathy from this government. In fact, they had the Minister of Education (Mr. Wishart) who—again who also disappointed me with his comments simply suggest to me that somehow school divisions are wasting taxpayer dollars.

Well, they're not; they're educating our children. They are building our citizens of tomorrow, and, unfortunately, they are going to have to turn to property taxpayers to receive the money they need to do the work.

Winnipeg School Division, the division for the area that I represent, actually proposed three options to try and show property owners in Winnipeg School Division what this would mean, and they proposed three different options to protect the existing programs that would require a 3.9 per cent increase in the school taxes and to actually add some very modest enhancements, including more assistance for children in the autism spectrum. They are now talking about a 4.5 per cent increase.

And, you know, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this Education Minister will stand there and say, well, it's not our fault—it's not our fault, and, you know, the Premier's been through this movie from the 1990s when school divisions had to make horrible decisions to cut teachers, to make classrooms bigger, to do away with important programs that provide a full school experience. They will simply throw up their hands and say, it's not our fault.

Well, we're not going to be fooled by that, and the people of Manitoba and ratepayers in those school divisions are not going to be fooled by that. It's time for this government to start investing in our education system, and it's time for this government to stand with Manitoba students, Manitoba families and Manitoba teachers.

Shifting the burden onto school taxes might make the Premier look good in the short term, but it shortchanges our students, and it is going to be a big issue this year and every year this government decides to underfund our education system.

Now we know that there are specific requests and challenges that arise in the education system. We know that we have a growing refugee population, and every member of this House has stood and has

applauded the efforts to integrate refugees into our school system and into the rest of our systems. There are costs involved with that, and those are front-line services. I don't consider assisting newcomers, I don't consider assisting refugee students who arrive here, I don't consider additional supports for them, to be wasteful spending. But, obviously, Conservative members do, and we'll be taking them to task on that every chance that we get.

And, you know, sometimes in certain divisions and in certain schools there's spending that may be beyond what members opposite may consider to be front-line services. That's why our government, the NDP government, invested in things like breakfast programs, and early reading and math supports for indigenous and refugee and inner-city students to succeed in school.

Are those front-line services if they're not being provided by a teacher? Well, if they're services that are assisting children who need a little bit of assistance so they can be full participants in the school community and have a chance of getting through school and become part of our economy, that is a front-line service. And I'm very worried that programs like that are going to be the first thing that are going to go when school divisions continue to be pressed by this government with underfunding.

And, you know, it's not the only area where we have serious concerns. If essential services like education aren't safe under this government, certainly health care is not safe either. I talked a little bit about some of the cancellations of CancerCare and personal-care homes. They also shut down the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic, which was providing important French-language health-care services to the community's residents, and it shows Manitobans where this government's priorities really are.

And now we've learned the Premier—of course, when they gave mandate letters to their ministers, this was supposed to be a big story, and they put them up on their websites, and they pushed it out to the Media. Boy, they sent their mandate letters around to the Health authorities. They sure didn't talk about that. They sure didn't tell the media what they were trying to do to the various health-care authorities. They gave their mandate letter, and then they ran to get out of the way.

The Premier has ordered the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Manitoba's biggest health-care authority, to cut \$83 million from their budget within just six weeks: Prairie Mountain Health authority,

\$17.5 million; Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, \$8 million; Southern Health, \$11 million; and the northern regional health authority, \$6 million.

And I'm going to leave that field for my colleague, my friend, the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), who's going to have a chance to talk about what those cuts could very well mean for the people that she represents in the constituency of The Pas, but also what it means for people living across the North in Manitoba's largest health-care region.

And, of course, there's been some cryptic comments that have been provided, saying, well, maybe the health-care authority has to stop providing non-insured services. Well, what does that mean? Does that mean mental health services? Does that mean substance abuse programs? Does that mean health-home care, which is a challenge and an expense, but even greater in the north? Does that mean EMS, where now we'll have less parity and less support than we get at the present time?

This decision shows that the new government, which claim they could just wave a magic wand and suddenly get rid of all this waste, well, they've now done the work. They've had a look, and there isn't that kind of waste to be trimmed. There's always improvements that can happen, but it's quite clear that this government is going to be cutting to the bone, because they don't have any good ideas. Seventeen years in opposition, they don't have any real ideas on how they could get improvements in the health-care system. So they're going to swing the axe just as they did 17 years ago.

And, you know, this decision was made even in advance of the receipt of the government's health-care review. Those reviews are to have been kept secret. This government showed no good faith in going to its health authorities and demanding they make deep cuts without even giving them alternatives, without even providing solutions or doing anything else that would help health-care authorities get the job done to provide better care closer to home for Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Well, here's the member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) saying we can't be spending all the time. So I'm sure he's walking around his community of Thompson, saying, aren't you proud of me? My government cancelled the clinic that was promised for the city of Thompson. I know how well that's going to go over in the city of Thompson, and, you

know, Madam Speaker, all those backbenchers sitting around the back should know that this is probably the best year they're ever going to have. And, when April 11 descends on the people of Manitoba, all of a sudden, they are going to have a very, very different experience in their communities as people start to realize what this Finance Minister and what this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) program of austerity means for real services that real people count upon.

So we know not only, of course, has the Premier and the Health Minister cut the other projects they talk about—we know they've cut a wellness centre in Concordia to keep seniors healthier so they can remain in their home as long as possible, they can delay needing home care as much as possible, and they can then delay going into hospital or a nursing care home as long as possible, although now we know it'll be very, very difficult to get into any nursing care home, because there aren't going to be any beds build under the Pallister government.

We also know there was a promise for an International Centre for Dignity and Palliative Care at the University of Manitoba. Well, we know that's now gone under this new government. We knew there was a plan for a new facility for the Pan Am Clinic in Winnipeg. We know that that's gone, in this government's rush to austerity and cuts and freezes instead of continuing to provide better health care for the people of Manitoba.

* (16:30)

Now we know that there's ways that we can get better results, and that's why we built QuickCare clinics and that's why we built ACCESS centres to try and take the pressure off of busy hospitals and busy emergency rooms. And I know the member from Morris again continues to chirp from his seat. I can't wait to hear what he has to say because I'm sure it'll be very insightful and give us more views on what some of the backbenchers in this government think because, you know, they rode into election on this wave of—this wave, and now they're realizing how difficult—and now I hear the member from Morris shouting from his seat at how the former Filmon government promised the Brandon general hospital seven times. I heard that very clearly and, indeed, it wasn't the Filmon government that built it. It was the new NDP government that got the job done—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: I would quote former Premier Gary Doer, who put the puck in the net. And the member for Morris (Mr. Martin), you know, he just keeps shooting the puck over the boards and hitting the post and not scoring a single, single goal.

We also know that we need more health-care professionals in Manitoba, and turning around and cutting and starving the health-care system is not the way to have more health-care professionals working in the province of Manitoba. We know that when the Filmon government was in power, we lost over a thousand nurses in the province of Manitoba. Over the past years, we were able to get some of them back. We began to train more and more, but, you know, when you lose a nurse, it's not easy to get them back.

And we know that in government we worked hard to increase the number of doctors. We expanded the size of the medical school. We also improved programs to make sure that we had doctors not just in the city of Winnipeg, but working and practising across the province of Manitoba.

We know there's a family doctor finder which connected over 40,000–48,000 Manitobans with a doctor and nurse practitioner, and 95 per cent of people that applied under that program have been matched up with a doctor. I shudder to think of the results once this Finance Minister stands in his place on April 11th and delivers what is going to be a bad-news budget for people in my community, for people in the communities that my colleagues represent, but also so many of the communities that the government members represent, and I just want them to know after April 11th, there is going to be a real reckoning and it's not going to be very much fun.

You've still got the chance to talk to your Premier and your Finance Minister and do something better for the people of Manitoba.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I will talk briefly and then my colleague from The Pas will have plenty of time.

Anyway, this is the Interim Supply. I think, first of all, it's important to note that it would have been highly desirable if this government had actually brought down a budget on March the 1st instead of waiting 'til April the 11th.

And, if you think about planning for this coming fiscal year, the government presumably is going to

introduce some new programs. It would be really nice to be having those new programs up and running and be able to be funded by March the 1st, but with the way this government is going, the budget won't even—by April the 1st it won't even be there until April the 11th, and because it's late in getting prepared and presented, it creates uncertainty about whether the budget will actually get passed by June the 1st. And so we could be well into the fall, maybe in November, before the government could even start funding some new programs.

So it would have been nice if this government had been organized, but—it would have been nice if this government would have been organized, and I wanted to put that on the table first of all.

I also wanted to comment on the fact that, you know, it would be smart—and I mentioned this when we were doing questions—to actually have some multi-year fiscal planning. The NDP, when they were in power, managed such a multi-year fiscal plan for universities, but, you know, it was a disaster—*[interjection]*

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

I would just like to indicate that there are a number of conversations going around and I'm having some difficulty hearing them. Also, the conversations that are going around the member for River Heights's desk are being picked up through the sound system because these mics are very sensitive. And I am hearing some conversations quite clearly that are happening around the member for River Heights. So you may want to be cautious about that.

And I would urge members that it's important that we, you know, give the member that is speaking his proper respect and allow him to be heard. I think we would all wish that to happen for us as well. So I would encourage the—you know, all members to please pay attention, and just also a reminder that these mics are very sensitive.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, thank you for the caution. I'm sure it's well appreciated by the former premier and others who don't want to get misquoted because something is picked up on a microphone that they don't want to be there. None of us want to be caught in that sort of a situation, ever.

The—so there is a need for better planning; a need for multi-year planning. In this context, one of the surprising things is that we don't yet have the third quarter financial report. We're now, I think,

about 65 days after the end of the fiscal year, December 31st. And the Auditor General has been quite clear on the fact that Manitoba needs to get its act together and to shorten the time after the fiscal year when the quarterly–third-quarter financial report is available, as with other quarterly financial reports. The better that we can–the sooner we can have these reports out, the better that we're going to be able to plan moving forward. That applies to government; that applies to members of the opposition, you know, who want to be on top of what's going on.

And so I just refer members to the Auditor General's report of March 2014, in which he laid this out very clearly, and I'll quote: The average time for Manitoba to release a quarterly report during the period we examined was 57 days, ranging from 49 to 106 days. The other provinces average 34 days, all with much smaller ranges. So the other provinces basically are getting out their quarterly financial reports in about half the time that Manitoba is getting it, or has been. And we find that this year, the Conservatives are just as bad as the NDP, as the NDP averaged 57 days and the Conservatives–

An Honourable Member: Some would suggest, worst.

Mr. Gerrard: –at least 65 days.

An Honourable Member: Still better than the Liberals.

Mr. Gerrard: Give us a chance, and we'll–you–we'll show you we can do a lot better.

The usefulness of the quarterly reports, as the Auditor General points out, diminishes as time passes. If readers don't know what–when to expect quarterly reports, they can't rely on up-to-date financial information to make informed decisions.

I note that the previous government had informed the Auditor General's office that they were not going to implement this recommendation, so I would suggest to them and hope, urge the Conservatives that they will actually implement this recommendation and have much more timely quarterly financial reports in the future.

I want to talk for a few minutes, when we're talking Interim Supply, and this government is talking about wanting to save money, that one of the most effective ways to save money in health care is by keeping people healthier so they don't have to use the health-care system. And so the prevention of sickness needs to be a very important part of what is

happening in this budget, which we expect now on April the 11th.

* (16:40)

And I would hope that the government is going to pay attention and to start looking more carefully at preventing sickness, because there's a lot of areas where we can save considerable sums of money by keeping people healthier.

I have talked at length about diabetes being an example. We produced, in the Manitoba Liberal caucus, some time ago a fairly extensive report on diabetes and basically showed that if there is an effort to prevent diabetes, then we'd be able to save hundreds of millions of dollars. And so this, in the rush to cut back–that the government needs to be very, very careful about not cutting back in areas where they're spending some money to actually save money in the future because otherwise the government's going to dig itself into a larger and deeper hole instead of making sure that the finances of this province and the sustainability of the health-care system is going to be possible.

So, with those few words, interim appropriations are important. We really basically, though, are waiting for the budget when it comes down on April the 11th and I wish it were sooner but it will come then and we will comment more at that time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It's an honour to stand here before you today to put a few words about the Interim Supply bill and the cuts associated with this bill.

As a northerner and as MLA for The Pas, it is quite concerning as I'm learning more and more about this new government and the priorities, or non-priorities, for us northern people in Manitoba. I just wanted to put on record that my concerns are that unnecessary delays have real consequences for Manitobans. Programs like Neighbourhoods Alive! and Community Places that rely on this funding are now faced with more doubt and uncertainty as they wait for the budget. For example, this affects directly The Pas renewal community corporation in my community.

And, what's more, because the government has chosen April 11th as budget day, this means this is at least an 11-day delay between the end of this fiscal year and the budget release date. This will cause more difficulty and strain on organizations such as

The Pas renewal corporation who will have to find new funds to cover the government's delay. As a result of this government's delay, these organizations that I mentioned and programs will be left scrambling to pay their employees, people who are raising families in The Pas, or even just to keep the lights on within their organization.

We want to see this government to stop stalling and start governing with focus and commitment and transparency for all Manitobans. This means reversing massive cuts to our health-care system, cuts to the CancerCare in Winnipeg, cuts to personal-care homes in Winnipeg and Lac du Bonnet, cuts to community clinics in my hometown The Pas and also in Thompson, cuts to clinics in St. Vital and St. Boniface. Layoffs and deep cuts to important services like health care and education have long, severe—long—severe long-term consequences that will hurt Manitobans. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) should stop going in the wrong direction and reverse his damaging obsession with cuts.

I just want to focus on health. Again, I'm from The Pas. We're six hours away, directly north of Winnipeg. I, myself, have been affected by the cancellation of the clinic. When you walk into our fourth-floor clinic, which only houses two offices for a couple of doctors, therefore it limits access to health care such as an ear infection, a child crying with an ear infection. Instead, when you run out from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., that's it. All of us have to be shipped down to the emergency room, clog up those services, in order to see a doctor for a few minutes to be assessed and to have our prescription and go home and look after our children or ourselves.

So, by just imagining that the clinic will no longer be there, that vision, that potential to supply and give access to northern Manitoba families, including mine, was a huge, huge disappointment. It's a huge disappointment because I watched it grow. I watched both sides of the river, the Opaskwayak Health Authority and the regional health authority, combine their resources, their knowledge, their experience to work together—for that common goal to make sure that we have access to health care. And it was also an honour to have been there within the town council—the Town of The Pas council office to make that announcement. I was beaming with pride that I was able to make this announcement, because I thought this was very important, not only for The Pas and OCN but other surrounding communities:

Flin Flon, Moose Lake, Cormorant, Wanless, all our surrounding communities there.

So, with that, with the cancellation of The Pas primary care clinic and the Northern Consultation Clinic, in Thompson, along with more than \$1 billion in vital health centres across Manitoba, that cancellation was, again, a huge disappointment and a heartbreak for someone who is working their best, travelling six hours here every week, leaving my family to ensure that I stand here and stand up for northern people's rights.

Families in The Pas and Thompson need improvements to primary health care plus greater access to specialists. And these new clinics would have gone a long way to meeting their needs. For example, if we had somebody specializing in diabetes, my childhood friend and her twin son—one of her twins wouldn't have been medevacked here in the middle of the night. We could have had a specialist housed within The Pas.

So, with that, by the cancellation of this clinic and a place to house specialists and more doctors—this can create less stress for our families who have to be separated, think about transportation, about coming back and—or deal with child care for the remaining children who have to be left at home, loss of work days, sick days, loss of income and loss of school days as well.

So, with that, the cancelling of these needed events—investments in primary health care not only hurts our families, it's short-sighted and foolish, because these projects will only be more expensive to build in the future. So, if this cancellation—our people in The Pas are thinking that this project will never, ever come to life again, which is, again, disappointing for our people.

Also, too, the people of The Pas and Thompson understand that the new clinics would have provided important services and helped with long-term recruitment of doctors and retention of doctors and other health-care-related providers in our regions. I've had the honour to sit on the Opaskwayak Health Authority health board, and we had many, many conversations about recruitment and retention of doctors. Also, too, within University College of the North, I had many opportunities to sit and talk about recruitment and retention of instructors and professors such as health-care aide instructors and nursing instructors as well.

So the current state of the primary care in The Pas and Thompson demonstrates that these clinics need—they need to be planned—built as planned. These projects involved many, many stakeholders, many, many provisions within their budget to accommodate this project that everyone was looking forward to. So now that it's gone, priorities, strategies, things have to be re-planned to accommodate this disappointment in our community.

So, with that, I just—I'm just disappointed that this government is recklessly cancelling the projects along with many other important health projects across our province.

And, with that, Madam Speaker, with passion, I'm saying that it's my plan to work closely with the leadership of the Northern Health Region, our communities and stakeholders to fight for the reinstatement of these clinics.

* (16:50)

Now, to continue on with my concerns regarding our health needs across Manitoba, these are some words I want to put on record.

Health is an essential services; it is an essential service like education. They aren't safe under this government, neither is service—neither like a service like health care. This government's cancellation of important health-care projects puts Manitoba families at risk. And again I'm going to repeat that—the products that have been cancelled. It needs to be put on record many, many times as to why this is so important, why we keep on sharing this and make sure it's put on record.

It's disappointing that a personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet, estimated cost \$32 million, gone. Northern consultation clinic in Thompson, \$9 million, gone. The St. Vital primary-care access clinic, \$4.7 million, gone. The primary—The Pas primary-care clinic, \$5.3 million, gone. CancerCare Manitoba facility, \$300 million, gone. In addition, their shutdown of St. Boniface's QuickCare clinic, which was providing important French language health-care services to the community residents shows Manitobans where this government's priorities really are.

And really, I really have to repeat this over and over again that taking a 20 per cent pay raise and jetting off to Costa Rica for two months is really unacceptable. It's not a laughing matter, like, it's unacceptable. Now we've learned the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has ordered the WRHA to cut

\$83 million, which includes the Town of Churchill, and they've been ordered to do this in six weeks—six weeks—imagine getting that notification, six weeks, \$83 million, gone.

Other cuts the Premier has ordered for the RHAs, for example, I've already mentioned \$83 million. Prairie Mountain Health, \$17.5 million, six weeks to do that. Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, \$8 million, six weeks. Northern regional health authority, an additional \$6 million gone from my region. Cuts to health care, which could've benefitted and enhanced our mental-health program or home-care services, which is many concerns I get from my constituency office to ensure that they're still there within our community. And, of course, the Southern Health regional health authority of \$11 million.

And in regards to capital—health capital cuts, again, after campaigning on a promise to protect front-line services, one of the first things this Premier said in regards to health care is to cancel \$1 billion in capital projects. This is after campaigning, promising to protect front-line services. How can cancelling \$1 billion in capital projects help that promise.

Again, let me repeat again, our new facility for CancerCare Manitoba, several PCHs across Manitoba including two in Winnipeg and one in Lac du Bonnet. Again two major clinics in the North, St. Vital, a wellness centre in Concordia for seniors and families. So, instead of investing in community clinics that provide timely care close to home for families and seniors, this government shut down our clinics, and I just wanted to talk a little bit about that these clinics could have provided timely care close to home. This is quite, quite true to where I'm from. Every night, every day when I hear the plane fly over me, I think medevac, medevac, medevac—money, back and forth.

I've been sent over—when my daughter was medevacked out myself we had to go through the Northern Patient Transportation Program, which basically is a policy that should be updated. I don't think it's been updated since '95, but even that's been—our RHA has been told to reconsider costs and the policy around that, also, too, medevac they've been asked to look at and re-examine. So I really don't know what that means but to me that's just very harmful.

So, with that, like when I was talking about when I hear the planes fly over, back and forth, medevac, I just think about the millions of dollars

spent and with—without that clinic, a lot of our people could be kept home and get the care that they deserve to have at home instead of being separated for their family which just adds further to their stress of their illness. I should know, my family has been through that and recently just about every day we talk about a relative, co-worker that has been medevacked out, or even people having to catch rides back and forth from The Pas to Winnipeg to see a doctor. I've given people rides from The Pas to Winnipeg, Winnipeg to The Pas, just so they could see a doctor for 10 minutes, 10 minutes. All that six-hour ride, 10 minutes, six-hour ride back.

So I think with that clinic it could have prevented waste of time, waste of money, and we could have just saved money and provided that health care at The Pas, primary health clinic, if it was actually going to be built.

And, speaking of money, there were, I read that, you know, the government was only going to sponsor—I mean, fund emergency or crisis only.

I'd like to invite anyone from the members opposite who have the privilege of living around close to major health-care facilities to come and talk to our people, especially our First Nations, in regards to accessing health care from the North. It can be quite a stressful situation, especially when interpreters are needed and family members are needed to be allowed to be a—to escort their family members.

So, when I was reading about, you know, health care being sustainable today, five years from now, 10 years from now, I was just thinking, you know, about The Pas, that investment, you know, that could have been the same statement that could have been used for in regards to northern health. Building those clinics in The Pas could have saved—and Thompson—could have saved us money in the long

run, especially when you're talking about medevac and the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

So, with that, I just want to continue on, just a little bit more about the question that I had asked today. It's very important that these questions are being asked by a northern MLA, especially when the NRHA, which serves 26 First Nations communities, including some of Manitoba's most remote First Nations, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is forcing the NRHA to cut non-insured services, which mean cutting services like mental health supports and in part of Manitoba where rates of substance abuse and mental health issues are much higher. For example, Cross Lake, I was there last year during their suicide crisis. Just recently in my home community three weeks ago we buried a young woman, committed suicide due to depression.

So, with that, it's quite concerning and just absolutely heartbreaking that this government is asking my people to take cuts. What does that mean? You know, these cuts pretty much put our lives at risk. So that is something that I am not going to stand for, and that is something I'm going to stand up every each opportunity I get to ask these important questions for this government to actually answer.

So, with that, I just want to say that, too, that I agree with MKO Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson. I absolutely agree with her concern that this government didn't even consider, or probably didn't even notice, that First Nations communities need to be consulted regarding these health cuts, especially with—

Madam Speaker: Order please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 12 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Interim Supply	
Bill 13—The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act		Isleifson	498
Goertzen	489	Micklefield	498
Bill 14—The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act		Charges Under The Wildlife Act	
Goertzen	489	Swan	498
		Stefanson	498
Members' Statements		Collective Bargaining Agreements	
Lucy Fouasse		Lindsey	499
Graydon	489	Friesen	499
Provincial Nominee Program Fees		Pallister	500
F. Marcelino	490		
Recognizing Local Museums		Petitions	
Smook	490	Bell's Purchase of MTS	
First Nations Mental Health		Maloway	500
Klassen	491		
Robert Sopuck		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Nesbitt	491	<i>(Continued)</i>	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Oral Questions		Committee of Supply	
Minimum Wage		Interim Supply	
F. Marcelino	491	Questions	
Pallister	492	Allum	501
Provincial Nominee Program		Friesen	501
F. Marcelino	493	Swan	501
Pallister	493	Introduction of Bills	
Personal-Care Homes		Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017	
Wiebe	494	Friesen	507
Goertzen	494	Second Readings	
Northern Health Authority		Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017	
Lathlin	495	Friesen	507
Goertzen	495	Questions	
Public-Private Partnerships		Maloway	508
Kinew	496	Friesen	508
Wishart	496	Swan	508
Mental Health and Addiction Strategy		Debate	
Klassen	497	T. Marcelino	511
Pallister	497	Swan	514
Goertzen	498	Gerrard	520
		Lathlin	521

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