

**Second Session – Forty-First Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
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	NDP
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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 28, 2016

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 6—The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Repeal Act

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke), that Bill 6, The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Repeal Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Pedersen:** Bill 6 repeals the East Side Road Authority Act, thereby fulfilling our election pledge as well as helping to fix the finances of Manitoba. Repealing this act also begins to rebuild the trust and respect of those Manitobans impacted by ESRA.

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

##### Bill 208—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Continuity of Learning)

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 208, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Continuity of Learning); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (continuité de l'apprentissage), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Kinew:** This bill would fulfill one of the recommendations from the report on how to improve educational outcomes for children in the child and family services system. It would do so by allowing

children who, during the course of a school year, are moved out of a school division to still receive services and an education from that original school division.

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

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

##### First Report

**Mr. James Teitsma (Vice-Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense? Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its First Report.*

##### Meetings

*Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:*

- December 16, 2015 (5<sup>th</sup> Session – 40<sup>th</sup> Legislature)
- November 25, 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup> Session – 41<sup>st</sup> Legislature)

##### Matters under Consideration

- Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2014 including the conduct of the 2014 Arthur-Virden and Morris by-elections
- Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2015 including the conduct of The Pas by-election

##### Committee Membership

*Committee membership for the December 16, 2015 meeting:*

- Hon. Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. CULLEN

- *Mr. EICHLER*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS*
- *Ms. LATHLIN (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX*
- *Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park) (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Hon. Mr. SELINGER*

*Committee membership for the November 25, 2016 meeting:*

- *Mr. ALLUM*
- *Hon. Mrs. COX*
- *Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Mr. KINEW*
- *Ms. LAMOUREUX*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. SWAN*
- *Mr. TEITSMA*
- *Mr. YAKIMOSKI*

*Your Committee elected Mr. TEITSMA as the Vice-Chairperson*

***Officials speaking on the record at the December 16, 2015 meeting:***

- *Ms. Shipra Verma, Chief Electoral Officer*

***Officials speaking on the record at the November 25, 2016 meeting:***

- *Ms. Shipra Verma, Chief Electoral Officer*

#### ***Report Considered and Passed***

*Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:*

- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2014 including the conduct of the 2014 Arthur-Virden and Morris by-elections*

#### ***Report Considered but not Passed***

*Your Committee considered the following report but did not pass it:*

*Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2015 including the conduct of The Pas by-election*

**Mr. Teitsma:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River

(Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that the report of the committee be received.

***Motion agreed to.***

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I wish to table the annual report for 2015-2016 for 'Assinibane'—Assiniboine Community College.

**Madam Speaker:** Ministerial Statements? Oh, another one?

**Mr. Wishart:** Madam Speaker, I wish to table the report for Red River College for 2015-2016.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Madam Speaker:** The required 90-minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the First Minister please proceed with his statement.

#### **Fidel Castro**

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Madam Speaker, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor reminded us all one week ago that Manitoba is the home of hope, a place that people from all backgrounds and from all regions of the world have chosen to make their home.

They came, and they continue to come, in search of a new life, a better life for themselves and their children. Manitoba has always provided that new life: a new life of hope, and opportunity. That has been true since the arrival of the first settlers and it remains true today. It is especially true for those who have fled the oppression of tyranny, who have fled starvation, who have fled terror and who have fled torture.

Manitobans have welcomed them with open arms and with open hearts, as we always have, as we always will.

It is with those thoughts in mind that we take note of the passing of Cuban President Fidel Castro this past weekend.

While some have praised him as a great leader and gifted orator, my thoughts are for those who suffered horribly from his oppression throughout his long tenure. My thoughts and the thoughts of this government are with the thousands of Cubans who were punished, tortured, imprisoned and, in far too

many instances, killed because of their religious beliefs, because of their sexual preference, because of their support for workers' rights, because they yearned for freedom and democracy.

Madam Speaker, as Human Rights Watch has pointed out, thousands of Cubans were incarcerated in abysmal prisons, thousands more were harassed and intimidated, and entire generations were denied basic freedoms.

Fidel Castro created and presided over a one-party state that controlled all aspects of Cuban life for more than five decades.

The denial of Cubans' fundamental freedoms was pervasive and it was unrelenting. All forms of dissent and opposition were ruthlessly suppressed, and the surveillance, the beatings and the arbitrary detentions continue to this day.

Our thoughts also go out to the many thousands of Cubans who fled their nation and, in particular, to those who died seeking the freedom and opportunity that Manitobans enjoy, and too often take for granted.

Madam Speaker, our thoughts and prayers today are for the Cuban people with whom we share a warm and deep friendship.

Manitoba is the home of hope, and today we share that hope with all Cubans: the hope that a new day of democracy, a new day of freedom, is dawning for their nation and for each other.

Thank you.

\* (13:40)

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I rise in response to the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) statement on the passing of Fidel Castro, long-time president of Cuba. Canada, under many governments, and the Canadian people have had a long relationship with Cuba and the Cuban people.

Madam Speaker, despite a US embargo for 50 years, Cuba under Castro made advances in the fields of education, literacy and health for millions, while also employing arbitrary arrest and detention against opponents, stifling dissent, causing hundreds of thousands of Cubans to flee and revile Castro as a totalitarian dictator.

It is difficult to imagine a 20th century without his presence.

As we look to the future, I know I speak for all Manitobans when we hope and wish for the best for the future welfare of the Cuban people, a future characterized by free and open elections, respect for human rights and respect for economic and social justice.

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

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, I rise today to respond to the Premier's statement on Fidel Castro, who passed away just recently.

He governed Cuba as prime minister from 1959 to 1976 and then served as its president for 32 years before he was succeeded by brother Raúl in 2008.

Canada and Cuba have had good relations for many years. Canada and Cuba first established diplomatic relations in 1945 and have maintained them since then. In 1976, Pierre Trudeau, as prime minister, visited Cuba. In the decades since, many Canadians, my parents included, have travelled to Cuba and enjoyed their stays.

Cuba has developed a local community-based health-care system, which has put a significant emphasis on wellness and preventing sickness, aspects of which have attracted the interest of Canadian policy-makers. There have been business partnerships and trade relations between our two countries.

Though there were very serious and major issues of human rights while Fidel Castro governed Cuba, there was, at the same time, a major effort to achieve universal literacy and he spoke out and acted against racism. In spite of the views of the government of the United States, over many years Canada has pursued its own foreign policy and tried to work with Cuba in a positive, co-operative way.

It is of interest the comments of Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela gave Cuba and Fidel Castro much credit for helping to bring the end of apartheid in South Africa by helping Africans.

He talked in 1991 about liberation and said, we want to have the moment of liberation open the way to ever-deepening democracy. He said that in Cuba. He also talked of the Cuban help in the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale in Angola. Manna-Mandela said Cuito Cuanavale marks the divide in the

struggle for the liberation of southern Africa and an important step in the struggle to free the continent and our country of the scourge of apartheid.

Looking back today, the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale is credited with ushering in the first round of trilateral negotiations, meted by the—mediated by the united nation—the—the United States—

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The member's time has expired.

**An Honourable Member:** Do I have leave just to finish the last little bit?

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** That battle is credited with securing the withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops from Angola and Namibia by 1991.

Fidel Castro was a polarizing figure, neither all good, nor all bad, but he does have an important place in the history of the Americas and of Africa.

Our thoughts are with the people of Cuba today. Our thoughts also go to Fidel Castro's family in these difficult times.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable minister for Sports, Heritage and Culture.

I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided, in accordance with rule 26(2).

### Nellie McClung

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** Madam Speaker, take it from me, nice men don't want the vote.

These words, spoken by Nellie McClung in the midst of a mock parliament, started a suffrage movement in Manitoba that ultimately resulted in many women achieving the right to vote 100 years ago.

Last January, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) wrote to the governor of the Bank of Canada requesting that Nellie McClung be chosen as the first woman other than the Queen to be represented on a banknote in Canada.

I, and many of my colleagues, stood on the snowy steps in the—of the Legislature to make the case for Nellie to be represented on that banknote as

a reminder of all—to all Canadians that everyone has a special place in democracy.

Because of the efforts of Nellie McClung, and others who fought for equality, women are now able to vote and hold public office. As Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I believe I speak for all of my colleagues, male and female, when I say that we are grateful for their efforts in putting us where women belong: on the floor of the Legislature.

Madam Speaker, 2016 marks the centennial anniversary of some women in Manitoba getting the right to vote. Having Nellie represented on a banknote would be a stunning tribute to her strength and fortitude. Unfortunately, Ms. McClung is not listed as a final contender for the appearance on the Canadian banknote.

I do not stand today to take anything away from those named on a short list, and we must congratulate the Bank of Canada for finally deciding to put a Canadian woman on a banknote. However, I would be remiss if I did not stand today to object the decision by the Bank of Canada to ignore the contributions of such an important woman in Canadian history.

Let 'em howl, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Madam Speaker, 100 years ago, with determination and courage, Nellie McClung spearheaded the women's suffragette movement, earning many women the right to vote and, in many respects, forging a new path to women's equal and full participation in Canadian society.

Along other members of the Famous Five, Nellie played a fundamental and lead role in the Persons Case which was crucial in changing the definition of persons to include women. This marked a fundamental shift in perception, social construction and inclusion of women in mainstream Canadian society within communities and even within families.

Today, all Canadian women have the right to vote, women can be found in almost all levels of elected office and women are more prominent in the workforce.

But, despite these accomplishments and changes that have followed over time, there is much more work to be done in ensuring women's equality. Every day I drive by the beautiful bronze monument that we have on our Legislative grounds in

recognition of Nellie McClung and the Famous Five. The monument stands as a testament to women's strength, determination and perseverance in the struggle for equity and as a reminder for all of us to continue to fight for women's social and economic equality.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

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

**Ms. Klassen:** Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the life and the works of Nellie McClung. Liberals are proud to have a history of inclusion. Nellie McClung was a Liberal and, over 100 years ago, fought for and secured the right for some women to vote. It would not be until 1960 that our indigenous people would see the same right to vote and if they did prior they had to give up their First Nation Indian status.

I would like to remind all that some women in this province still haven't had the right to vote, specifically Buffalo Point First Nation, who—it's under a band system—band custom law.

Our province needs more women like Nellie, women who see an injustice to fight and fight to make our world better. The Manitoba Liberals are proud to stand beside women who possess strong work ethic, determination, drive and passion for making our province better, not for only ourselves, but also in the generation to come.

I am proud to join the House in—today in the celebration of Nellie McClung.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

\* (13:50)

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Violence Against Women in Sexually Explicit Material

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** I have three daughters.

I have three daughters and I want them to be treated with respect by the men in their life.

I have three daughters and I want them to be free from sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse and violence.

That's why I am so disturbed by the pervasiveness of violence and degradation against women in sexually explicit material available online. In Canada, almost 90 per cent of mainstream sexually explicit material content features violence against women. Even worse is that sexually explicit content featuring violence against women accounts for over 30 per cent of all Internet traffic.

Tragically, many of these—many of those consuming this material are under-aged. In Canada, the average age of first exposure to sexually explicit material for boys is just 12.

It's prevalent, it's pervasive, and children should not be exposed to it.

So many of our youth have easy access to online content featuring violence and degradation directed against women, and this has consequences. Many of us were sickened by the story of Rehtaeh Parsons who committed suicide after enduring humiliation and bullying attributed to a sexual assault. Here's what her mother Leah Parsons had to say: Easy access to messages and visuals online that condone violent pornographic templates for our youth is setting the stage for what is considered a norm when it comes to the treatment of females. If my daughter was treated as a human being and not as an object to conquer she'd still be here today.

It's our society's collective responsibility to protect children like Rehtaeh. I encourage you all to attend the showing of the documentary, *Over 18: The Question is Not Enough*, at Springs Church at 595 Lagimodiere in my constituency at 7 p.m. tomorrow night to learn how we could be doing better.

I have three daughters. They live in a society awash with material featuring violence and degradation against women and girls. We owe them better. Let's all work together to stem the tide.

### LITE's Blueberry Pancake Breakfast

**Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas):** I was thrilled to take part in a LITE's, Local Investment Toward Employment, 20th annual Wild Blueberry Pancake Breakfast at the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre this past Friday.

In what has become an annual North End tradition, hundreds of people and volunteers gather to celebrate building community together. People from all over Winnipeg came out to enjoy a locally sourced breakfast of blueberry pancakes

and sausages, a crafters market, community group displays and local entertainment.

LITE is a non-profit organization that supports employment for businesses and people in the North End and inner city. LITE was originally created as an alternative Christmas hamper program for those in need. Today's hampers are filled with products and groceries purchased from local businesses and social enterprises, a gift that gives twice.

Since it began, LITE has raised over \$1.6 million in donations to support community economic development. LITE has helped create over 1,500 jobs in the area and supports training and skill-building programs. The pancake breakfast is Canada's largest community economic development event.

Lillian Richards, who is here with us today, made pancakes at the first-ever breakfast and helped come up with the idea of making Christmas hampers to support community economic development. At this year's breakfast, after 20 years and over 40,000 pancakes served, she was honoured for her efforts, receiving the Golden Spatula Award.

Stories like the success of LITE show us that our community is always willing to lend a hand. Whether it's a donation of money or time, everyone finds a way to make a contribution.

Today we have with us in the gallery: Lillian Richards, Tyler Pearce, Kelsey Evans, Christa Campbell and Jewel Pierre-Roscelli from LITE; and Taryn Bruyere and Laura-Lori Thomas from the Native Women's Transition Centre, who bake cookies for the hampers.

Can you please join me in congratulating them, Madam Speaker? Chi-miigwech.

#### **Gail Singer**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** We've all had that one teacher whose lessons have stayed with us long after we left their classroom. Many former and current students of Earl Grey School would point to Gail Singer, who is with us in the gallery today, as that educator.

Madam Speaker, Gail was a principal at Earl Grey School for over 30 years. She recently took her well-deserved retirement. While she was principal, she spearheaded a number of different initiatives, including an all-girls' program, the first of its kind in the Winnipeg School Division. They launched the program to encourage more

young women to enter the STEM fields. With a \$10,000 grant, they purchased technology and science equipment. Around 25 grade 7 and 8 students participate in the program every year.

My younger sister is a past participant of the all-girls' program. This year she finished her Ph.D. from Harvard on a full academic scholarship and is now doing a post-doc at Stanford University. You can't argue with the results of Gail's program. In case you're wondering, yes, they have an all-boys' program too.

Gail has always looked at education from a broad perspective, and by translating cutting edge academic theory into classroom practice she has encouraged students to become actively involved in their own learning. She is committed to the Earl Grey community and believes not only in her students' potential, but has worked tirelessly to help them achieve it by making sure there are innovative approaches in our public schools.

On behalf of your students as well as their friends and families, I thank you, Gail, for your leadership, your dedication and the immeasurable contributions to Manitoba schools over the course of your career.

#### **Holiday Road Safety**

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services):** Madam Speaker, as all members of this House know, the Christmas and holiday season are upon us.

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year when we celebrate faith, family and the tradition of giving gifts, sending greeting cards and, most importantly, spending time with loved ones. It also is a time when friends and colleagues get together to celebrate the closing of one year and the ushering in of a new year. This is a season filled with hope and joy and love.

This time of year is also one of the most high-risk times on our roads with people taking to the highways as they head off for a well-deserved break. Many people will be attending Christmas parties and end-of-the-year celebrations which often involve alcohol. Certainly, we want people to plan ahead as to know they're going to get back home safely at the end of the evening.

If you are hosting a Christmas or a New Year's Eve party, please look after your guests so they get home safely. If you are attending a Christmas or New Year's Eve party, please make sure you have

a safe roads program in place. An excellent option is the Operation Red Nose organization which is run by volunteers in select communities throughout Manitoba. Partygoers are taken home in their own vehicle driven by a sober driver. The service is free of charge and is not limited to those under the influence of alcohol, as fatigued or medicated motorists are free to use the service as well.

Madam Speaker, this year has been a dangerous year on Manitoba roadways with far too many Manitobans losing their lives. We hope that Manitobans will make responsible choices over the Christmas season and keep Manitoba's roadways safe.

Let's make this a truly merry Christmas.

#### **Brandon Day at the Legislature**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Madam Speaker, today was to be Brandon day at the Manitoba Legislature. Over 50 people had been planning for weeks to make the trip from Brandon to introduce themselves to ministers and staff and spend the day getting to know their legislators. Unfortunately, winter intervened and it was too icy on the highway today.

Madam Speaker, the bus was to leave at 7:30 this morning, but, at that time, my colleague, the MLA from Brandon East and I received a text from Mayor Rick Chrest that they had to cancel. True to Brandon form, everyone who was scheduled to make the trip was already there to go, but it was always best to be safe.

Madam Speaker, in the 2011 census, Brandon had a population of just over 46,000. It is now estimated that the population today is over 52,000, a very diverse and inclusive population, definitely the second largest city in Manitoba.

I have always been struck by the optimistic outlook of the citizens of Brandon and Westman. Problems are turned into opportunity, and Brandon is always looking to improve its situation and involve all of its citizens in the process. They're all proud of our communities. We are all proud here in the Legislature, and all of those communities contribute to a better Manitoba and we'll be the most improved province in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I know the mayor and his colleagues are already planning another day and will find other ways to engage the legislators. Until then, thank you to the many people in Brandon and at the

Legislature that were involved in planning for today until the weather intervened. It's always best to be safe.

\* (14:00)

In the words of Sergeant Phil Esterhaus, played by Michael Conrad on Hill Street Blues: Hey, let's be careful out there.

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the public gallery. From Henry G. Izatt Middle School we have 75 grade 9 students under the direction of Joe Martin, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister.

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

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Provincial Nominee Program New Application Fee**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** New immigration to Manitoba through the 2000s to today has helped drive Manitoba's population to a record 1.3 million people. The New York Times praised our parka-clad diversity, and the Provincial Nominee Program has allowed tens of thousands of new Canadians to build and thrive in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the Premier is imposing a new fee that disadvantages newcomers and serves as a disincentive to apply, yet, just like with working people, the Premier has decided to reach into the wallets of new immigrants.

Madam Speaker, imposing a new fee on immigrants will not create one more new immigrant, as the number of provincial nominee programs has been capped since the Harper administration.

Will the Premier reconsider his position?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, actually, no, Madam Speaker. My position has been, for over 30 years, that immigration to this province is essential, that we owe that hope, and this home of hope that we have here is appropriate for people to come here, whether economic immigrants or refugees from around the world, and we will do our best to continue that fine tradition.

The Provincial Nominee Program the member opposite refers to is, of course, something that was

developed, and I think the member knows this, in the 1990s under the government of Gary Filmon. And a great Progressive Conservative initiative it was, Madam Speaker. We'll continue to build on that tradition and encourage a program to work even better than it has under the previous administration.

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

### Community Connections

**Ms. Marcelino:** The Provincial Nominee Program currently selects skilled workers based in part on their education and training, work experience and language ability, as affirmed by ILEELTS scores, a mandatory requirement from all nominee program applicants.

Importantly, however, Madam Speaker, the program also encourages applicants who have strong connections in the province. We know that when immigrants have family, friends or community connections in Manitoba, they are much more likely to stay here over the long term.

The Premier's statements in a press release last Friday were particularly vague on this point.

Is the Premier intending to change the criterion for the Provincial Nominee Program and reduce the program's emphasis on community connection as part of this program?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, Madam Speaker, we can make the program work better, and that's what these changes are about. The biggest challenge for nominees under the Provincial Nominee Program is that 64 per cent of them last year arrived in Manitoba without guaranteed employment and they have to find jobs after they land as permanent residents. And, as a consequence, the five-year average is higher for unemployment for these folks when they come here than it should be, higher than the average for the rest of the province, certainly.

So our goal is to lower those unemployment rates and to better link, through improved outcomes—better link the folks who come here through the program to job opportunities. It doesn't do them a service to bring them from a desperate circumstance in another country, Madam Speaker, and put them on welfare in this province when, in fact, we have tremendous needs for new people in jobs in our province.

So better links that will get people the opportunities they desire to work, something the member opposite should consider doing, would be appropriate. We're going to consider—

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —we're going to continue to make sure those links are—

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —better made. We're going to continue to make sure those links are better made and that a program that has languished in relative ineffectiveness relative to other provinces is improved in its effectiveness here in Manitoba.

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

### Changes to Criteria

**Ms. Marcelino:** Madam Speaker, the Premier's statements will be offensive to many nominee program applicants and new immigrants.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba's immigration program has been so successful because it emphasizes community attachment. We know that when immigrants have a real connection here, either through family, friends or community, they are much more likely to stay here rather than leaving for bigger markets like Toronto or Vancouver.

The Premier needs to be straight with Manitobans and explain whether he intends to change the criterion of the program. Will he do so today?

**Mr. Pallister:** I understand the member opposite and her colleagues are very defensive about the program, and rightfully so, Madam Speaker, because the program did not result in employment opportunities for people who came here under it with the frequency that we would like to see happen.

People who are coming to Manitoba from other countries want to come here to work, and so working in partnership with our educational and training initiatives with post-secondary and community college opportunities that may present themselves, working in co-operation with our labour-market experts, who can tell us where people can come here and actually find jobs, is far better than the approach that was taken by the previous administration, which all too often resulted in people, unfortunately, having to depend on social supports for far too long a time.

So we want to make sure—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, 64 per cent of nominees under the previous administration were coming without guaranteed employment. Our goal is to make sure that that number is far lower in future.

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

#### **Changes to Labour Legislation Consultations with Labour**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the Premier has broken his promise to protect front-line workers. He pretended to work with labour leaders and claimed he would stay out of collective bargaining.

Now we are starting to see the true side of this Premier. His Throne Speech announced his intention to reach into the wallets of front-line workers, but this announcement was not mentioned during the election.

Did the Premier engage in any consultation with labour before announcing his intention of bringing in this heavy-handed legislation?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Absolutely, Madam Speaker, but the interesting thing here is, of course, that the member's referencing the phrase of reaching into people's wallets. This is exactly what the previous administration did when they walked and they knocked on the doors of Manitobans, and they looked people right in the eye, and they said we promise, no tax hikes, and then they hit Manitobans with the biggest tax hikes in modern Manitoban history: tax hikes that hit particularly hard on union members, front-line workers who had to pay 8 per cent higher fees for insuring their own home. The home where the members looked them in the eye and promised them they wouldn't raise taxes all of a sudden had an 8 per cent higher bill on the insurance on it in case it burned down.

Madam Speaker, they also put an 8 per cent surtax on all the workers in the province on the benefits they purchase—8 per cent more for your benefits that you purchase to support your family in case you're hurt, you're sick. These are—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —examples. Though they're just a couple, they're examples of literally dozens of times where the previous administration not only broke its

word, but reached right into the pockets of front-line union workers in Manitoba.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** Under our administration, with record investments, infrastructure, people were working. We had the second highest economy in the country and there were no 12,000 jobless Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, the Premier assures labour leaders that he respects the collective bargaining process and has no interest in interfering with it, then he inserts himself into the university's negotiations with UMFA and causes a strike that hurts thousands of students. From this political interference we know the government has been planning this attack on front-line workers for months.

Now his government has announced his—its intention to bring in a bill that may undermine constitutionally protected collective bargaining rights.

If the Premier's truly committed to consultation with front-line workers, why hasn't he put any of them on his Premier's enterprise team?

(14:10)

**Mr. Pallister:** See, the difference, Madam Speaker, between the previous administration and this one, is we understand what a team is, not just what it looks like, but what it is.

The previous administration was so divided they couldn't focus any of their attention for over two years on the people of Manitoba. They were so divided, they decided to stage a rebellion against their leader—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —the premier at the time. They were so divided they decided to focus solely on the inward machinations of their party, as opposed to on the best interests of Manitobans. They were so divided, they decided that they substitute leadership with tax hikes and broken promises, Madam Speaker, and that's exactly what they did.

Now, I'm quite prepared and will be continuing, as will my ministerial colleagues, to work with union leaders. We will work with them as partners. But, Madam Speaker, we most certainly will not have

them lead our leadership selection process going forward.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** From the same time period, 1969–2015, our party had only four leaders and all four served as premiers. In contrast, the other party had seven leaders and only two served as premiers.

Madam Speaker, the government's proposed wage-freeze legislation is another step in the Premier's attack on front-line workers, and it's quickly undoing nearly 20 years of—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Marcelino:** —peace with labour.

The Premier needs to stop manufacturing attacks on labour. Instead, he needs to work collaboratively with them. That collaboration cannot happen when a Premier has made up his mind and is dictating orders to everyone, like what we saw during his political interference at the University of Manitoba.

Will the Premier agree to stop his—this proposed legislation, actually engage in real consultation with front-line workers and stop manufacturing attacks on our public-service sector?

**Mr. Pallister:** Thank you to my colleague for giving me the opportunity to mention to her that history is important and it's important to learn from it.

One of the things that we've done on this side of the House when we were in opposition was to speak respectfully about Howard Pawley, Ed Schreyer, Gary Doer. We continue to do that.

The members opposite decided to focus for almost 20 years on personal attacks on Gary Filmon. That was their style; it continued to be their style, Madam Speaker. It continued to be their style in the leadership campaign and it continues to be their style now.

It isn't ours. We don't choose to do things that way. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** But I should encourage the members to understand that history did speak loud and clear about seven months ago, and they were sent to the historical dustbins and the rump that they are now because of good reason. They need to examine those reasons.

Madam Speaker, we on this side are the party of hope. They appear to want to be the party of despair and false accusations.

### Teachers' Collective Agreement Government Intention

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** There is, of course, another former premier that the current Premier did not mention. I would encourage him to speak respectfully about that person as well.

The Premier's comments in the media about education funding and teacher salaries seem to imply there will be a wage freeze that could include teachers. This is particularly concerning because we have seen the British Columbia government break existing collective agreements with teachers in the name of cost cutting.

The agreements in our province were negotiated in good faith and ought to be respected.

I ask the Premier to clarify for the House today whether he intends to respect the existing collective agreements with teachers until they expire in 2018.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I do apologize for the—to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger). Of course, as we all know here in the Chamber, I can't refer to the member by name, and so that was at part, I suppose, an excuse for not mentioning his name. But I do say and I will say that I have spoken respectfully of the member and will continue to—more respectfully than some of his colleagues have, quite frankly. And I want that point on record.

In respect of teachers, I was raised by one, was one, and I have nothing but respect for teachers. We'll work co-operatively and as teammates with our teachers and not wave them around as political weapons or try to frighten them with taxpayer-paid newsletters, as the members opposite like to do.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** I also thank the Premier for his clarification there.

Sometimes it's difficult to hear the question over the din of some of the commentary here in the Chamber. So I'd just like to reiterate that there were some comments made by the Premier in the media which seemed to imply that there may be a wage freeze coming for teachers' salaries in the province.

And, again, this is concerning, because in British Columbia we saw, in the name of austerity, interference by that Premier in the existing collective bargaining process and with existing collective bargaining agreements.

So with that in mind, I would just like to ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister): Will he clarify for the House today whether he will respect the existing collective bargaining agreements that we have in this—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —province with the teachers that extend to 2018?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I thank the member for the question.

This government has been clear from the beginning that we're facing significant challenges, all of us as Manitobans, a real need to fix the finances of this province. The previous government brought a budget in the spring of 2015 and they said that the deficit for that year would be \$424 million. The Public Accounts reveal that number to be now closer to \$1 billion.

For this member to try to pretend that somehow this is not something that all Manitobans must contend with is simply false and he should get his facts straight.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** That answer is a little concerning because it's a relatively straightforward question that was posed: Will you respect the existing collective bargaining agreements with teachers that should be in place into 2018? An indirect answer like that seems to imply that there may be other plans afoot.

So I'd ask again: Will the Premier respect the existing collective bargaining agreements with teachers in this province which are to be in place until 2018?

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

We have to understand what the context of the member's question is. When that government brought, from time to time, in government an argument that said that there was a necessity to seek a pause in labour-sector agreements, they said it was because it was necessary. When this government has spoken about a need for all of us to understand what

the fiscal reality is and establish a similar backdrop, somehow they would want to agitate and scare civil servants and they would like to scare teachers. They would like to scare workers who work for the government.

We don't favour that approach. We don't think that it's beneficial. We believe that we are all in this together as Manitobans facing significant fiscal challenges. We will do the work of facing those challenges on behalf of all Manitobans.

### **Restorative Justice Advisory Council Meetings**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** Last week was national Restorative Justice Week. We're now discovering how little this government cares about getting better outcomes in our judicial system through restorative justice.

Could the Minister of Justice tell this House how many times the Restorative Justice Advisory Council has met since she was appointed to her position in May?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Of course, last week was Restorative Justice Week in Manitoba, a good week in Manitoba, and I want to thank the member for the question.

Of course, it does bring up many challenges that we're currently facing within our provincial justice system, challenges that we're working with stakeholders within the community. We're working with front-line services to develop solutions to the various issues, and part of that solution is very much restorative justice and we're moving in that direction.

And I want to thank the member for the question.

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

**Mr. Swan:** I recognize and my colleagues recognize how difficult it seems to be for this minister and for other ministers to answer even the most direct and basic questions.

\* (14:20)

So I will help out the Minister of Justice. The answer is zero. The minister has not called together the Restorative Justice Advisory Council even once in her seven months as minister. I'm told by members of the council they haven't even heard from the minister or her staff.

Maybe this minister should top–stop talking about how she says she's listening to Manitobans and actually start listening to Manitobans who have so much expertise to offer.

When will this minister have this council meet?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, that, coming from a member from a previous government that didn't listen to Manitobans, didn't consult with Manitobans, didn't even listen to members of his own caucus, Madam Speaker—I will take no lessons from members opposite when it comes to the challenges that we're facing within our justice system.

I will listen to front-line workers. I will listen to stakeholders within the community. I will not take lessons from members opposite.

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

**Mr. Swan:** The minister should be aware that the Restorative Justice Advisory Council have nine members. Each of these people are passionate about finding better ways to deal with criminal activities outside of our traditional court system.

Madam Speaker, the council includes mediators and educators, representatives from NKO, Onashowewin, Peguis First Nation, the Manitoba Metis Federation, newcomer communities and Karen Wiebe, who many members will know from her work with the Manitoba Organization for Victim Assistance or TJ's Gift Foundation.

Is the minister just not interested in hearing what these committed and passionate Manitobans have to say, or is this council one of the boards that's going to be sacrificed by this government?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Again, coming from a member opposite that claimed to consult members within the community and really did nothing of the sort, Madam Speaker—back when he had a chance to make some changes within the system, he chose not to; he chose to cut and run from his job. So I will take no lessons from members opposite.

We continue to meet with elders. We continue to meet with the Manitoba Metis Federation. We continue to meet with members across this great province of ours with respect to restorative justice initiatives. We are moving forward in that, and I hope that members opposite will get on board and support the initiatives that will be moving forward for all Manitobans to ensure the safety of all Manitobans.

### **Public-Private Partnership Legislation Transparency for Infrastructure Projects**

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

Madam Speaker, this government has no plan except to cut front-line workers and privatize important public services. But they don't want any kind of oversight of their plans. They don't want to be transparent with the public and they certainly don't want to copy industry best practices.

We know that P3s can benefit the public, and there's—should be nothing wrong with showing that information to the citizens.

Why is this government killing a bill that promotes transparency for infrastructure funding?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** What this government is committed to is not—is leaving no good idea out of consideration, taking not an ideological approach to decision making but taking a results-based approach to decision making, looking at a return on investment platform, looking at value for money in all of our decision making.

Where our opponents would run away from viable options and underutilize them, that won't be this government's approach at all.

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

**Mr. Maloway:** The Premier certainly didn't answer that question.

Madam Speaker, transparency and accountability are key. That's why we consulted with stakeholders like the City of Winnipeg, introduced legislation that protects the public. It follows guidelines recommended by the federal government, the PPP Canada Crown corporation. But that isn't enough for this government.

They ignore the experts, ignore the City of Winnipeg. They ignore their responsibility to the public.

Madam Speaker, when will this government stop its wrong-headed attack on legislation which protects Manitoba's infrastructure budget?

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

We have to acknowledge that there has been disagreement on those benches since last week when this issue first came up. The interim Leader of the

Opposition stood up and said that private-public partnerships are an effective way of making investments. No sooner had she sat down and the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) stood up and said they're back-loaded, high-interest credit card arrangements with—for big investors. *[interjection]*

So I'm not exactly sure what the nature is of the disagreement on that side, but it seems that—

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** —the interim leader takes the more informed opinion, the one that this government will proceed on, which is that we won't leave any good idea off the table simply to say we did. We'll investigate them. We'll make sure it makes sense for Manitobans and for the infrastructure arrangements that this province needs.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Elmwood, on a final supplementary

**Mr. Maloway:** This government is taking away the bill that actually makes these things transparent.

Transparency is what we're seeking. If the government wants to spend public dollars, they should show the public how they're doing it. Accountability is what we're seeking. If the government makes a bad deal, they should be held accountable to the public. The Auditor General is the best person to make these judgments, and that's who the—this particular legislation empowers.

Why is this government bent on pursuing its ideological opposition to transparency and accountability?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** This from a member who put Louise Bridge signs on his—above his NDP stickers on his own signs, Madam Speaker, to cover them up—talking about transparency. Wow. That's pretty funny when you think about it.

Seven other provinces have used—in the last three years, have used 3Ps. None of them has such legislation as the NDP brought in to block the use of 3Ps.

You know, Madam Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada, in an analysis of P3s in a document they produced called *Dispelling the Myths*, said: Efficiency gains in the form of lower costs, quicker completion and higher service levels are due to factors such as performance-based contracts, risk transfer to private sector providers.

This is exactly what we're after. We have been left with a tremendous obligation to service the debts of the previous administration, and we need to look for ways to creatively make sure that we rebuild our infrastructure in partnership with those who would like to help

Madam Speaker, so I encourage the member to, when he talks about transparency, demonstrate it in his own signs during elections.

### **Provincial Nominee Program New Application Fee**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** The Minister of Education said this past Friday that there will be up to an additional \$500 acceptance fees for the applicants of the Provincial Nominee Program. When an applicant of this program has been accepted, they are then considered a taxpayer here in the province of Manitoba.

So when the government said in the Throne Speech that improvements to the program will not cost the Manitoba taxpayers, it would appear as if they didn't consider newcomers.

Madam Speaker, there was a time when it took less than 90 days to process an application, and there was no \$500 application acceptance fee then.

Why is the government taking advantage of new immigrants who may already have a significant debt by taking more money out of their pockets?

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

We're certainly looking to make the Provincial Nominee Program work better and, as the Premier has said, there had been definitely a deterioration in the number of people that arrived with a job lined up. So we're fine-tuning the program so that we think that when people arrive here in Manitoba, which is when they'll be charged a fee, not when they express their first interests, but only after they have been accepted, and that money will be, actually, reinvested in helping other immigrants and refugees here in Manitoba. I don't think the member has a problem with that.

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I'm glad the minister mentions reinvesting the money, because, Madam Speaker, according to the Premier's words this past Friday, the government will not be using the money collected

from this new fee to correct the massive backlog or fix preventable issues within the Provincial Nominee Program.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself stated, and I quote: Revenue from this fee will go towards language training resources as well as assisting refugees and their families.

Madam Speaker, new immigrants are already paying out of their pockets for language training and for proficiency tests.

Can the minister explain specifically how this additional \$500 charge is going to be utilized?

\* (14:30)

**Mr. Wishart:** I can, certainly, answer most of that question for the member.

We are certainly reinvesting it in language training—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Wishart:** —answering most of the question for the member.

The waiting list that she has been so concerned about we will have eliminated by April and we will be starting with zero—first time we've seen that in a number of years, especially with the previous administration.

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

#### **Request for Provincial Audit**

**Ms. Lamoureux:** This government has decided to charge new immigrants more money rather than fix the mismanagement of the Provincial Nominee Program.

I am sure that the minister must recognize that the problems in the program run much deeper than just wait times. We need to evaluate and determine what went wrong and fix the program so that it is fair and that people applying can have confidence that their application will be respected and processed in a timely fashion.

Madam Speaker, I ask sincerely: Will the minister please join me and invite the provincial auditor to review the program?

**Mr. Wishart:** We have certainly been concerned about the efficiency and the workings of the program since we became government.

And, having reviewed the numbers, we have been able to put together, we think, a very good plan forward that'll reduce the wait times and make sure that people that come have jobs right away and that they're focused on those jobs and that the industry is in the right position to take advantage of them.

We certainly don't want to—don't need to apologize for the inefficiency and the delays that were in the previous program under the other government.

#### **East Side Road Authority Repeal of Legislation**

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** A week ago today we heard a great Speech from the Throne. We heard that our government is setting a new course for Manitoba.

We know that after a NDP decade of debt, we are focused on fixing our finances. After an NDP decade of decay, we are focused on repairing our services. And after the NDP decade of decline, we are focused on building our economy.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure tell this House more about our government's plan to fix the finances by eliminating NDP waste and duplication?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure):** I want to thank the member for Brandon East for the best question of the day.

Bill 6 repeals the East Side Road Authority, and this was identified in the Auditor General's report as a huge waste and mismanagement of funds within that organization.

Our government will continue to fix our finances, repair our services, rebuild our economy, and repealing East Side Road Authority is just a first step in making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada.

#### **Environmental Protection Areas Government Intention**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Can the minister please inform the House if her government is still committed to protecting 17 per cent of Manitoba as a protected area?

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

the hall for the question again; it's a very important—the Chamber, sorry—it's a very important question.

As I said last week, I don't know if the member was listening or not, but I've been right across the province, north to south, listening to Manitobans, stakeholders, you know, people who are working in the park industry, people who are, you know, concerned, people in community pastures, people who really care about this—about conservation and about the environment.

And, you know, I'd like to say, again, about their record, you know, in 17 years, they only saved 3 per cent—or had a 3 per cent increase in preserved areas. So we're not going to take any advice from the member opposite. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Madam Speaker, where to begin.

To start with, the 3 per cent number. I had hoped the minister—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order please.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** —would have brought some clarification to her erroneous portrayal last week. The 3 per cent increase was 3 per cent of Manitoba's total land mass, was added to the Protected Areas Initiative. Millions of hectares were added as protected areas and the 17 per cent goal is not an accident. It's the United Nations' goal based on the global scientific consensus which our government endorsed.

Is this government, is this minister, going to be adding more protected areas to Manitoba's future generational legacy?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you to the member opposite. I'm glad to see he had his calculator out again and his little pen and pencil, and doing some calculations as he did last week on proposed climate change income and revenue.

As I said, we're concerned about this province. We're concerned about conservation, parks and we will get it done, Madam Speaker. You know, we're more interested in preserving the environment than media attention, as the member opposite has been involved in.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, I'll try one more time, Madam Speaker, to perhaps put this into a colour shading that the minister's partisan answers can understand.

A gentleman by the name of Stephen Harper actually endorsed the 17 per cent protected areas objective that came from the United Nations. Our government endorsed that as well.

Is she telling the House and Manitobans that her government is more conservative than Stephen Harper's was when it came to protecting wilderness areas in this province?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you so much to the member opposite. I'm glad to see that he's actually quoting Stephen Harper and the Conservatives as a good reference in the House here today.

And, you know, I would just like to also give clarification, you know, to the member opposite and his private member's statement where he says that after seven months we've done nothing as a government.

You know, I am very proud of what we've done. We've implemented a two-year moratorium on park fees, which actually would have seen an increase of 750 per cent under the former government—shameful, Madam Minister.

We've actually given fishermen marketing freedom. They finally, after 17 years, they finally have the ability to sell their fish and market them in a manner that will give them the most money. They work hard and they deserve it.

So thank you so much for that question to the member opposite.

### **CPP Expansion Drop Out Provision**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** We learned there are worrying and discriminatory provisions in the recent agreement to expand CPP, penalizing women and persons with disabilities. There is no so-called drop-out provision in the new CPP expansion. This means women who take time off to work to care for their children will have lower pensions. This means that people with disabilities will also have lower pensions.

Will the government call on the federal government—will this government call on the federal

government to add a drop-out provision in the expansion of the CPP?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I thank the member for the question, and it gives me an opportunity to talk about the many areas that Manitoba has actually been engaged in exactly this subject: talking to our federal partners, talking to other provinces about this opportunity that we have in this country right now to make CPP expansion not just a bigger process, but a better one.

This is exactly why Manitoba brought a series of recommendations that we put forward to all our partners, recommendations that will be considered at the next Finance ministers meeting, and I cannot wait until the next question to be able to continue my answer and talk about more of those changes that Manitoba is sponsoring.

\* (14:40)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. John's, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Fontaine:** This is not a new provision that we are asking for. It is already part of the existing Canadian Pension Plan. It was enacted because it is unfair for women, who still do the vast majority of child rearing, and unfair for persons with disabilities who cannot participate to the same level or degree as others within the workforce. Women and persons with disabilities should not have their pensions penalized.

Will this government commit to supporting a drop-out provision in the expanded CPP?

**Mr. Friesen:** This government has brought to the table numerous recommendations to the feds that would produce changes that will make it better, some of the changes, exactly as the member cited herself. We can't wait to have that conversation at the federal level.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Madam Speaker, it's important and critical that Manitobans have access to good pension options. Our government introduced a simplified approach: the money purchase plan. Our plan actually requires employees to pair—to pay their fair share so that the 'burden' of retirement does not fall solely on the backs of front-line workers. We have a made-in-Manitoba solution.

Will the government recognize that it cannot solve the problems—solve problems by offloading them onto Manitoba front-line workers?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I'm genuinely pleased to hear the new position of the NDP as articulated by the member in her three preambles, because the previous position was, of course, that we should get on board with the proposals the federal government was advancing. That was the position stated this spring. In fact, members opposite were harshly critical of our attempts to make changes to the CPP which would enhance the benefits, the protections for vulnerable people. They were harshly opposed to us protecting disabled people, harshly opposed to us protecting vulnerable people, harshly opposed to us protecting widows.

In fact, Madam Speaker, we have advanced Manitoba modifications with a made-in-Manitoba strategy, and we have the unanimous support of nine other premiers. We're proud of that, and we ask for them to get onside. They were opposed before, but they can help now, and I ask for their help.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

**Madam Speaker:** Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley who has two minutes remaining.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** When I left off in the majority of my presentation, I was outlining the basic features of an austerity agenda and what that does to local people in the jurisdiction that's unfortunate enough to be there when the government of the day brings in that austerity agenda. Austerity happens economically, socially, environmentally and politically.

The three areas I had commented on so far, in terms of what my constituents can expect from this government's agenda of austerity, is increased unemployment and decreased wages and money coming into their homes. That will take place

whether they work directly for government, whether they work in the non-profit sector or in the economy more broadly, as the government withdraws from its involvement in stimulating productive growth and employment. There will also be a decrease in services as this government makes massive amounts of cuts to services that citizens deserve to have and did have under our administration.

And thirdly, the costs for individual households and people will undoubtedly go up as new service fees are brought in, and there are examples in all three of these areas of initiatives this government has already launched which fit the austerity agenda.

Ultimately, though, one of the core goals of an austerity agenda is to provide more power and money to the elites, and you can see that no more blatantly than in the blind submission to so-called international trade agreements and the investor-state resolution dispute mechanisms that all of these contain.

Indeed, to summarize their impact based on the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the damage so far has been significant. In addition to paying hundreds of millions of dollars to investors, Canada has been pressured—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Good afternoon, Madam Speaker and members of the House. It is once again an honour to stand before you today to speak to the Throne Speech for the Second Session of the 41st Legislature.

The 'strone'—the Throne Speech read on November 21st is one that serves all Manitobans. It is a great feeling to know that Manitoba is back on course after a decade of debt, decay and decline. Our priority is focusing on fixing the finances, repairing our services and rebuilding our economy. We have set out to promote economic opportunities, improve our front-line services and put Manitoba back on responsible fiscal track.

It is also important to know that we are seeing a shift of how we work with Manitobans. As anyone here today will know, our new government has been holding public consultations and asking openly for Manitobans' input in the—in following government areas, including: the Canada Pension Plan; The Workers Compensation Act; most recently, the health-care system; Budget 2017; labour and skills

trading; Manitoba parks. These are just a few of an extensive list of consultations involving Manitobans. We know that Manitobans are our most valuable and first-hand knowledgeable stakeholders in fixing today's challenges, and, collectively, we will find the right solutions.

Madam Speaker, this is one of the most comprehensive plans Manitoba has ever seen. Today I take this opportunity to speak in support of the Throne Speech for many reasons, one being, and which is important to me and part of why I became an MLA, is making sure that the most vulnerable children in our province are provided better protection and services.

As a specialized foster parent and having many years with a strong career background in working with children, youth and adults in vulnerable situations, I have seen first-hand the impact of our most vulnerable when the system fails them.

For over a decade, like Mr. Freeze's victims, there was a standstill in proactive initiatives that have been proven to be effective and positive. This page turns with the Throne Speech and our government.

Under the NDP we have seen more kids apprehended by Child and Family Services than in any other province. On a positive, we are seeing the positive impact that high-fidelity wraparound and customary care modelling are having on the child-welfare system.

Our Progressive Conservative government plans to not only acknowledge, but also act on the programs that are seeing Manitoba children in healthier, more positive and forward-looking situations. Our government is currently exploring all options, and we continue to work with our stakeholders and members of the community to find solutions to these challenges.

Madam Speaker, one change that will have wide-reaching impact is the Progressive Conservative government's exploration and current implementation of the protecting children act. By improving the information sharing between service providers, we are enabling earlier interventions, proactive prevention and quicker responses for children finding themselves in vulnerable situations. Service providers such as those with Child and Family Services, schools and law enforcement will be able to work together to filter down children's needs. It will open and welcome stronger

communications and create the ability to have an appropriate care plan. We will protect and improve lives, and we will give children a better chance to succeed without them getting caught up like Spiderman's villains in a web of barriers.

We will also help parents and caregivers of some of these children, should they find themselves in government housing programs, by making long overdue repairs to rental units and working with stakeholders, tenants and the public to develop a new made-in-Manitoba housing strategy. This strategy will help parents, caregivers and children. It will address the backlog of repairs and also start to address homelessness.

Madam Speaker, there's no shortage of positive initiatives and changes that will benefit all Manitobans, from education, to conservation, to indigenous relations, to health. However, we do recognize there's lots of work to do. Our government is ready.

\* (14:50)

Leading up to the Throne Speech, there has been a great deal of work done by the staff here in the Legislature, the government departments, our stakeholders and all Manitobans. Their hard work needs to be recognized and a thank you given.

Madam Speaker, the Throne Speech and our government also recognize that the children we help today will grow up to see other positive changes as our government is making for their tomorrow. As they go through school and enter the workforce, our decisions today will benefit their tomorrow.

Some examples of the benefits are our government's decision to improve the Manitoba Bursary Program that will see bursary funding targeted to lower income and indigenous students. And, when these children get to the workforce, they will benefit from our many decisions without quite remembering all of them. However, they will be able to look back to 2016 and see where the page turns.

If a child decides to become an educator, like the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), today we are making investments so when that happens they will teach on the fundamentals of quality education and have better professional development support. They will see curriculums that aim for measurable targets so we know what is improving and where more improvements might be needed.

If a child decides to work in the justice field, like Batman, our government has made a commitment to better improve our justice system so people working in need of these services are not bogged down with a time—with the time-consuming backlog of cases. They will work in a system that sees that it is—that sees that access is timely and effective and efficient.

If a child decides to become a paramedic, which I couldn't find a superhero to compare to, today we see our government working towards self-regulation of paramedics, which tomorrow's children will benefit from a well-regulated service that results in a strong and effective health-care system.

As today our government has committed to spur economic growth for future generations to strive in, like Boba Fett hunting a bounty, our government will seek out a way of reducing burdensome regulations, unnecessary red-slash-orange tape that drag economic growth, costing our economy billions of dollars each year in lost time.

The children who wake up with the great idea of entrepreneurship in this province will no longer feel the freeze of carbonite as Han Solo did, when they want to become their own bosses. They will be able to create a team working towards common goals without orange-tape anxiety.

Red tape stifles growth and kills jobs. Our government believes in removing these stumbling blocks. Our government will also capitalize on Manitoba's strengths, including aerospace, which my son is interested in going into, agriculture and industries attracted by our clean hydroelectric energy—[interjection]—as I'm supposed to mention that it's located in sunny St. James here—created and supporting our children in the many and rewarding future career choices.

Madam Speaker, I know there's a lot to be said only to speak of one area and only briefly on many almost does a disservice to the many others that are seeing great things happen.

I wanted to take this opportunity to mention November 18th. On this day we gathered a group of people with diverse professional and personal backgrounds. We sat at a table, enjoyed some local coffee and got the opportunity to listen to their ideas and what they would like to see improved, as well as how they would do it.

Within an hour, Madam Speaker, we covered eight subject areas. We had a detailed discussion on different situations and solutions/ideas to some.

One challenge that is faced and was brought up by a resident of Ste. Anne, Manitoba, is that although her small town has an exceptional hospital and service, the problem tends to be the doctor's schedule that sees him travelling all over the area to meet the area's needs.

That brings me to proudly tell you what that part of the Throne Speech tells you of our government's plan to create a provincial agency for doctor recruitment and retention. By working together and having a collaborative approach, we believe this is something that will consider the needs of all Manitoba in both urban, rural and northern and remote communities.

Madam Speaker, this is just one of the reasons our government strongly encourages public participation. The value of information from the people who see what needs to be changed goes a long way in the decisions elected officials make.

This Throne Speech reflects what people have been telling their elected officials for years and comes from consultations, teamwork and collaboration.

The last thing I want to speak on in regards to the Throne Speech is an area that I deal with constantly throughout my riding, and that's municipal relations and includes the many people and levels of individual municipalities.

When our government first took office, we followed through with our commitment to provide municipalities with a new streamlined process for accessing cost-shared infrastructure dollars. This was warmly welcomed by many professionals who had concerns.

With so many different areas of the provincial infrastructure funding, this was one way we set forth to reduce red tape and make the delivery process more efficient.

Our government has undertaken the most robust municipal infrastructure consultation in decades, and we will continue to build respectful and collaborative relationships across Manitoba. By doing this we will be able to better respond to the needs of our province by funding support to local priorities and delivery of economic benefits, all the while ensuring that government funding delivers value for money and return on investment.

Madam Speaker, I am very confident that the direction our government is taking to fix our

finances, repair our services and rebuild our economy is a responsible and accountable one.

Every day we are making progress and thinking about the future, a future that our children will raise their own families in.

I'm also confident Manitobans are at peace that their government is now moving in a positive direction in taking into consideration their tax dollars and their input.

I want to thank you—I want to thank again all staff and members of the House and you, Madam Speaker, for the time to speak in support of the November 21st Throne Speech.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Madam Speaker, I would like to put a few words regarding the speech—the Throne Speech.

First of all, I will start from the point of immigration, and today I felt—being an immigrant I felt really insulted and it was insulted by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) by saying, when immigrants come over here they are most likely to have welfare. That is not true. When—provincial—under the Provincial Nominee Program, when immigrants come over here they bring \$10,000 with them per person, and after that \$2,000 every person. And so they are not—they don't come for welfare.

And, also, I think it's really insulting saying that when immigrants come over here they collect welfare. That's not true. They have their families over here; they borrow money if they have to.

On the other hand, they will take any job. They will take any job. It does not matter what kind of job they happen to have. So every immigrant that go through our doors are kind of struggle, and at the end they succeed. They take whatever job is available, and then they will learn and improve their other skills on whatever gap there. Then they get the job, a proper job.

So I think—I hope the Premier (Mr. Pallister) gets correct information and apologizes to the immigrant community.

Further, I think the way immigration certain they are—think they are improving, according to even the Throne Speech or their intention in the Throne Speech, I don't think they will be doing a good job. What they are doing, they are simply match skill in

the other countries and all over with the employer. So the immigrant will become part of the employer.

\* (15:00)

I suggested that when immigrants come over here immediately send them particulars for their engineers. Send that person to that engineering branch. Let them see the culture of that trade or that profession. Once they have their culture and then they will find their own way. So, in the beginning, help them a little bit. And they don't need that kind of manipulation or that kind of taking advantage of.

So I hope this government try to understand how the immigration system works as don't put your hand in their pocket, because when those people come over here, they are ready to do whatever needs to be done.

The government's Throne Speech laid the groundwork for cuts to front-line workers and opens the door to privatization of front-line services.

In their first year, the government has already broken their election commitment to protect front-line workers. Every single member of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) Cabinet gave themselves a raise and are now going to make nurses, teachers, community safety officers and child-care workers and linemen suffer.

Instead of building strong public services, the government is undermining them. They plan to gut a law that requires transparency and accountability for all private-public partnerships. Rather than having to justify their actions to the public, they want to benefit their well-connected insider friends. Why are they afraid of having the Auditor General monitor what they are planning on doing?

The government is more interested in manufacturing partisan crises and fighting the last election than finding real solutions for Manitobans. And they are attempting to use these fake, manufactured 'crises' to justify a program of cuts and eventual privatization.

The government's Throne Speech is the wrong direction for Manitoba. It cuts where it should build, it privatizes instead of keeping services public and it will divide Manitobans rather than offering an inclusive vision for the province. New Democrats oppose this austerity agenda and that is why we oppose this Throne Speech.

Madam Speaker, fixing the finances is code for politicizing the budget process. The government

should stop picking ideological fights and actually work for all Manitobans. They are attempting to manufacture a political crisis in the budget in order to offer a fake justification for their program of cuts and eventual privatization.

Madam Speaker, first, it trumpeted fake savings of over \$100 million in their last budget. That's what transparent budgeting looks like for the Premier. But they could not produce a number because they made it up. Instead, they found so-called savings by jacking up taxes on seniors, breaking an election commitment to do so and making \$9 million in cuts to schools and universities.

Madam Speaker, seniors are still hurting, and our government was to give them a rebate of up to \$2,300, and that's the maximum. But now this government is only giving them the rebate for \$470 and, also, there's a clawback.

So, about—seniors losing about—almost about \$1,800. So, this is not the way to treat your seniors who worked all their life and who built Manitoba, who built the economy. And, also, I think it's also important for the citizens. If citizens say in old days they are safe, so they will stay over here. Otherwise, they will leave to the other provinces. So it was very important to give the rebate, school tax rebate, to the seniors. But this government first attacked the seniors.

Second, they inflated the actual budgeted number by over \$150 million. The government claimed to have a historic deficit of over \$1 billion. But, when the Auditor General actually looked at the books, it turns out the government inflated their deficit figure by more than 15 per cent, and they never could explain why they misled Manitobans, nor did they apologize.

This government had manufactured a political crisis surrounding the deficit in order to justify what they had already planned to do: cut front-line services and open the door to privatization, breaking an election pledge in the process.

Their Throne Speech breaks an election commitment and launches an attack on front-line services and the people that provide these important services. The government wants to offload their financial problems onto the backs of the front-line workers. Cutting jobs and slashing wages is not protecting front-line workers. It shows the Premier's pledge was not worth the paper it was written on. It was written with disappearing ink. Cutting jobs and

slashing wages is not a plan for hope. It takes money from the wallets of working people for the Premier's own mistaken priorities.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet took a raise to their salaries of hundreds of thousands of dollars this year alone. The Premier will pocket more than \$30,000 extra this year alone. Each Cabinet minister received approximately \$24,000 more this year. This totals nearly \$330,000 for the entire Cabinet. But this government refused to raise the minimum wage for working Manitobans, and now they are going to force nurses, teachers and child-care workers to take a legislated pay cut as well.

When the Premier mentioned about the immigrants to go on welfare, maybe he has the intention to send them on welfare, because the immigrants who start from the—on the minimum wages, if minimum wages are better, in that case, they don't have to get other services.

Cuts to jobs and to wages of front-line workers were not part of the Premier's election pledge. He's already broken that commitment, but they are his real agenda.

Nothing in this Throne Speech preserves Manitoba's affordability advantage. It doesn't even mention it. MPI rates, home heating and electricity rates and tuition fees are all set to rise under this government. This Premier does not believe it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that life in Manitoba remains affordable for families. They have refused to preserve our affordability advantage and instead are shifting the burden to those who can least afford it.

Deception and distraction are how this government conducts labour negotiations when it is not launching unnecessary partisan fights with labour, like it did with Bill 7.

We already know that this government does not respect the collective bargaining process. Collective bargaining is a fundamental right held by Canadians and has been affirmed as such by the Supreme Court of Canada.

\*(15:10)

This government interfered with labour negotiations at the University of Manitoba, ordering the University of Manitoba to not offer a salary increase after negotiations had already started, which caused a strike that impacted nearly 30,000 students

for three weeks, but it won't admit that its reckless actions hurt students.

Now the government proposes to bring in legislation to cut wages and jobs for front-line workers, legislation which may very well be unconstitutional. Have they actually tried to talk to any labour leader regarding this proposed legislation?

Kevin Rebeck, MFL, says, the Premier said that he respects collective bargaining and the thousands of Manitoba workers who deliver the vital services families count on, but that's clearly not the case. In this Throne Speech, the Premier seemed to set on undermining collective bargaining and restricting the ability for our hospitals, clinics and Crown corporations to deliver services.

Michelle Gawronsky, MGEU, a quote: We were looking for a clear sign that this government was going to follow through on its commitment to protect and invest in the public services Manitobans count on. Instead, the Premier is now proposing to not only strip working Manitobans of their bargaining rights, but also threatening the very services that he clearly and publicly promised to protect. End of quote.

Kelly Moist, CUPE Manitoba, quotation: Premier plans to table legislation to control the costs of public services, but appears to be backtracking on his commitment to respect the collective bargaining. The government speaks of the consultations it had undertaken, but appears to listen only to a small, privileged minority. End of the quote.

*Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

If we talk about infrastructure, the agenda for infrastructure for this government is one of cuts. They do not want to boost the economy through infrastructure spending.

Our government invested a record \$628 million in the 2015-16 year in roads and bridges. Just last week, the Province admitted it is cutting that investment by 20 per cent next year. But, rather than admitting it's cutting investments, the government today portrayed this cut as a strong commitment to infrastructure. It is nothing of the sort.

Instead of actually investing in roads, bridges and other essential infrastructure investments, the government is planning to open the door to privatization of public services. Its only real plans for infrastructure are to scrap The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act.

According to this government, when you have transparency and accountability, this discourages investment.

We believe differently on this side of the House. We know that when you don't have transparency and accountability, this opens the door to the privatization of public services, which only benefits well-connected insiders.

The Throne Speech claimed that infrastructure spending will use a return-on-investment test for roads and bridges. We know what return on investment means to Tories. It means making no new investment in the North of this province and leaving rural Manitoba to fend for itself. That's why this government made no specific commitment to build an inch of road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, nor did they provide a timeline for the construction of the Lake St. Martin-Lake Manitoba outlet.

This Throne Speech offered no new investments in downtown Winnipeg. The government has already killed a role-killed a rail-relocation study that was supported by business, by the City of Winnipeg, by the federal government.

The government ordered Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to kill their headquarters relocation project which would have saved the corporation millions and contributed to the revitalization of downtown.

Now, the government has interfered in MBL again and is trying to undermine their investment in the True North Square for partisan political purposes, and they are using deceit to cover their tracks.

The Throne Speech offered no new infrastructure investments for Brandon: nothing for Brandon water treatment plant; nothing for the Keystone Centre; no regional economic development plan; nothing for the North Hill ACC campus; no new school in Brandon's south end; no new student housing for Brandon University; no new seniors' housing.

And, also, I think they are not keeping the commitment which was made previously to build a school in The Maples constituency. It is the same story for communities across the province: Selkirk, Gimli, Swan River, Dauphin, Lorette, Stonewall, Ste. Anne, Steinbach, Teulon, La Broquerie, Arborg, Thompson, Flin Flon and so many more.

Perhaps, most importantly, there was not one mention of Churchill, the Port of Churchill or the Bay Line in the Throne Speech. This government

has no plan nearly six months after the port was shuttered and grain stopped shipping to get it open again.

When we will the—when will the government actually offer a plan to save the Port of Churchill?

Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member—the honourable Minister for Infrastructure.

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure):** In responding to the Throne Speech, I thought it would be best if I brought a positive message into this House given some of the things that happened last week. We certainly need to raise the bar in our discussions within this Chamber, and I will do my best to adhere to that. And, although it may be tempting to take a few swipes at the former government, I'm not going to do that today because I believe we should be above that.

And Manitobans are really asking for this government to move forward in a positive message and that's what the Throne Speech was all about, and as we continue to do this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I first want to just speak to my constituents in Midland constituency.

It's—it certainly is an honour to represent them in south central Manitoba, across south central Manitoba, and I was reflecting this weekend as I was driving in my constituency that having been given the honour of representing the Crown in Cabinet, I certainly don't have as much time right now to spend in my constituency as I would like to. I was actually speaking to one of my constituents on the weekend, on Saturday morning, and having a great visit with him. And I reflected on that, that I just don't have the time to spend in Midland constituency that I would like to, and he just turned to me and said don't worry; we understand; you're busy.

And we are busy taking care of the business in this province and bringing Manitoba forward as we really believe it needs to, and there is no shortage of things we want to do. So I'll just—one last shout out for the great constituents of Midland constituency for their ongoing support.

\* (15:20)

That also goes to family—not much time to see family these days. I did get to see a couple of my grandchildren on the weekend and thoroughly teased them and got them all excited and then left. So it

worked out well for all of us; so we have a good time with them too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that was mentioned in the Throne Speech, and again today, as I introduced a bill—Bill 6 was to repeal the east side road authority act and this is a true demonstration of legislation. We campaigned on this to—with a—repeal this act. We knew there was problems on the east side road—within the East Side Road Authority, and certainly the Auditor General's very extensive report on the workings or the misworkings within that agency certainly brought to light by the Auditor General's report.

And so with this Bill 6 we will move forward. We are already, as a department, moving forward to wind down the operations of the East Side Road Authority. It was very obvious when the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke), the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) and myself sat down with those chief and councils from the east side and, as we heard their story, just asked them to speak freely and they did speak freely to us. And it was of the broken trust and the lack of respect coming out of the East Side Road Authority and, by extension, from the NDP—former NDP government. So it was—we had very good meetings with them. We've continued to meet with them.

My department is continuing to meet with the east side communities. They're still very positive and it just—it's about rebuilding the trust and rebuilding the respect with those communities and making sure that we're in constant communication with them, and we are. And the—we will continue to build roads on the east side. We're very adamant that the federal government honour their election commitment in that the Prime Minister in the federal election, a year ago last October, one of his campaign promises was to put funds into building roads and infrastructure on the east side. And so we are continuing to work with the federal government on this. We want them to—it means—it's about action, it's not about words, and so we're looking for this action from the federal government to become involved with us and help build infrastructure on the east side of Manitoba and, of course, all across Manitoba.

I also had the honour, a couple of weeks ago now, to release our capital plan for infrastructure in—not only for this year, \$502 million for this year and an additional \$500 million for the following four years—very well received by the Manitoba

Heavy Construction Association. They're looking for stability in the five-year plan that they know that the can hire people, they know they can buy machinery and know that there will be work out there for the next number of years and not simply moving it around to higher spending in election years followed by a drop-off in spending.

You can't build a business on that kind of instability, and what we're all about is stability and return on investment so that we make sure that we—our investments that we do invest in roads and bridges and drainage projects across the province do bring a return on investment for that investment. And to that end we know that the maintenance budget has really suffered in this department in the last number of years, so we're working to address that over the coming years.

We continue with the AMM meetings last week, meeting with quite a number of municipalities and again I met with another municipality again this morning. And every municipality, it doesn't matter what part of the province you're from, they have road and drainage issues that they would certainly like to see addressed. But this is about being an open and transparent with them. We know that you can't fix every road in every corner of the province right away, but we are going to work on a sustainable plan so that municipalities have that assurance that they are being heard and that they can count on infrastructure investments where it really will help return investment in—within their communities.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're certainly encouraged by the work that continues to go on on the Shoal Lake road. Our commitment is to build that road. We will build the Shoal Lake road. It's—the engineering is continuing. Surveyors have been on the ground in there. We have a very good working relationship with Chief Redsky from Shoal Lake 40, and this is not about negotiating in the media. It's not about taking your selfie stick out there and doing photo ops. This is about doing the real preparatory work so that we can build a road in—for this community which has been over 100 years in the making, but this government will make it happen. So we really look forward to seeing that happen down the road, and we invite all members of this House to be involved in that when—as construction begins to take place in the foreseeable future here.

Another project, a huge project within our department, is building this Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin channel. There is an emergency channel in

there right now that's—is not the most functional way, and then we're still missing this second outlet out of Lake Manitoba. Given the significant precipitation that's been across the western side and northern side of Manitoba, this is raising real concerns about going forward through this winter and into next spring.

You know, it doesn't matter which political stripe you are, nobody wants to see a repeat of the 2011 floods or 2014, and just the damage that happened to communities. And some of those communities have really never rebuilt from there and so we're being very proactive on this, trying to ensure what we can in the immediate term in terms of preparation. But also we want to—this is a purpose of building this permanent channel with control structures on it both out of Lake Manitoba and out of Lake St. Martin, and making sure that it provides stability not only for the communities around Lake St. Martin and around Lake St. Man—or Lake Manitoba, but it provides stability for all Manitobans.

And—but this is just a start. You can build a channel there to control those lake levels, but that doesn't address the entire flood question, and that's where this government's been very proactive. We've spoken, had ongoing discussions with Saskatchewan about controlling water. They've had a very aggressive drainage program in Saskatchewan and we are—we continue to speak with Saskatchewan on this.

We're doing some preliminary studies to find out where the water is, the level—ground levels, et cetera, as to find out drainage patterns. And this is how you—this is not very glamorous work when you do preparatory work like this. This is not about photo ops. This is about making sure that we get it right so that when there are investments in here it does have a meaningful result from there and that's all about return on investment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we—there's a lot of good things within this Throne Speech. Reducing red tape is part of our government's plan to grow the provincial economy. No matter who you talk to, whether it's in business or whether it's in community groups, no matter who, everyone is frustrated at the amount of red tape that there is in this province when it comes to—whether you're doing business, trying to set up a business.

\*(15:30)

Just today at noon, when we met with Keystone Agricultural Producers, I was talking to a producer who was building a shed on his own operation and he was very frustrated at the level of red tape that was involved in just building a shed because he—and it wasn't that—it's partly because there's too many rules, but the biggest problem is you never know what all the rules are. You do something and then you think you satisfy those red tape regulations, and then the next thing something else comes up. So, that what business and community groups are looking for is certainly a reduction in the red tape that happens whenever you try to do anything in this province, but also trying to streamline it so that everyone is aware what the rules are, there's clarity from within what building codes or disincentives there are. People want to know what they're up against.

Certainly, the health-care review and lowering ambulance fees are a huge priority for this government. We need to do this health-care review. I noticed with some bemusement, I guess I would call it, where the former government is taking KPMG to task for doing a health-care review, only to see that they did the same thing a number of years ago. But, however, they didn't follow through; they spent the money and didn't see the results. This government is all about results. We will get results and that's what this Throne Speech is all about.

We're—there are so many places within government that need to be reviewed. We're doing a total operations review, and this is something that should be welcomed by all members of this Assembly, and it certainly is being welcomed by all—by Manitobans. It's long overdue. We're not sustainable at our tax rates. The sales tax, PST, not only increase but broadening that PST from former government was—is really a detriment to the economy of Manitobans. It takes money out of their pockets and it's in the government hands, and that's not how you grow an economy.

So this government will do our level best to turn this economy around and turn Manitoba's economy around. We're certainly interested in finding efficiencies. This is something that is long overdue within this province, and when I talk—when I speak with Manitobans, that they're certainly excited about this. No matter whether it's a health-care review, a fiscal review, a red tape review, you name it, there's people that are interested. Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has done his budget consultation, just a record number of people engaging in that process, and certainly a wide

variance of opinions of how the budget should roll out. But that's what you need to do; you need to look at every possible option there and make sure that we continue to operate, you know, in the best interests of all Manitoba.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech was a very positive document. It was—I've seen throne speeches in the past that were full of empty promises and went on to no end to—of the promises way, but it's not about promises, it's about results, and Manitobans expect results. They want to see results. They—everyone cares deeply about our province and wants to see the best outcome for us, and that's what this government is about.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and—you know, and I said I'd be positive, but it's—you know, I have to just digress just a wee bit. And after, you know, the decade of debt, decay and decline, it is certainly refreshing now to speak with Manitobans who understand that that decade is gone by and that there will be changes coming forward. This government is—has been given a mandate by the voting Manitobans for—to fix the finances. This government will repair the services. This government will rebuild our economy, and what our goal is is to make Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada. And this Throne Speech sets out the goal how we will get there, and I urge the opposition to get onside so that we can, together, rebuild Manitoba's economy, because it's certainly worth it, and we all love and want to see this province improve.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This—I'd just encourage all members to support this Throne Speech. Thank you.

**Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface):** I do rise to address the Throne Speech that was recently laid in front of us. It is the first real statement of the new government's intentions for the future of Manitoba. The first Throne Speech is completely understandable that it was brought in quickly right after the government was elected, and this Throne Speech indicates where they're going in the future.

They start by laying out that they want to deal with the fiscal realities of Manitoba. And the one thing I've noticed in all the speeches that I've heard so far is that the one item is what is the cost of servicing the money that was borrowed to invest in essential infrastructure inside of Manitoba: money that goes for schools; hospitals; personal-care homes; of course, roads, sewer and water and other

government facilities. What is the cost of servicing the debt? And that has been relatively flat or even slightly declining over the last seven years. It's about 5 and a half cents on the dollar. When we came into office it was 13.2 cents on the dollar. So it's about 68 per cent lower than it was when we came into office, and yet the members of the government want to say that it is a crisis. Well, it is probably the most affordable debt-servicing costs we've seen in many decades, and that is very important to making decisions about how you go forward in the future.

The other point that they often make about the fiscal reality of Manitoba is that if the interest rate goes up, they will be suddenly exposed to a very dramatic increase in costs. Well, most of the borrowing that is done, over 90-plus per cent of it, is done on the basis of how much money do you have to set aside for that particular asset? If it's a road, it could be up to 40 years. If it's Hydro, it could even be longer. If it's a computer, it's three years. So the reality is is that most of the money is locked in for a very significant of—period of time on major infrastructure projects, and it won't vary in the short term if the interest rates change.

The floating amount of money that is borrowed can be locked in more quickly. If there's a concern that interest rates are going to rise rapidly, then the government, through the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and Cabinet, can decide to lock in that floating amount of money at a long-term rate, which is very reasonable. When we asked in the spring session what the borrowing costs were for long-term debt in Manitoba, they were somewhere between 2.8 and 3.2 per cent, extremely reasonable from a historic point of view. So this notion that somehow we are going over a cliff on debt is quite inaccurately portrayed without those essential facts being put on the record.

The size of the 'defit'—deficit, you never hear that the size of the deficit is about 1 per cent or less in the province of Manitoba. That is a very important notion to understand, that your deficit has to reflect its size in relation to the total size of the economy, which reflects your ability to pay through revenues received. And any deficit is of concern to some people, but there are certain times in the economic cycle when it makes sense to have a certain amount of deficit in order to maintain economic growth inside the province. It, of course, needs to be managed. It, of course, needs to be put towards those things that will make a difference in Manitobans' lives, whether they be infrastructure projects which

increase our economic capacity to grow the economy, or whether it be investments in things like education which prepares young people for the ability to contribute to the economy and make a living for themselves and, of course, fulfill their responsibilities as citizens, not just taxpayers but as the citizens more broadly.

So those kinds of investments are good investments as well, which is why we very much support a skills agenda in Manitoba which will allow more young people and people of all ages to get equipped with the skills they need to fill the jobs that are available in the labour market where, in Manitoba, we have a high participation in the labour market and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, although it has been rising since the government has changed and we have seen the loss of 12,000 full-time jobs in the province of Manitoba. That's about 60 jobs a day, assistant Speaker, that I want to put on the table. Losing 60 full-time jobs a day is a very serious concern for anybody who's in government.

The other thing that we talked about when we talk about the budget was the so-called deficit being \$1 billion. It turned out to be \$150 million less than that through mistakes that were made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the government and perhaps his communicators wanting to—and the transition team wanting to pump up a number that would easily stick in people's minds. But the reality was it was considerably less than that and—15 per cent less than that—and that's an error that's never been apologized for or put on the record as having been a mistake, a mistake which has misled Manitobans.

\* (15:40)

Now, the other thing I wanted to talk about was the Canada Pension Plan when it comes to fiscal realities. We want to ensure that when people retire, they have the means to support themselves and to live in dignity. And, early on, the current government shied away from supporting improvements to the CPP. Later on they decided to support it. They said they wanted to make improvements in it. The CPP is a defined benefit plan. It's available to Canadians no matter where they live and work in the country. It increases the ability for people to be mobile and go where the jobs are. And, in our case in Manitoba, we have the jobs, so it allows us to attract people, and at the same time they can still build their ability to have a pension.

But there are some shortfalls within it, and none of the improvements that this government has proposed addressed those shortcomings in the second tier of the CPP. What are those shortcomings? There is no dropout provision which allows people that are out of the workforce because of a disability issue or out of the workforce because of parenting responsibilities to buy back their time and then—thereby be able to put in place a pension that will support them when they retire. Parenting should not be something that penalizes your ability to have a decent pension. Disability should not be something that penalizes your ability to have a decent pension. It should be an—the Canadian Pension Plan should be there for all people that wish to participate in the labour market.

The indexing that has been done under the current fiscal reality, the indexing of all the tax brackets and the lifting of the personal exemption—indexing has been shown to primarily support those people in the higher income brackets. So the benefits flow disproportionately to the people at the top of the income scale and have far less benefits to people who are working families, middle-class families or people working on lower wages. So they will be the worse off from this. And those that need it the least will be the biggest beneficiaries of the indexing proposal. And locking it in through indexing means every year that money comes off the table before the government has an opportunity to consider what are the most important priorities of the government, be they education, be they health care, be they services to families. Those very important priorities are automatically shortchanged by an indexing proposal which takes the money off the table before anything else is considered. And you have to wonder about that, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that's sorely missing, both in the first budget and in the Throne Speech, is a commitment to affordability in Manitoba. The affordability advantage was published every year. It was a methodology invented during the period of the Filmon government and laid out all the different costs of living that people bear in Manitoba: hydro rates, auto insurance rates, mortgage costs, daycare rates, costs of operating a vehicle in this province. All of those things are no longer available to the public to scrutinize, whether the government is keeping the province of Manitoba affordable. That's a massive oversight in public transparency and accountability for the impact of provincial budgets on the cost of living of Manitobans. And I do hope

that the absence of this in the Throne Speech does not indicate that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) or the new government will eliminate that Manitoba advantage once again when they bring a budget forward this spring. It's important to publish the impacts of their decisions. If they believe that they have to raise hydro rates, if they believe that auto insurance rates need to go higher, if they believe that daycare rates need to go higher, if they believe that tuition rates for students at university need to go higher, they need to show the impact that will have on families; single-parent families, two-parent families, families who have different numbers of children, whether there be two, three or even higher numbers of children. They need to indicate what that impact will be on senior citizens.

The Manitoba advantage was their methodology. They have eliminated it. And I want to encourage them to bring it back. It's very important that we be able to discuss the impact of budgets on people's cost of living and family types of different sizes and of different levels of income. That is fundamentally important going forward, Mr. Speaker.

So the fiscal reality is this: they need to take a balanced approach which does not put at risk essential services. They need to do it in a way that keeps Manitoba affordable. And they need to do it in such a way that they don't use the excuse of a manufactured crisis of debt to be a reason why they cannot support fundamental infrastructure and investments in facilities that will allow Manitobans to have access to those things they need, including daycare, which I'll come to a little later on.

Now, there's been a lot of discussion about labour relations in Manitoba. And we've heard many comments from not only the Premier (Mr. Pallister) but members of the new government that they want to work in partnership with labour. And yet the first thing they do is they bring in this Bill 7, which takes away the right for people to certify after they hit a 65 per cent threshold through a democratic exercise of a secret vote to form a union and require them to do it twice. There's been so many comments on that. I will simply say this: It puts at a disadvantage working people who feel very vulnerable in the workplace. And that is something that we should be very concerned about, Mr. Speaker.

It also speaks to the second issue, the notion that somehow there could be a legislated cap on collective bargaining in terms of what wage increases people could support. And that is

something that is—we have to take a very careful look at. There's a very good article in the Free Press today that shows that there is a duty to consult and seriously attempt to negotiate a collective agreement before any other measures are taken. And we do look forward to this government not unilaterally imposing wage caps on collective bargaining units and working people in Manitoba, but that they have a commitment to collective bargaining which is, after all, something that is constitutionally protected in this country and considered one of the core freedoms that people have as a collectivity in this great country of Canada.

My notes here also speak to the issues of infrastructure, and there are several very significant issues arising in infrastructure. There has been a reduction of 20 per cent in infrastructure spending over the last year. The member is shaking his head. He would argue that we're keeping the five-year average in place as a floor amount, and I understand that, but the reality is there is an opportunity to piggyback on federal infrastructure money, which is being made available right now to do strategic investments, and I think that he should keep an open mind to which strategic investments will give him the best rate of return, which is one of the criterion, the key criterion, that he has put forward on what is the appropriate types of infrastructure investments. For example, in the city of Winnipeg, does it make sense to complete the ring road, which is a complement to the Perimeter, that would take thousands of trucks off of residential streets and major arteries in the city of Winnipeg, make neighbourhoods safer and allow a greater efficiency for the trucking industry? Why would he not consider that as a strategic infrastructure project?

Rail relocation: there's another opportunity. There's \$1 billion of underpasses and overpasses that are going to be built over the next 20 years in the city of Winnipeg to deal with the reality of rail lines being in this city. There should be a feasibility study on the potential benefits of rail relocation to not only the people of Winnipeg but to the province of Manitoba. And I would hope that the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), as well as his colleagues in Cabinet, would not take those ideas off the table and cancel them right away.

He talks about Freedom Road. He calls it Shoal Lake Band 40's road. It's called Freedom Road because it's an opportunity for those folks in that community of Shoal Lake Band 40 to have access to the goods and services that the others of us take for

granted. And for Freedom Road is a project that is seen by the people of Shoal Lake Band 40 as a infrastructure project, that they want to have major input into the design of it and the opportunity for jobs there. So I hope that the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen) will stay open to some form of community benefit agreement, which will allow the people in that community to get access to those jobs and skills that will allow them to do that.

And, similarly, with the east side, with the abolition of the East Side Road Authority, the member spends a lot of time throwing cold water on the effectiveness of that agency and talks about community benefits agreements as if they were a waste of money. Those community benefits agreements provided local employment to people in those areas to do road-clearing projects, to do brush-clearing projects, to—*[interjection]*

We have read it, and the reality was everything can be better, but that does not provide an excuse to eliminate it altogether. The ability to build key pieces of infrastructure in very difficult terrain is a challenge for no matter who the government is, it's a challenge for no matter who the government is, and there has to be an open mind to find a way to do that in partnership with the First Nations on the east side.

**An Honourable Member:** Clearing brush 30 years ahead of time.

**Mr. Selinger:** Clearing brush at any time is a good thing if it provides winter roads, if it provides pioneer roads, and if it provides the opportunity to lay down the tracks for permanent, high-quality roads in the future, Mr. Speaker.

He also talks about—I wanted to just go back to Freedom Road or the road for Shoal Lake Band 40, the design work. I noted last week the design work has been completed, and they think they can find a way to build that road for about \$33 million. And I want to acknowledge that we were very pleased to put that design work money out there. We're glad there was a federal contribution; I hope the member got a city contribution as well to doing that design work. Anytime we do a good job in design work, we get a better road; we get a more cost-effective way to do that. And I'm pleased to see that that investment that was made while we were in office has been followed through on and we're going to be able to proceed on Freedom Road in a cost-effective way.

\* (15:50)

And, finally, there's the discussion of what we do with the risk of flooding in Manitoba, and I suspect that the Minister of Infrastructure is quite concerned about the moisture levels that we're seeing in Manitoba right now. If there's a lot of moisture on the ground before freeze up, if there's a hard freeze up and a slow thaw in the spring, we could be subject to flooding again.

Of course, we want to proceed with the second channel out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin without putting those communities at risk. And I do hope that the member finds a way to work with the First Nations communities and Lake St. Martin, as well as those that are on Lake Winnipeg, as well as those that are impacted directly by Lake Manitoba to find a way to move forward on that project where they will see clear benefits not only in terms of flood protection, but employment and training opportunities as well. So it is important to proceed on that.

And, finally, I heard the Minister of Infrastructure talk about the need for interjurisdictional collaboration in how we design flood works on the prairies. That is important. What happens in Saskatchewan in terms of drainage can have a major impact on southwestern Manitoba, which we've seen in the past. So forging an agreement there to work with them to manage the flow of water in a way that minimizes impacts on Manitoba when we're already experiencing internal flood-risking issues is very important.

And data collection in terms of precipitation and moisture levels and runoff levels is also very important not only with Saskatchewan and Alberta, but also with the United States as well, particularly North Dakota. So the more we can do to further interjurisdictional collaboration on forecasting moisture levels as well as providing emergency support to those communities when they're in trouble, the better off we're all going to be.

We did not see any significant and specific commitments for infrastructure in the North. Mr. Speaker, that is important that we do that. I do note that the railway to Churchill is still in play in terms of the future viability of finding a way to keep that going. There has been good experience in the past on how to do that. We know that not only the federal government but the provincial government, First Nations and all the communities along that line need to be involved in that and we need to find a solution for that.

Now, we talk about efficiencies in government, and I know that it's important in any budget or in any exercise throughout the entire government we need to find a way to do efficiencies. How do we do that? First and foremost, the best way to do that is in collaboration with the people that deliver the services. In health care: doctors, nurses, technicians, front-line service deliverers in our hospitals, in our personal-care homes, in our community-based clinics, in our CancerCare centres including the regional ones. When we collaborate with the people delivering the services, we can find a better way to deliver those services without putting people offside and without having undue confrontations.

In collective agreements that we've negotiated in the past, we've had in those agreements, for example, with the doctors, a commitment to find \$50 million of systemic efficiencies within the health-care system as part of signing that collective agreement. That is why you negotiate: to find a way to make the system better for the citizens of Manitoba and to do it in such a way that the people that we've hired to deliver those services are involved in the design of more efficient and more effective services, and we want to make sure that we do that.

And that applies to education as well. We've heard a lot of comments about how Manitoba has not done particularly well on scores such as the PISA scores. What we haven't heard anything about is how the graduation rate has gone from 73 per cent to 87 per cent with a more diverse population in Manitoba, and when we have greater diversity and can achieve an 87 per cent graduation rate, that is something to be celebrated. It's a very, very significant accomplishment because a high school diploma is the ticket for somebody to get into a trade, post-secondary education or a community college education, or some combination of all three of those.

And what we always want to do—and I know the minister's interested in this and I know he cares about this—is we want to ensure that there are no wrong doors in education and training, starting at the high school level where they get career orientation, and then continuing to allow them to graduate and get successful graduation out of the way with good skills that lay the foundation for a post-secondary trade, college or university education. And going into a trade should not mean you're excluded from going into a college or university education, or vice versa. Getting a college or university education should not be a reason why you can't have access to a trade or a

specific skill that's needed in our community. And we're seeing more and more of this. We're seeing university grads get access to college education or trades, and they are doing that and they're starting their own businesses and being extremely successful.

And, as the House leader said to me, we are running out of time, and if we're going to support people to access the labour market, we also have to do it by providing them robust access to daycare—

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

**Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River):** Good afternoon, Deputy Speaker.

It is an honour to stand before the House today and speak to the Throne Speech for the opening of the Second Session of the 41st Legislature.

I have been in my role as a member of the Legislative Assembly for a little more than seven months. I am proud to be a part of this province with its 'divulse' culture and ethnic backgrounds.

The people that live in the many different regions raise their families and continually explore new opportunities for their future. I am also proud to be a part of a government that is setting a new course, the most improved province. I believe our commitment to be inclusive, focus on innovation and entrepreneurial leadership and the depth to which our citizens are both giving of their time and resources will be key in making Manitoba the most improved province.

I look back at the time spent on the campaign and the constituents who were engaged in the election process and realize that the people of Manitoba have been waiting for change for a while. Transparency, trust, and an openness to listen are key in helping to establish a course which put Manitoba back on a responsible fiscal track.

Citizens in Manitoba have been faced with rising debt and an uncertainty as to how to get Manitoba back on a sound and fiscally responsible path. I reflect on the many conversations at the door, in local coffee shops, at various festivals throughout the province, and when we were out for a walk. I learned a lot from the people and what they have been living with and the restricted circumstances some have been living within.

Constituents' comments included not having a say in major decisions, unable to feel confident in their government, and often feeling left confused

over government legislation which would cost them money.

Speaking with families, I heard from individuals who are struggling with work and home life, trying to find child care for their young children, and budgeting for their home and family can benefit from the income they are working hard for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, balancing a family budget is key in ensuring families can be a part of a social environment, pay the bills and still find time to enjoy each other's company. Many Manitobans were eager to put forth their ideas and expertise. This was further witnessed through the town hall meetings held to discuss the budget. Communities, business leaders, teachers, students, indigenous leaders, child-care professionals, and business owners all participated in the prebudget meetings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the time spent listening and asking questions was invaluable, as equally valuable as the constituents themselves. They wanted to be heard and they were. This government will continue to engage citizens. Reoccurring themes such as sustainability, efficiency, opportunities for growth and the need to develop the northern economy will be taken seriously. The input from the prebudget consultations will develop a framework for the path necessary to ensure Manitoba is on track to being the most improved province.

Manitobans do not want to be viewed as the province which falls behind in education, front-line and/or social services and health care. Manitobans want to regain their position in being on the leading edge of innovation and support. Manitobans have an investment in their future and its success, so they can leave their children a better province to live in.

The responsibility has been left to our government to begin correcting the past. As part of this government, I am privileged and humbled by the faith that the citizens have entrusted us with. I am also aware going forward the decisions we make won't always be easy.

Decisions have already been made to support the promises made to be more fiscally responsible. Transparent and accountable budgeting goes hand in hand with this commitment. Reducing the size of the Cabinet and by reviewing efficient and responsible ways to reduce senior management is the start of responsible government, a government which does not impact nor affect the services provided by the front-line workers.

This is the beginning of our government's approach to sustainability. This new trend will follow suit throughout the province's Crown corporations and regional health authorities as we introduce legislation to encourage reductions in administrative and senior management costs.

\* (16:00)

Further to that note, our goal of reducing Manitoba's more than 200 agencies, boards and commissions by 20 per cent in total will enable us to better address the challenges we have inherited.

Our Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler) has a large task in front of him, but I know that he is up to the challenge.

Further to this notion of more effective and sustainable governance involves the reduction of red tape. As mentioned in the Throne Speech, our Red Tape Reduction Task Force has been mandated to consult with stakeholders to identify regulatory barriers and develop options to eliminate them. Through these initiatives, we will enable government operations to be more efficient and more effective.

Madam Speaker, many Manitobans rely on our provincial services in one way or another, and thus it is our duty to ensure that they run in the most effective way possible. As such, our government's commitment to develop a comprehensive plan that acts upon the many outstanding reports and recommendations for improvement is commendable. Specifically, our commitment to achieving better outcomes in the child-welfare system will work towards fewer children in care, strengthen partnerships with families and communities, better co-ordinated services and greater public accountability.

This important work has already begun with the ascension of Bill 8, The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act. This important legislation eases the flow of information across all sectors of government services to ensure Manitoba's children are better protected and helped in a timely manner. In this same vein, our pledge to introduce legislation to create a standalone Child Advocate will benefit our child-welfare system, as it will enhance the independence of the office and restore much-needed accountability.

As the legislative assistant to the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) tasked with issues pertaining to child care, I am committed to helping increase child-care spaces in Manitoba. After consulting

with stakeholders, families and community members for the last several months, we have been able to pinpoint key areas that, if altered, would greatly improve our child-care system. As such, I am excited to work on behalf of Manitobans to create ways of addressing barriers to make our system more efficient, effective and sustainable.

Also, in my legislative assistant portfolio, I have been tasked with issues related to domestic violence. Prior to this role, I was a front-line worker in the social service area for many years and witnessed the struggles many women and their children deal with. Women leave their homes to keep themselves and their families safe. Women may travel many miles and leave their home communities to ensure they can secure the proper resources needed to live a life without fear. These women and their families need ongoing support as they secure resources, a safe home and skills needed to support their decision to leave their situation.

I am honoured to be a part of a government that wants to support these women by listening to the front-line workers and what they need to ensure their clients get to ensure the services they need. Investing in our families is an investment in our future.

I will also be able—I was also able to speak to The Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention Act. Safety in post-secondary institutions across all of Manitoba is vital. Every year thousands of students who have graduated from grade 12 enter campuses across the province, seeking higher education. These students need to feel safe in their learning environment. For some of these students, this could be the first time being away from home, and the campus becomes their residence, second home. Students, regardless of their ethnic background, gender and sexual identity, need to feel confident that the activities they participate in are safe for all, and there is no reason to fear they may become the victim of a sexually violent act or harassment. Activities are inclusive of all social media and Internet conversations. Unfortunately, the Internet has become another avenue to exploit, harass, bully and intimidate people.

Madam—or, sorry, Deputy Speaker, as leaders in Manitoba, we have a responsibility—no, a duty, to ensure the safety of our young people. To this point, The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act, which represents a significant move towards supporting 'professionals' and service providers is also vital. The ability to transfer information in an

efficient and timely matter is very important to children, their families and supporting agencies. The information shared with other agencies, if in the best interest of the child, will ensure the necessary information is disclosed and that only information necessary for providing or planning services is disclosed. No more will be shared to protect the individual rights of the child than is necessary. It is through information sharing service providers can begin to build a network or a bridge between the community and service providers which removes the fear and isolation individuals experience and replace the insecurities with direction and support.

I believe there is no support service, family member nor community resource in place which would not want a child to be safe. We all remember the inquiry into Phoenix Sinclair. I want to restate a quote from Commission Counsel Sherri Walsh: One of the central themes in this inquiry, quite plainly, she said, is to consider how it is that in our society a small child can become so invisible to an entire community, one which includes social service agencies, schools, neighbours, friends and family, so invisible as to literally disappear.

Deputy Speaker, our children are our future. We are looking at broad-based strategy to support family child-care spaces, reviewing the barriers to open a home-based child-care centre and available programming.

Our government has been listening to Manitobans. There has been a lot of work done to make this province more open, accessible and accountable. This initiative is the start to making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada.

In addition to repairing provincial services, rebuilding the economy is also a priority to our Progressive Conservative government. We recognize the need for economic diversification across the province, including building more opportunities in the North to ensure long-term stability for the region's people and economy.

A strong economy and good opportunities for our young people are strongly correlated to education, and poor performances by Manitoba children on national assessments indicates a need for improving student achievement. Our government will focus on the fundamentals of quality education to ensure that our future generations are equipped to be successful. In addition, our commitment to improving financial supports and bursaries for

post-secondary education will assist many students in reaching their goals.

Deputy Speaker, we have been listening to Manitobans, and we will continue to listen to Manitobans. I also want to thank you for having given me the opportunity to stand in the House and speak to the Throne Speech. I am both honoured and humbled to represent the people in Seine River.

In conclusion, I want to state community involvement, being inclusive open discussions on budgets; passing legislation to ensure our youth, family and friends are safe, honouring the many who have come before us and led the way for our democratic society is a start to regain the trust and respect Manitobans deserve.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I'm very pleased to speak today to the government's Speech from the Throne and also, you know, put on the record some of our comments regarding the contents, or lack thereof, of the—lack of clarity, I guess it is, to the Speech from the Throne.

But, certainly, they have made it fairly clear, from what we can see so far, that this speech lays the groundwork for cuts to front-line workers, which, by the way, they said they would not do just seven months ago during the election, and opens the door to privatization of front-line services. And that basically goes with the territory if you're a Conservative anyway, so—and privatization is something that they, even if they say they're not going to do it, we know that it's just automatically part of their DNA.

In their first year, the government's already broken their election commitment to protect these front-line workers. Matter of fact, we can't even get a definition from them of what a front-line worker is, no matter how many times our critics ask these questions of the government.

Every single member of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) Cabinet gave themselves a raise. And now they're going to make nurses, teachers, and community safety officers, child-care workers suffer because of it.

\* (16:10)

And even today in the Free Press there's an article there, I think pretty much on the front page, if I'm not mistaken, that talks about how they are planning to—the Premier is planning to launch a

freeze on—actually, a freeze or a rollback on contracts already negotiated. He plans to open them up and cause reductions and rollbacks in contracts already negotiated.

Now, you know, this, essentially, is starting to look and sound much like the Sterling Lyon government of 1977 in their acute protracted restraint. We had thought that these guy—that the government had learned from the Sterling Lyon experience and that they appeared to be taking a more nuanced approach. But, you know, at the end of the day, I guess they're starting to look very much similar to the old Sterling Lyon government, just less up front about it, I guess.

Now, instead of building strong public services, the government's actually undermining them. They plan to gut a law that requires transparency and accountability for all public partner—private-public partnerships. Rather than having to justify their actions to the public, they want to benefit their friends in the large construction companies. And we'd like to know why they're afraid of the Auditor General monitoring what they're planning on doing.

For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, triple P approaches, private—public-private partnerships have really not—you know, they've been around in the United States for years, and they have not been normal here in Manitoba. I think the Charleswood Bridge was the first one. It was about 15 years ago, and there were no more of these until Sam Katz became the mayor, and in short order, they started pumping through as many of these as they could, I think starting with the Disraeli Bridge. And the government of the day introduced legislation to make this transparent. Unfortunately, it did not—you know, legislation is rarely retroactive and, unfortunately, the Disraeli Bridge project got done under the triple P concept before this legislation was passed.

And so, now what the government is planning to do is eliminate this legislation which gives this transparency to the public when a triple P is actually done. So, they are now going to move forward with the public not even knowing who the participants are, what the rates of return are. And we know where this is—where—why this is happening. Quite simply, it's because interest rates are low and private corporations and individuals have pools of capital and they are unable to get very big returns on the markets currently.

And when, as the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) pointed out the other

day, that what actually happens here is that he's—triple Ps actually cost the taxpayer a lot more money at the end of the day because what happens is these private pools of money gravitate towards this model that, if constructed in a secret manner, in a non-transparent manner, can—will effectively give them maybe a 6 or 7 per cent rate of return, where on the market right now they'd only be able to get a 2 per cent return.

So the taxpayers of Winnipeg and Manitoba have the luxury, the privilege, of paying for the Disraeli Bridge at, I think, what, \$30 million a year, if I'm not mistaken, for about 30 years so that the proponents of the—of this bridge concept will, in fact, be getting a return much greater than they could on the open market.

The former premier has certainly pointed out in the past that the governments—and current Premier (Mr. Pallister) would be able to tell you the same thing, that the Finance Department of the Manitoba government can borrow money a lot cheaper than the private sector. That's just a fact of life. So—and I don't believe for a moment that the private sector has sufficient funds to be able to finance this thing without themselves going out and borrowing money, which, at the end of the day, will be higher than the government could get if they were to take it on themselves.

The—this particular government is certainly on the wrong direction—or taking Manitoba in the wrong direction. It cuts where it should be building; it privatizes instead of keeping services public; and it's—certainly is going to divide Manitobans. And we're going to see a lot of evidence of that after the March 8th—is—which is my guess as to when the budget will come down, because we're back here next March 1st, and so it's usual that the budget—the federal budget will be out in February, and it's usual that the provincial government would come in with a budget perhaps as early as March the 8th.

So, in terms of the public sector wage issues that the government is dealing with right now, fixing the finances, and we hear this every day from this government, you know, oh, we got to fix the finances. Well, the reality is that they are politicizing the budget process; they're picking ideological fights; and they're attempting to manufacture a political crisis. You can see it happening. I mean, they're out there, oh, the debts. They even inflated the debt—the deficit and had to walk that back in the first budget. They had to walk it back when they said they saved

over, I think it was \$100 million in fake savings, and they call that transparent budgeting. But, obviously, there's not transparency there. In essence, they just simply made up the number, and that was only a few months ago.

They claimed this historic deficit of over \$1 billion, and the Auditor General actually looked at the books and it turned out the government inflated the deficit by more than 15 per cent, and they were never—the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) tried to pin them down on this on many occasions, and they could never actually explain. As a matter of fact, they came up with different explanations, you know, depended on the time of the day, I believe. And they could never explain this.

So they've manufactured this crisis and, in the process, broke their election process—or their election pledge, which they continued to promise, and then they knew that the voters were not going to accept their arguments that they weren't going to cut. So they said, well, we're not going to cut any front-line workers, right. But then they wouldn't define what a front-line worker was, so, at this point, we're none the wiser and neither are they. *[interjection]*

And the member likes to talk about the Louise Bridge. You know, I'm happy that they do. The more they talk about the Louise Bridge, that keeps the issue up there. And, you know, they can keep talking 'til the next election, and the signs are ready to go. We'll have them up there. But my guess is that before we go into the next election with all those signs with build the Louise Bridge, they are actually going to build the bridge. And I keep telling certain members over there that the end of the day, they are going to build the bridge. And we're all claim credit for it.

So, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, they also raised the wages of the—or salaries of the Premier and his Cabinet. The Premier is going to get an extra \$30,000 a year this year alone, and each Cabinet minister is getting extra \$24,000. Now, that's hardly an encouragement to all those 40 members over there, most of whom are not in the Cabinet. I mean, so the boss grabs an extra \$30,000. He puts 11 people in the Cabinet who then get an extra—I can see some of them are doing the math right now, getting those calculators out. They—so 11 select, quote—team members—team members—get an extra \$24,000, and the rest of them get their—to sit there to—or get their—get to cheer on those 12 people. So this totals over \$330,000 for the entire Cabinet and

they refuse to increase the minimum wage in the process, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

\* (16:20)

Now, there are a lot of cuts that are going to be coming as a result of this government, I believe, certainly after the budget for sure, maybe even before, but the front-line workers are going to find that there are—are going to see major cuts.

Now, I want to deal with an issue that's very current and it's being discussed a lot right now, not too much mention of it in the Throne Speech, but that is the fentanyl crisis that's been discussed in this House by the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), had a member statement, had people in the gallery. The member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), in fact, has a bill on this matter, and, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not something that just, like, happened over night.

I remember back in 2009, so that would be seven years ago, making speeches about this very subject on—in Ottawa, in the Parliament, on certain bills, as a result of representations made by a member from the United States government on this issue of the—among other things—but on this issue of the pill-making machines, or pill pressers, and in the United States this member of the US—I guess embassy, told me that what was—in the United States they have a registration for these pill-making machines, that you can't buy one in the states without registering to do so, and that if a pill-pressing machine breaks down there's a paper trail. So they—you cannot get these things without having—establishing a paper trail.

And so what he said was happening here is the methamphetamine and these other drugs were being actually made in the Toronto—in Toronto and the Toronto area because the criminal organizations were fearful of producing these pills in the United States, so what they are doing is they export it. I mean, talk about, you know, exporting jobs to Canada, well that's what they were doing. The criminal enterprises move their production of these amphetamine pills from the United States to Toronto and he was saying, why? Because they can buy the pill-making machines without being traced when they break down, which they do. They can be fixed in Canada without a paper trail and, you know, this was Bill C-475 that I was speaking to in Ottawa, which was an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substance Act, meta-amphetamine and Ecstasy.

Now, this is the same group of drugs I believe the member from Minto is more of an expert in this field than I am, evidently, so I believe that fentanyl is, you know, part of this process. But let me tell you what happens with this stuff. We know that it's very dangerous to produce methamphetamines and every once in a while I was at a seminar in the last two or three years where the insurance industry explained what these things—what actually happens, and they can build a lab and operate in a—even out of a car, but a lot of them are in houses. There's children, you know, in proximity, and unless the chemist who is mixing all this stuff up knows what they're doing, they can not only blow up—blow themselves up and the structure, the house that they're in, but they can take a good chunk of the street with them in the process.

So this is what we're finding here in Canada and, I guess, by extension, in Manitoba, that you have criminal organizations moving up from the States to produce this stuff because we're not regulating the pill pressing machines, and they're manufacturing these products with great danger to themselves, their families and the public here, and then they're smuggling all this stuff back into the United States.

So this is not, you know, a mom-and-pop operation that we're talking about here. These are criminal gangs, and, as I've said many times, you know, in the House of Commons and here, the reality is that these criminals are not people that are living in poorer neighbourhoods. They are people with tons of money. They are buying houses with—presumably with cash, but houses in the suburbs. You know, we mentioned Birds Hill before, but in that area, million-dollar houses—these are not—you know, these are not people that are riding their Harleys and wearing gang colours. They are wearing business suits. Many of them take the proceeds of the drugs, and they purchase legitimate businesses downtown and they try to operate as respectable business people.

That's what we have to target, is—we—you all—we have to follow the money in these situations, and we have to try to knock off and put in prison the big drug dealers who are benefiting by all this misery that they're creating in the schools and in the communities of this—in this country and this province. So the member for Concordia is on the right track here. The government has to move on this and regulate these pill presses so that they are registered, the people who buy them are registered; when they break down, they can follow the paper

trail. We have to start, in this case, co-operating with the Americans, right, and learning how we can, you know, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel.

So the Minister of Health should actually take this good advice, and he would be way ahead of the game if he were to talk to people that know this issue rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, which is what he seems to be intent on doing.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that I've kind of strayed from the Throne Speech just very briefly, and I'm just about to get back on track with it. But I know that even just reading my notes took, like, 40 minutes this morning. I figured, how am I supposed to condense 40 minutes of notes into a 20-minute speech and then talk about pill presses on top of that? That is impossible.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

The honourable minister for Municipal Relations and indigenous.

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations):** It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to talk about our government's Speech from the Throne, and I think 20 minutes from our opposition was probably adequate this afternoon.

Our new Progressive Conservative government is setting a new course for Manitoba, one that puts our province on a better track, one that focuses on long-term, sustainable measures to fix our finances, repair the services that Manitoba families rely on and generate long-term economic opportunities.

Our Speech from the Throne is our road map that will help guide us in the year ahead as we undertake the work that Manitoba's elected us to do. Our plan is one that focuses on working together collaboratively with Manitobans and Manitoba communities, because we know that as a province, we are stronger when we work together in partnership. There is an openness and a 'willingness' to finding opportunities to collaborate, partner and work together.

I'm empowered to continue working to build those connections. And nowhere is our new approach to collaboration and partnership more evident than the areas of indigenous and municipal relations.

\*(16:30)

The meetings that we had in the first months after being elected with our First Nations, not just in our office, but also in their communities, were very interesting; the fact that they felt it was the first time that somebody actually wanted to listen and took the time and the consideration to visit their communities.

Our first interaction with the northern affairs community councils were even more in depth. Their dissatisfaction with the way they've been treated in the past, not recognized by any government and very underrepresented—it didn't matter what department, they were just not getting the help that they needed to move forward. We spent three days with them at their convention, meeting with their elected delegates and talking about their concerns and issues. And since that point in time we've developed a very strong relationship and one that is mutually beneficial to our government, as well as to their communities.

We also have come a long ways in the past seven months with the Manitoba Metis Federation. Again, I will put on record that their president indicated they literally had had no minister, no voice and nobody to listen for 10 years. Now they meet with, actually, several of our ministerial offices, and we are having a great dialogue on moving forward, working in partnerships. And the level of frustration that we first met with has deteriorated. It's a much friendlier atmosphere. And it's evident that trust and respect is being built totally across all of our indigenous situations.

Working with municipalities has also been interesting. Having the opportunity to meet with and try to help reconcile with amalgamations that have gone terribly wrong, that are literally tearing communities apart, tearing their councils apart, in fact, and there's a very high level of frustration. The many, many years that they've took—taken, building strong and sustainable communities is—has really 'deteriated.' But this government isn't going to walk away from them. We're not going to force something on our communities. We are going to work with them. We are going to stand by their side. And we are going to find solutions that will work for the communities and also the people that live in it.

There are many other indigenous partners that we're working with that, in support of education, training, 'stablingshing' new businesses, as long—as well as economic development throughout the province. And there's a focus on northern and mote regions of all of Manitoba.

Our government's working in partnership with municipalities to respond to their needs and to ensure that 'previncial' funding supports local priorities and delivers real economic benefits to our communities.

We had the opportunity last week to spend time at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention. I was able to present to the delegation there now as the Minister of Municipal Relations. I was also the co-moderator for their ministerial forum, and it was an absolute honour and a privilege to announce that all 12 of our government's ministers, as well as the Premier (Mr. Pallister), were all there and prepared to answer questions. And there was a wide range of questions asked. And it was really encouraging that we had delegates that got up and spoke to the change in government, very positive comments in regards to the approach to debt that this government has taken, that we were going to stand strong on decisions made, we were going to find value for money and we were going to ensure that the infrastructure projects were developed as a partnership with the AMM, federal and provincial governments. And the response to them was absolutely amazing. And we had very, very positive comments coming back to our government since all of those meetings last week.

My own department also met with approximately 30 different municipalities, which gives them the opportunity to come and speak with myself, my deputy minister, as well as our staff about issues that they were having or projects that within their community or within their region that they were hoping to develop. It was really beneficial to spend that time with them, and we look forward to furthering those kinds of collaborations.

We got to work right away after our first 100 days, meeting with municipalities and gathering their feedback for a new, streamlined, single-window process for accessing cost-shared infrastructure. This was a really important first step in our commitment to ensure that all municipalities have a fair say on how their infrastructure funds are invested at a local level. And we followed up that work by launching the most robust municipal infrastructure consultation in decades, which included five major regional meetings and a new infrastructure survey sent to every municipality. We're really pleased that the turnout at these meetings was terrific. We had a 70 per cent turnout on participation for municipalities at the round tables. The discussions were engaged. I had the opportunity to sit at multiple tables, and they were really impressed with the

dialogue and the sharing of information that took place at those meetings. It was the first of its kind, but it certainly won't be the last.

Our department is willing. We are going to partner. We're going to work with our municipalities to repair and replace roads and bridges within their municipalities. AMM strongly supports rural and northern economic development. They want to work with us. They worked previously in-participated in economic development strategy, pre-discussion budgets across-discussions across the province, they were participating.

We've also had a really good working relationship with Mayor Bowman and the City of Winnipeg since the election. We have an open dialogue. We have a very good understanding that if there are issues that need to be discussed, they won't be talked about in the media, they won't be 'disfused' in other ways. We will meet face to face. We'll meet the challenges. We will discuss them and strive towards successful outcomes that are good for Winnipeg as well as the province of Manitoba.

We recognize fully that if Manitoba is going to be successful and the most improved province in Manitoba, that the City of Winnipeg also has to be a part of that, and they have to really be successful in order for our whole province to be successful.

Municipalities currently receive provincial funding from dozens of different envelopes, and through ongoing work to simplify and streamline access to funding, we're working to reduce red tape and make the funding application process more practical and effective with greater autonomy and flexibility for municipalities to deliver on their local priorities. Our Throne Speech outlines further steps that will build on this important work. It included a strong commitment to red tape reduction, and this is one thing that we hear the most from municipalities as well as our indigenous communities, that the red tape is just absolutely counterproductive to anything that they are hoping to do in the future as well as of the past.

We also have a commitment to ensure value for money as we rebuild our provincial infrastructure. Our plan to implement a return-on-investment test, to prioritize government investments in highways, bridges, water management infrastructure, as well as social and cultural projects, will further improve funding processes and help ensure that Manitobans are getting the best value for their provincial resources, and they are very much supportive of this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our commitment to collaboration and strong partnerships extends to our indigenous people and communities as well. As Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations, I've had the opportunity to travel to the indigenous communities across the province to meet with their leaders and families and to hear about their priorities. Their priorities are very similar to ours: economic development, safe water and waste-water solutions. They would really like to be involved in regional partnerships with the municipalities that border them. Education for their children with increased rates of graduates is a very high priority for them, and we know that this is so much a part of what needs to happen all across the province as well as health-care needs. Too often I heard from these leaders that it's not just about the money. They need help and they need strong partners, going forward, so that we can achieve and accomplish their needs.

\*(16:40)

And some of the priorities that come up time to time again include working collaboratively towards truth and reconciliation and working together to develop lasting, inclusive economic opportunities for the indigenous people in Manitoba.

More broadly speaking, our indigenous people want a government that's open, accessible, and listens to them about their priorities with an open mind and a commitment to partnerships.

I spent many years in my business and municipal government as a former mayor of Gladstone and VP of AMM. I understand real well the hard work of all elected officials, indigenous and non-indigenous, in providing good leadership, infrastructure and services to our communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to be part of a team that's listening to the needs of all Manitobans, developing new partnerships, processes, and considering new actions to address critical issues facing all communities towards building a stronger Manitoba. Working together, we will bring future successes. We will build strong, sustainable communities that can achieve their economic potential, ensuring infrastructure investments are strategic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Speech from the Throne builds on our government's important work in these areas. It highlights our government's commitment to supporting the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

There are many support groups, vigils, that bring attention to these issues, but we need to work towards prevention and education. This will take a strategic and aggressive plan to change the past, a change that gives our vulnerable population courage and self-confidence and predators will not be able to control them any longer.

And, while we anticipate that the results of the inquiry will lead to additional work for our government towards truth and reconciliation and ending systemic violence, we know that we cannot wait. It is time for action. All of Manitobans have to understand that the consequences of the past wrongdoing becomes a responsibility that now falls on all of us. We can change the future, and as a government we will lead by example.

Work is already well under way. Manitoba has adopted the national terms of reference for the inquiry and appointed the inquiry's commissioners by an order of council in August to facilitate this. We have provided support for families participating in the inquiry. A Manitoba justice has submitted an application to the federal government to enhance and expand on these services, and we will be continuing the important work of engaging with indigenous communities and leaders to develop a strategic path forward under The Path to Reconciliation Act towards the implementation of a reconciliation strategy.

In terms of inclusive, lasting opportunities for economic development, our new Progressive Conservative government continues to be a strong partner for our indigenous communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, along with other ministers, have been mandated to work with our First Nations and other indigenous partners to create jobs and economic opportunities together. Our meetings and consultations will continue.

I had the opportunity to spend a week ago Friday at Turtle Lodge at Sagkeeng First Nations, listening and watching the ceremonies and the teachings of our indigenous people. They have a respect for Mother Earth that is not always recognized or respected by governments or private individuals. It was a very good day spent listening to them and having the opportunity to speak to them and tell them the value of my time spent there.

And we have been making important progress. We have supported the transfer and development of urban Aboriginal economic development zones,

including recent land transfers for the Peguis and Swan Lake First Nations urban reserves.

We look forward to new opportunities as we formulate new partnerships with our indigenous communities: provincial government, federal government, municipalities and private investors. We will be the most improved province because we will work as a team respecting all jurisdictions and partners.

But we're not stopping there. The Throne Speech includes a continued commitment to working in partnership with indigenous communities' leaders to create jobs, seize opportunities, and forge a path of healing and hope.

This is a very broad mandate. It's a mandate that we are building on trust, respect, and listening. We are giving our indigenous leaders the opportunity to speak and share their experience and knowledge. For many, this is the beginning of something very new—a government that actually values what they have to say, not providing cheques and quickly closing the door.

That work will include engaging with indigenous communities on the development of an improved duty-to-consult framework and will help ensure inclusive economic opportunities and respect for indigenous rights. Once formulated and approved, this duty consult will not just be a document on the shelf. It will provide the framework as we move forward, creating positive relationships for the future.

As the Minister for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, I've had the enriching experience of hearing about priorities for both our municipalities and our indigenous communities. This has offered me a unique perspective on how we can all work more effectively together.

In discussions already held, I'm more than excited by the willingness of all leaders, indigenous and non-indigenous, to work together. There are many opportunities that can be unlocked through strengthened relationships and partnerships between our leaders and municipalities.

Leadership in government is not always about doing more. It's also about doing things better, and breaking down the silos that sometimes can separate our communities is a strategy that can certainly lead to a lot of better. With our government's strong commitment to collaboration and partnerships, which are hallmarks of our Speech from the Throne, I'm

excited about the opportunities in front of us in the areas of indigenous–municipal relations, and indeed, all across all of government, to help make Manitoba Canada's most improved province.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and to put a few words on the record here as to why the New Democrats in the House cannot support this Throne Speech.

There are several issues that are challenges for the people of Manitoba. We live in an historic moment. We live in a time where we are confronted by many challenges, challenges like climate change. How are we going to save the environment from the man-made impact of increased carbon, of pollution? How are we going to help to ameliorate that situation?

We live in a moment where our history, collective history as Canadian people, calls us to work towards reconciliation with the indigenous community, with indigenous nations. We live at a time of unparalleled technological achievement on the cusp of a revolution in artificial intelligence, and all the societal and economic impacts that that will have on our society.

And we also live at a time of unprecedented exacerbation of income inequality, where we have seen the wealthiest in the global society consolidate their riches, and yet we're confronted at a ugly truth that many other people are being left behind. Many other people are forced to live in poverty, even in this, one of the wealthiest societies in the world.

And though we live in this historic moment where there are so many great challenges which call us to action, we are met with a Throne Speech that does little to address those historic challenges and offers instead many—well, a paucity, really, of supposed answers, none of which really come close to achieving what we need in this time.

Perhaps the most disturbing thing in this new government's short time in office is that while they claim to be so concerned with the finances of our province, they don't appear to have much ability to manage our provincial economy in a good way, much less the finances of our province. So, the one thing that they actually appear to be concerned about, they don't seem to be able to do very well. We saw that with the erroneous statements regarding some budgetary figures. We see that in the Statistics Canada reports which tell us that job losses continue

to increase the longer that the Conservatives have been in power. And of course, we're confronted with the economic impact of declining wages.

\* (16:50)

And I know that the member from Brandon East is frustrated that there's no investment in his city since the election, and he likely would like to see answers from, you know, his government. And he's probably wondering why his party talks about a decade of decline that describes the time that he was in office as a city councillor out there in Brandon, and he's probably scratching his head, why do they talk about my former career like that.

That's the type of leadership that we see, supposed leadership, that we see from this new government. The reality is this, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, if you look at independent economic experts' evaluation of the situation in Manitoba, if you look at the financial sector's evaluation of the province of Manitoba, look to firms like RBC, look to firms like BMO, look to firms like TD bank and the evaluations that they make of the public accounts of provincial governments in this country, and you will find evidence that the situation is not what has been described to us by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and by his ministers. When you go to that interprovincial comparison, that interprovincial analysis, what you will find is that Manitoba is typically in the middle of the pack when you look at the debt-to-GDP ratio or the deficit-to-GDP ratio.

Now, of course, we hear the Premier and the other ministers of the Crown rise every day and talk about nominal figures, but, of course, that's not the state of the art or the state of the science when it comes to economic analysis. What is used is the real GDP analysis, and I know that the member from Emerson appreciates this edification and education on economic insight and economic analyses because what we know is that the current state of the art is that we use ratios of debt-to-GDP and deficit-to-GDP because those allow for a real comparison across years and going deep into history and going deep into our province's past. The reason that we do that, of course, is to account for the impact of inflation over time. If you don't take into account the impact of inflation over time, then you will have an inaccurate picture of the finances or an inaccurate understanding of the public accounts.

And so it's concerning for me to hear that the supposed experts across the Chamber are not using what most public sector economists and most, you

know, public sector experts use when it comes to announcing—when it comes to analyzing the finances of the public accounts. And it's concerning because what we're seeing here is an agenda of austerity. They are using the pretext of a crisis to try and legitimize the concentrations of wealth amongst their friends at the expense of good public service, at the expense of progress in meeting those challenges of our time. We ought to be finding ways to fight climate change. We ought to be finding ways to meet the technological advances in our society and ensure that Manitobans are well educated, well trained and positioned so that they be able to take advantage of those economic opportunities that are being created by app makers, by researchers in artificial intelligence and machine learning, by people who are creating intellectual properties which will create passive income for their descendants for generations to come. And yet all we hear from the government are, you know, the same recycled lines that they've been using since the election campaign, and, you know, Chicken-Little type attitude with respect to the supposed blue skies of our province, and they can't appear to settle on a distinct narrative other than the fact that they love to talk about the NDP.

But, while we have to recognize the truth of the statement, the economic horse pulls the social cart, the statement that a friend of mine, Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos First Nation, likes to make, we have to understand that there is also a requirement for government to consider the well-being of all of its citizens as well as its economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts.

And so, yes, it is true, we have to be good stewards of the economy, we have to be responsible with the way we expend public dollars. That is true. It is true that the economic horse pulls the social cart.

However, there's another anecdote that I would like to share that, to me, speaks to the other obligation of government because, again, at the end of the day, the obligation of government is not just to look after the economic well-being of its citizens, it is to look after the overall well-being of all of its citizens.

And so I'd share with you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, a story that my late father told me as a small morality tale. And we were discussing a situation that I found myself in, had—having to do with, you know, the provision of some social services and how certain, you know, politicians in

Ontario at the time weren't speaking up about it. And my father asked me a simple question. He said, if you see somebody in the street who's about to be hit by a car, do you check your pocket to see if you have enough money to help them or do you just go help them? And the profundity of that statement, I think, is one that we ought to keep in mind.

Again, yes, it is important to be responsible with public dollars. It is important to be responsible when it comes to the management of the economy. But we ought to understand that when there are people in our society who need help, that we still find the wherewithal and the capacity to be able to marshal public resources to help them. We have a moral obligation to do so. And I see a lack of willingness on the part of this government, as evidenced in the Throne Speech that they brought down, to tackle some of these great issues of our time.

So we could go through some of the examples. We heard a lot of talk in the debate around Bill 7 about democracy and democratic will. And yet, to me, that was merely a pretext to try and create a situation where there was less unionized labour in our province. If this government was really serious about helping to improve our democracy, then they would find ways to increase the participation of women in our electoral system. They would find ways to increase the number of female candidates. They would find ways and suggest ways for all parties to put forward more female candidates so that we could see more female members in this House.

I'm very proud of our brothers and sisters in the Saskatchewan NDP who have put forward a plan called 20 for 2020. And their goal is to elect 20 New Democrat women MLAs in their next provincial election. And they're working backwards from that goal by nominating some 35 candidates and putting in place the fundraising and the mentorship today so that they will be able to have as many of those candidates be viable and electable as possible.

This is one of the great democratic challenges of our time, not the supposed issue raised by Bill 7. We were in this Chamber two short weeks ago when we heard Pascale Navarro, one of the recipients of the Governor General's Award in commemoration of the people's case, tell us that until women are equally represented in legislatures like this one, we will not have a true democratic exchange of ideas. And so if this government is serious about democracy, then they will back up those words with actions that will begin to create a situation of gender equality in this Chamber.

Of course, there are many other issues that we can touch on. Throne Speech announced a made-in-Manitoba carbon-pricing plan—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) will have six minutes remaining on the Throne Speech debate.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 28, 2016

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