

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 9—The Community Child Care Standards
Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers
Respecting Governance and Accountability)**

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 9, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers Respecting Governance and Accountability), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: I wish to introduce Bill 9, The Community Child Care Standards Act, enhanced powers respecting government and accountability, to be read.

I move, seconded by, again, the Minister of Justice, that Bill 9 be read for a first time and be ordered for second reading.

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to improving our early learning and child-care systems. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: We would just seek some clarity here from the minister.

Mr. Fielding: Madam Speaker, our government is committed to improving our early learning and child-care system. Families in Manitoba rely on child care to go to work, to school. To access child care is an important economic development and is important for many families. High-quality early learning and child-care supports children's growth and—helping

them to learn and to lay the foundations for successful later on in life.

Madam Speaker, it is for these reasons that I am proud to introduce the first phase of the amendments to improve the early learning and child-care legislation. We have heard from child-care providers and other key stakeholders that the current act is overly complicated and outdated. The bill represents phase 1 of phase 2 approach to meet the government's commitment to reduce red tape and support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 200—The Planning Amendment Act

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Arthur-Virden, that Bill 200, The Planning Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martin: Madam Speaker, the bill is part of our government's agenda to reduce red tape and paper burden on Manitobans. This act is a modest amendment to The Planning Act to bring the rural time frame in line with that of the city of Winnipeg. Thank you.

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

**Bill 206—The Brookside Cemetery
Recognition Act**

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I move, seconded by the member—The Maples, that The Brookside Cemetery Recognition Act; Loi sur la désignation du cimetière Brookside, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fletcher: Many people throughout Manitoba will already be familiar with the historic significance Brookside Cemetery has for Manitoba, in particular, in the—for those who have served or have had families who have served in the Armed Forces. It's one of the largest Commonwealth gravesites in the world. It has notable Manitobans, such as Tommy Prince, interned there, and it is one of the oldest and

most significant graveyards in the country, and it—this bill will create a unique and special recognition in light of this great piece of heritage that we have in Winnipeg.

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

**Bill 207—The Legal Profession Amendment Act
(Queen's Counsel Appointments)**

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I move, seconded by the member from The Maples, that Bill 207, The Legal Profession Amendment Act (Queen's Counsel Appointments), be now read first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, this bill would bring back to Manitoba a tradition that has been long held throughout Canada and, in fact, the Commonwealth. This bill will allow the opportunity for the government, through a way that will be non-partisan, to recognize lawyers who have provided great service to the community. Most provinces have the QC designation. Many lawyers have it, but the previous government took it away. This would just bring the QC back and to the credit of the legal profession.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

* (13:40)

**Bill 211—The Employment Standards Code
Amendment Act**

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 211, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce for first reading, Bill 211, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, and I won't do it in French this time.

This bill amends the Employment Standards Code to increase employees' entitlement to unpaid parental leave from 37 weeks to 63 weeks. The period within which that leave must be commenced is extended from one year to 78 weeks.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration. Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial Statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Donald Hrynyk

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): It is my pleasure today to present Donald Hrynyk as a Dawson Trail hero. I had the opportunity to meet Donald recently at a Take Your MLA to Work Day.

Donald works at Normandeu Sheet Metal, in Ste. Anne, Manitoba. Normandeu produces sheet metal products for buildings, contracting and ventilation. Donald has worked at Normandeu for over three years. In that time period, Donald has missed only one day of work. Donald is known to be a consistent and hard worker.

He knows his job and is well respected by his co-workers, who are happy to work with him. The only thing they might be unhappy with is his dependability, which puts a positive pressure on them to be just as committed.

Donald's position at Normandeu is arranged through Eastman Employment Services. Eastman Employment Services is a non-for-profit that connects employees—employers with job seekers with diverse abilities. Eastman's efforts within Dawson Trail have created opportunities for persons like Donald to work independently and successfully, to the benefit of both employee and employer.

As the MLA for Dawson Trail, I would like to extend my heartfelt thank you to Eastman Employment Services. They are here today to represent Donald, who was unable to be here himself. He did not want to miss another day of work.

Please rise and join me in acknowledging Eastman Employment Services and our newest Dawson Trail hero, Donald Hrynyk.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine)—or, pardon me, Point Douglas.

Seven Oaks School Division GSA

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Gay-straight alliance is a school-led club providing a

sense of community and safe supportive spaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, queer, questioning and straight ally students. This is a place where LGBTTTQ and allies are building a strong social network where all identities are respected. It's an opportunity for students and staff to educate themselves and the broader community while working together to promote equality and end any stigma.

Maples Collegiate has had a gay-straight alliance since the early 2000s. Seeing its success, the division progressively implemented policy changes prior to NDP's passing Bill 19, the safe and inclusive schools act, to begin introducing gay-straight alliances in every school. Seven Oaks School Division has made it a top priority to provide a gender inclusive environment.

Seven Oaks has active GSAs in all of their senior and middle years schools and in a number of their elementary schools. The growing number of GSAs in Seven Oaks over the past five years has played a key role in shifting school culture toward a more inclusive space for LGBTTTQ students.

Each November, Seven Oaks holds its Divisional GSA Gathering where students and staff come together to connect and learn more from one another on sharing ideas on how to make Seven Oaks even more inclusive for LGBTTTQ members of the community. This year, over 250 students in grades 4 to 12 gathered at Maples Collegiate for their third annual GSA gathering. The event has had many—has held too many school—the annual event has helped many schools in the division start their own GSAs.

The GSA gathering, gender neutral bathrooms, educational videos, LGBTTTQ training for staff and students, participating in Pride week, Pride Day in their own schools—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to quickly conclude her statement? *[Agreed]*

Mrs. Smith: —or Pride Day in their schools each year are some of the divisional initiatives that continue to build on the amazing work that these young leaders have achieved.

Today we are joined by many of these students from Seven Oaks School Division who are founding members of the GSAs in their schools. These students are not only community leaders, but they're

working for equality for all Manitobans. Your efforts don't go unnoticed.

Please join me in welcoming them and congratulating them in all of their hard work.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to inform this House—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas?

Mrs. Smith: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include names in the Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have those names included in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

École James-Nisbet: Megan Brett, teacher; Manny Calisto, VP; Makayla Koropas, Isabella Pereira, Rhett Mortel, Connor Eaton; Arthur E. Wright Community School: Garret Sutton, teacher; Kaycee Galicia, Myron Fajardo, Alex Payawal, Xylon Pasion, Jamie Anderson; Maples Collegiate: Lynda Brethauer-Venton, teacher; Julia Stern, Javon Cabrera, Cynthia Wood

Alex Wishart

Mr. Wishart: I am honoured to inform this House about a—Portage la Prairie's Alex Wishart, the first Canadian cadet to participate and complete a march alongside soldiers in the Netherlands' Nijmegen March.

The 16-year-old is the youngest Canadian military person to walk 40 kilometres a day for four days to complete the gruelling 160-kilometre march, all this while undergoing treatment for leukemia.

Alex is diagnosed when he was 14 years old and, while going through treatment, the idea of the march came to his mind. His family reached out to the minister of defence, and, shortly after, his wish was granted. He prepared for the overseas trek by hiking near his home with a weighted backpack.

The Nijmegen March, which started in 1909 as a military exercise, has become an annual event in the Netherlands that Canadian military teams take part in. This year's march attracted 42,036 participants between July 18th and 21st.

Alex wanted to complete Nijmegen to prove to himself and other cancer survivors that anything is possible along the road to recovery. Alex's health is improving and he has recently completed his 'chemotherapy' treatments.

I ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating Alex Wishart on participating in this life-changing event and completing the Nijmegen March to—his determination and commitment to overcoming life's obstacles is truly an inspiration.

Northern Communities Recover After Mill Closure

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): This month will mark one year since our community was facing the possible closure of the paper mill in The Pas. It was August of 2016 when our community, my hometown of The Pas at Opaskwayak Cree Nation, received the announcements of the closure and letting us know the mill was up for sale.

Our immediate reaction was shock and distress for an unforeseeable future for many employees, their families and friends. However, our community pulled together. Everyone, including our paper mill employees, local leadership, First Nation leadership, local business leaders and union representatives, all came together to find a solution.

I'm very proud to be part of a community that came together to save and keep jobs in northern Manitoba and, most importantly, allowing our families and children to remain in their hometown of The Pas.

It is with absolute love and respect that I rise here today to acknowledge their strength, leadership and commitment to their home. This truly represents our resilience as northern Manitobans.

I want to recognize the American Industrial Acquisition Corporation that came forward to purchase the mill and name it the craft—Canadian Kraft Paper Industries.

My heart and gratitude goes out to the employees of the mill who took a hit to their paycheques and their pensions by investing to ensure that this community remained together. First Nations were part of the solution and were included as participants within their traditional territory. This is truly a testament of their teamwork, and I cannot thank them enough.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and welcoming Jim Scott, the mayor for the town of The Pas and my good friend, for joining us to accept recognition on behalf of the community of The Pas.

Thank you.

*(13:50)

Elmer Hildebrand

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate Elmer Hildebrand, CEO of Golden West Broadcasting company, on more than 60 years of growth and success. In 1957, Elmer began his career at Golden West as a copywriter. By 1965, he was the general manager of the company.

Under Elmer's steady guidance, Golden West Broadcasting has expanded and flourished. What began as a single AM radio station in Altona has grown into a chain of—with 43 AM and FM stations. In time, where many media companies are reporting losses, cutting service and reducing staff, Golden West Broadcasting remains committed to the—providing communities with quality radio content. In recognition of Elmer's outstanding work, the Golden West Broadcasting company was selected as one of Canada's 50 best managed companies in 2005.

In addition to leading the Golden West Broadcasting company, Elmer is dedicated to giving back to his community. Elmer has served on many broadcast-related boards across Canada. For example, Mr. Hildebrand is one of the founding members of the Broadcasters Association of Manitoba and a former president of western association broadcasters.

Equally important to his work in the field of broadcasting is Elmer's dedication to improving communities across Manitoba. Elmer played an essential role in the construction of housing developments on an industrial park in Altona as well as fundraising for the Millennium Recreation Complex.

Elmer's hard work has contributed to the success of the Golden West Broadcasting company and helped to improve a number of communities in southern Manitoba.

Please join me in congratulating the hard work and dedication of Mr. Elmer Hildebrand.

Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery from H.S. Paul School 45 grade 5 and 6 students under the direction of Corinna Fulton and Ian Pudsey, and this

group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Changes to Health-Care Services Nursing Profession Recommendations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today is Wear White Wednesday, when we wear white to stand in solidarity—front-line workers in our health-care system like nurses, many of whom are joining us today as part of the delegation from the Manitoba Nurses Union. I was advised against wearing a white suit myself, so I'll settle for the pocket square.

The cuts that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is making to our health-care system will make—will take a generation to repair, and we know that these cuts are being driven by dollars and cents, not by consultations with front-line workers in our health-care system. We know that nurses didn't recommend that 30 of their colleagues at Victoria General Hospital be left without work. We know that they didn't recommend nurses at the burn unit in the Health Sciences Centre be fired and that nurses at Grace Hospital lose their jobs.

Before the government lays off any more nurses or makes more cuts to the health-care system, will the Premier commit to listening and really hearing the advice given to him by nurses in our province?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Certainly, we know that the former government spent almost a generation—17 years—dismantling the health-care system, Madam Speaker, making it last in so many different areas that Manitobans rely on, making it last when it comes to wait times for critical procedures, making it last when it comes to wait times in emergency rooms.

We know that Manitobans wanted a change. They wanted to ensure that their health-care system got better. They wanted to ensure that the wait times got shorter. We're making those changes that the former government didn't have the courage to do so that Manitobans in the future—future generations of Manitobans—have shorter wait times, better care and more access to health care, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the cuts made by the last Conservative government in this province took a generation to repair. These Conservative MLAs had a generation to think of a better health-care plan, and they come back and their answer is still to cut nurses. Nothing has changed with respect to their agenda.

I would share with the Health Minister some 4,500 signatures to a petition collected by nurses all across our province. I would table these so that our colleague could look at them. And what they're calling for in this petition is that the government reverse these harmful cuts and closures of emergency rooms and instead commit to real investments in health care.

Will the Minister of Health listen to the priorities of nurses in our province?

Mr. Goertzen: The Leader of the Official Opposition is advocating that we go back to the funding levels of the former NDP government. He is suggesting that we should go back to the funding levels when they left government. That would require us having to cut \$450 million out of the health-care budget, Madam Speaker, because we actually have a record level of investment in health care.

So while the member opposite, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, stands up and says we need to go back to what the former NDP government had, he should know that that would be the equivalent of four or five Health Sciences Centres.

Does he really want us to do that, Madam Speaker?

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

Mr. Kinew: What a clear illustration that this government does not know how to listen. Twice I get up and ask the Minister of Health to listen to nurses, and he stands up and says, I heard cuts, I heard cuts. Cuts, cuts, cuts, cuts: that's all that he thinks about with respect to our health-care system.

I would share with my colleague a further 4,500 signatories collected online by nurses in our province asking this government to reverse its harmful plan for cuts, its plan to close emergency rooms in this province and instead bring forward real investments in health care in our province that are—

An Honourable Member: Table them.

Mr. Kinew: I would table those for the benefit of our colleague—but instead of these cuts, bring forward real investments that are designed in consultations with front-line health workers in our province, such as the nurses who are with us here today.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, the only cuts that there were, were cuts to the NDP caucus after the last election. And there were cuts to the NDP caucus because Manitobans knew that there needed to be change. Manitobans knew that the health-care system wasn't working. Millions of dollars, tens of millions, hundreds of millions were being poured into the system, and yet it wasn't improving.

Now, we've listened to nurses in many different ways, and I was pleased that nurses more recently said that they were very pleased that we were able to transition the profession under The Regulated Health Professions Act. In fact, they came to the Legislature and they said the NDP didn't listen to them for many, many years, trying to get them transitioned under the RHPA, and they thanked our government for finally listening to nurses, Madam Speaker.

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

Federal Parental Leave Changes Timeline for Provincial Legislation

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, on a new question.

In the last budget the federal government announced changes to employment insurance which would allow Canadians to receive benefits for up to 18 months after the birth of a child. Now, these changes will take effect as of December 3rd, which is this coming weekend, and they require changes to provincial statutes, amendments to the Employment Standards Code in our province, so that parents can access this leave without losing their jobs—essentially that you can have pat. leave or mat. leave and still have a job to return to after those 18 months.

With just two business days until the deadline, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has yet to introduce any legislation which would ensure that Manitoba law comes into line with this new federal initiative. Now, we don't want parents in our province to get left behind.

Will the Premier tell us today why his government has refused to act to ensure that Manitoba

families can access equitable parental leave in this province?

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

Essentially, the question is about affordability to Manitoba families, and we accept the premise of that question. And I want to respond to that member and say that we are focused on increasing the conditions in which Manitobans can continue to keep more money in their pockets.

* (14:00)

We have indexed the tax brackets. We have raised the basic personal exemption. These measures seem modest at first, but I assure Manitobans, over time this will mean millions and millions of dollars more in the pockets of Manitoba families. These are only some of the measures that we are taking to ensure that Manitobans can continue to have affordability in their households.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, Madam Speaker, unless there are changes to provincial statute brought in by this weekend, parents in this province will not be able to access the parental leave which has been announced under this new federal initiative.

Now, initially, I was worried that perhaps it was the influence of their friends in big business which was causing this unnecessary delay, but listening to that response from the Minister of Finance, I wonder whether they're just not aware that this legislative change was needed, because it does not appear that they're briefed on the file.

We have been paying attention. My colleague from Flin Flon brought forward a piece of legislation today which would make the necessary changes to statutes in our province so that Manitoba families could access this parental leave.

Will this Premier put aside partisanship and pass our bill tomorrow?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I thank the member—or the Leader of the Opposition for the question. He made the assertion earlier that this government wasn't listening, but nothing could be further from the truth. It's a matter of fact that in only two budgetary cycles we've heard from over 60,000 Manitobans in unique interactions: in-person meetings, online

consultations, letters, surveys online. It indicates the way that we are listening.

Now, that party never listened to Manitobans and they paid the price for doing that. So when the member says that somehow we're not listening, he could not be further from the truth. We'll continue to listen to Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, my wife and I have been talking about parental leave lately and I can tell you that it's a very important issue to us. It's a very important issue to many expecting families in this province and I can tell you that it's disappointing to hear the Minister of Finance completely dodge the question. It appears that he does not know what we're talking about. It's quite simple: statutes in this province need to be changed by this weekend otherwise Manitoba families will miss out on the chance to access this new 18-month-long maternity or paternity leave program and ensure that they have a job to return to at the end of that period.

Now, my colleague from Flin Flon has brought in a bill which would accomplish these legislative changes. What we're asking for from this government is very, very simple: pass the bill, call the committee tomorrow and ensure that it receives royal assent before the weekend so that Manitoba parents don't miss out.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

Of course, maternity and paternity benefits are very important to Manitoba families. My wife and I, myself, found that was a very, very important program for us when we were raising our children and taking that leave from the workplace.

In many respects, of course, this is a proposed solution rushing ahead of what needs to be a good dialogue with Manitobans, needs to be a consultation. There needs to be listening to employees and employers to determine what is adequate, and are the provisions that are in place right now inadequate or are they sufficient for these purposes?

We welcome that dialogue and we—as we have been listening to Manitobans, we'll continue to listen to them.

Provincial Cannabis Strategy Media Presence at Conference

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Premier (Mr. Pallister) promised transparency, but he refuses to listen to Manitobans about the issues they care about. The Premier undermined democratic norms by shutting down committees and forcing through omnibus bills. He refuses to release reports after promising that he would.

Now, at the annual AMM meeting, the Premier ordered the media to be excluded from a briefing where they talked to municipal leaders about provincial cannabis strategy.

The media play a vital role in keeping Manitobans informed.

Why did the Premier refuse to allow Manitobans to see what changes he has planned for this province?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Well, Madam Speaker, the member talks about shutting out media. We can talk about how the NDP shut out the municipalities a number of years ago with forced amalgamation. On the eve of their convention, the NDP announced that they were going to amalgamate, get rid of a third of the municipalities across Manitoba. In fact, they went so low as they started to call them howling coyotes. That's how the NDP treated municipalities in the past. We are doing better. We will treat them as full partners.

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

Executive Government Acting Premier Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Premier has said, and I quote: We have a structure on our team with people delegated and designated to be in charge of the province. End quote.

But Manitobans are in the dark about this very structure. We know last week the Premier did not sign orders-in-council. Instead, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) authorized orders-in-council as acting Premier.

The government needs to be open with Manitobans.

Who is acting today, Madam Speaker, as premier for Manitoba, and for how long have they been acting?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Deputy Premier): And that is the very definition of what it means to be a Deputy Premier, and I thank the member opposite and I'm glad she understands that.

I also want to take this opportunity to wish our Premier (Mr. Pallister) well. He's taking some much-needed rest after an accident that he suffered from and we wish him well, and our hearts and thoughts are with he and his family at this time.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The salient point is acting Deputy Premier. Transparency means being open with Manitobans, acknowledging that we deserve to know who is making decisions on our very lives—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Every time Cabinet meets, the fate of our children, seniors and families are affected—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: We deserve to know who is responsible and who is acting for this province, Madam Speaker.

Section 4 of The Executive Government Organization Act states the Lieutenant Governor may, in either cases—special cases or generally, appoint a minister as acting minister during the absence or incapacity from any cause of that minister. Manitobans deserve to know who is presently acting as premier of Manitoba and for how long have they been acting.

Mrs. Stefanson: As Deputy Premier, I do fill in for the Premier at various functions. I fill in for him when he is not able to attend certain things. That is the very definition of being a Deputy Premier.

So—and when—and we want to make sure that we have people in place who act as ministers who cannot be there for that day or, you know, for whatever reason. That's why we always have people in place to ensure that the functions of government happen on a daily basis. That is happening right now, Madam Speaker.

Winnipeg Ambulance Service Municipal Funding Agreement

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, at the AMM convention in Brandon—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan:—mayors, Reeves and councillors from urban and rural communities alike echoed their concerns about changes to emergency medical services in Manitoba. The common thread is the lack of consultation and information for communities worried about this vital front-line service.

Now, maybe we can excuse the Minister of Health, as he's too busy to speak to every affected community in Manitoba, but I can't believe he wouldn't have time to speak to Manitoba's largest municipality.

Manitobans say they need strong emergency care. Why has this government frozen funding for Winnipeg's ambulance service?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I'm not sure why the member opposite, the member for Minto, would suggest that there is a lack of consultation on the 2013 Toews report. We weren't in government in 2013. He was in government. I believe he may have still been in Cabinet at the time when the 2013 Toews report was released.

So if they failed to do consultations prior to the report and failed to do consultations when it was released, I would certainly say they should have done more consultations.

The member is right, and shame on him, Madam Speaker.

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

* (14:10)

Mr. Swan: The mayor of Winnipeg has revealed the Province has reneged on the long-standing practice of cost sharing for ambulances in the city. To make it worse, the Province broke the news of a freeze for the current year and next year to the City in a letter delivered last week on the City's budget day.

The City budgeted for inflationary increases in accordance with the long-standing agreement. It means that this year the City will see a shortfall of \$5.5 million in revenue and another \$12.4 million in revenue for next year.

How can this minister expect the people of Winnipeg to believe his government's choice to renege on this long-standing agreement won't affect the health of Winnipeggers?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I know the member has been busy on his tour of misinformation. He was spreading misinformation in Brandon yesterday. He's returned to spread misinformation in Winnipeg today.

Between 2015 and 2016, there was an increase of the City of Winnipeg for ambulance service of 28 per cent, Madam Speaker. Now, of course, we've also indicated to them that we are locking in that 28 per cent increase for 2017.

There can be ongoing discussions about other sources of funding, but if the member opposite thinks that a 28 per cent increase of funding year over year is sustainable, he has a strange definition of sustainability for taxpayers, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, if the Minister of Health is saying the mayor of Winnipeg is lying, I invite him to go out in the hall and make that allegation. We know—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —this government has abandoned—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: We know this government has already abandoned its promise to municipalities of fair share and fair say. First they did it with transit service and now they've stuck the City with an unexpected bill for ambulance services.

They're closing EMS stations across rural Manitoba and refuse to tell communities their plan. This minister's left Manitobans across the province, in communities large and small, out in the cold, and now he's trying to download responsibility for a health-care service on the people of Winnipeg.

Will the minister reverse the government's decision and assure the City of Winnipeg that they can count on the inflationary increase and adequate support for Winnipeg's ambulance service?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, let me be clear on two things. The misinformation at this particular moment which is being spread is being

spread by the member for Minto. I'm sure there'll be more misinformation from whoever asks the question on the other side. But at this moment it's the member for Minto that is spreading misinformation.

When it comes to funding for ambulances in Winnipeg, Madam Speaker, there was an increase between 2015 and 2016 of 28 per cent. We have said to the City of Winnipeg that the funding for next year will be no less. There can be continued discussions in terms of funding.

But if any taxpayer in Manitoba, whether they live in Winnipeg, whether they live in Brandon, or they live anywhere else in Manitoba, really believes that a 28 per cent increase is sustainable for them or their families, they're wrong, and the member for Minto is wrong and I'll stand with taxpayers, Madam Speaker.

New Home Warranty Act Timeline for Implementation

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): It seems increasingly that this is a government that's run by consultants and for consultants. Earlier this week, we learned that they farmed out the writing of the Throne Speech to a consultant. But what we don't know is which of the consultants that they've hired recommended that they delay the implementation of The New Home Warranty Act.

Homebuyers want to know, Madam Speaker, so could the government tell us today: Why did they delay implementing the new homebuyer act?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member asked these questions yesterday. We answered these questions yesterday.

The fact of the matter is the members opposite had 17 years to make this a priority. They never did. Shame on them. Where they failed, we will deliver.

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

Mr. Allum: We asked again today because yesterday's answer was lousy, and today's answer was no better.

The New Home Warranty Act was introduced in November 2012 and it was passed in December 2013. That gave ample time for municipalities and the government and industry all to come together to understand how the bill can be implemented, and yet

the government seems intent on delaying it not only for one year, but for another two years.

Why does this Premier (Mr. Pallister) think that new homes for Manitobans is unimportant?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite makes my very point. The fact of the matter is they introduced legislation that they never proclaimed. Clearly, it wasn't a priority for their government.

And, Madam Speaker, we will always stand on the side of new homeowners and ensuring that they are protected. We will also—we take a balanced approach to this. We also have respect for Manitoba Home Builders' Association. The—this very issue came up at the AMM meetings yesterday.

We will take a balanced and responsible approach when it comes to this, and where members opposite failed, again, we will deliver, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, in fact, the Attorney General just made my point. We gave several years in order for municipalities and industry and the provincial government to get their act together with an implementation date of January 1st—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —2017.

And you can see, Madam Speaker, that this is a joke to the government. It's a laughing matter to the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —government, but it's not a joke to those who want to buy their home or want to buy a new home.

So we want to ask the government today: Will they reverse course and will they get on with implementing The New Home Warranty Act as of January 1st, 2018?

Get on with it. No more delays.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite makes my very point for me. I—this is the most unbelievable thing.

They had the opportunity to make sure that this was a priority when they were in government.

For 17 years they didn't make it a priority. They passed legislation. They never had it proclaimed. It wasn't a priority for them.

We take a new approach, a balanced approach. We consult with Manitobans. We will continue to consult with Manitobans on this very issue. We will continue to protect new homeowners in our province. We will continue to respect the work that is done by Home Builders' Association, by AMM, by all other organizations.

And, Madam Speaker, where they failed, again, we will deliver.

Canada Child Tax Benefit Funds for Children in Care

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, in 2016 the federal government increased the Canada child tax benefit for children all across Canada. Our families here in Manitoba now receive half a billion more per year than they did before, yet the most vulnerable children, 11,000 children in government care, see none of it. Rather, the tens of millions go into general revenue. This is illegal.

Why does the government feel that they can steal money from Manitoba's most vulnerable children?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I can tell you that this side of the House, I'm sure all members of the House, care about vulnerable Manitobans, and we'll continue to do that.

Our government is reviewing the special allowance aspects in terms of the payments in terms of the federal government that's a part of it. That's a review that is going on. That is a process, by the way, that was started under the previous NDP government and it's also a process that a number of provincial governments across the country are doing.

So we are consistent with other provincial—provinces as we move forward.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Allow me to quote the Minister of Education from February 25th, 2016. The minister said these illegal, immoral clawbacks impacted these agencies and left them vulnerable, them being the children. The minister continues: How does this government steal the future of these most vulnerable children and call that fair?

Madam Speaker, I table these quotes and I suggest that the two ministers get on the same page.

The new Canada child benefit means this government could double its intake to \$66 million a year.

Just how much money is the government going to illegally take from children in care this year?

* (14:20)

Mr. Fielding: I can guarantee you that this government supports vulnerable children, as I mentioned in the previous answer. It's the same answer as it was 30 seconds ago.

That policy is under review. It's something that was started under NDP government and is something that is done across the provinces in terms of the collections for this.

That is our policy. It is under review and we'll continue to review and monitor that in terms of any changes that happen under the federal government level.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this government has had ample time to get past this review and they are not above the law.

Allow me to quote and table what the Minister of Education said on November 23rd, 2015. The minister said this NDP government stole the money from the trust fund of the children in care and in doing so stole the good start in life. Again, I table the quote and I point out that this Conservative government is doing the exact same thing. Currently, there are 638 children in unpaid care and this government is taking \$3.7 million away from them.

Will this government cease this immediately?

Mr. Fielding: Again, this is something—a policy that's under review. Our department is reviewing a whole number of things in terms of our child-welfare reform. A part of that is looking at the SPAs. That's a part of that. That review will be a part of reviewing our operating agencies and our agreements in terms of agencies. That process is under way and continues to go forward as we reform the child-welfare system, the process and the results of the legacy of what the NDP has left our 'goverwin'.

Update on Provincial Finances Deficit Reduction and Public Services

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, last week in this government's Speech from the Throne we outlined our commitment to correcting the course and making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada by continuing to fix the province's finances, improve services and rebuild the economy.

Can the Minister of Finance outline for this House on action he and his department are taking to repair the finances of Manitoba for the benefit of future generations?

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

Well, our government has made progress on fixing the finances, as the Public Accounts indicate, with a reduction of the deficit of \$147 million last year.

We are also making other progress that the Throne Speech clearly outlines. One of those areas of progress is in the area of public service transformation strategy that we are bringing with a renewed focus on services for citizens, a renewed focus on harnessing the talent and abilities of our civil servants and a focus on a commitment to fostering innovation.

Madam Speaker, these times call for vision, courage and action, and this government is taking the necessary actions to make sure that we focus on Manitobans.

Education Property Tax Credit Government Plan

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, life continues to get more unaffordable for all Manitobans under this Pallister government. The recent Throne Speech that was tabled made it clear that this government plans to continue to cut services and download onto other jurisdictions while increasing the burden on individual Manitobans.

The government has already cut tax credits for seniors and they've provided no signal to Manitobans that there's not more pain to come.

Can the Education Minister tell the House: Is he planning on reducing the Education Property Tax Credit that helps keep life affordable for so many Manitobans?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): We work constructively with school divisions across the province to make sure that we get a good-quality education for all Manitoba students, something that didn't seem to happen under the previous government. During that period of time that they were in government we went from No. 5 in the nation to dead last. I'm sure that won't be construed as an improvement in anyone's books. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the fact is that the—this government's KPMG report called for reduction in tax credits. This same report was the report that called for making class sizes bigger, making tuition less affordable for students, cutting housing supports and downloading costs onto municipalities. And the Pallister government has shown that it takes its direction from outside consultants, not from Manitobans.

The Education Property Tax Credit helps keep life affordable for tens of thousands of homeowners and renters in this province.

Will the minister commit to preserving it at its current level of support?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for his question. I know he's concerned about affordability and sustainability for Manitobans.

Unfortunately, their government didn't set a very good example in terms of education funding when it comes to sustainability. They left Manitobans, including the students, with additional debt of \$25 billion. That's hardly construed as sustainability.

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

Farmland School Tax Rebate Government Plan

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, the questions are on tax credits to individuals and maybe the minister didn't get the memo, but, in fact, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) did say that this was something that he would consider. So not only is the Premier saying this is something that he would consider, but also the KPMG report follows up on that.

Similarly, the farmland school tax supports our rural economy by providing Manitoba farmers with

school tax relief. The tax credit saves farmland over-owners over \$35 million annually. Municipalities debating this issue today, this week here in Brandon, and the KPMG report has called this—on this government to reduce the benefit.

I ask the minister: Will he commit to preserving the benefit, or is he planning on cutting that too?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): What we will commit is to working with Manitoba school divisions to find a path forward for the sustainable funding of Manitoba education, something the previous government could never seem to find.

Madam Speaker, we want good results for Manitoba students. We do not want to play games with their future and leave them in debt.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Five-Year Plan Review

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act requires the government to review Manitoba's five-year poverty reduction strategy in May of 2017. That deadline has come and gone, and only now is the government starting to consult on a consultation plan.

Why isn't this government following the law and making a poverty reduction strategy a priority?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): This government ensures that vulnerable Manitobans are supported, and that's why they've introduced a poverty reduction strategy.

We're going to do something that the NDP failed to do: actually consult with residents of Manitoba to develop a comprehensive plan to reduce and help individuals, low-income Manitobans, live a better life.

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

Mrs. Smith: We know what their consultation plans look like. They make the decisions and hear Manitobans, but they've already got the decision made already.

They promised to update a poverty reduction strategy in 2016. This has come and gone. Budget 2017 provided that the—update strategy by the end of this calendar year. Now, under heavy criticism and just weeks before Christmas, the government is only now doing consultations on a consultation document.

Why isn't the poverty reduction a priority for this government, and why aren't they following the law?

Mr. Fielding: It's a little rich for members of the opposition to talk about affordability for low-income Manitobans. We know what their track record was when they were government in terms of their support for—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —low—individual persons. The PST increase is something that impacts people most.

If you talk about our plan, what we've committed to is ensuring that there's real measurement of our plan. We're also committed to targets, which a lot of the advocates will tell you is very important: was not part of NDP's plan, which they failed to consult on.

We're going to get it right, Madam Speaker.

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

Mrs. Smith: Putting money over people is not getting it right. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) is kicking the can down the road for no reason.

* (14:30)

He pretends that he wants to listen to people, to Manitobans who experience poverty first-hand. But what I've heard, and many of us have heard, is that, don't cut Rent Assist. Don't raise rents for tenants in social housing. Don't cut funds that improve the quality of housing. Don't cut the municipal transit system. Don't make education more expensive. But they aren't listening.

Will this government start to listen to low-income Manitobans and stop their cuts?

Mr. Fielding: Again, we hear from the members of the opposition. There's a reason why they're opposition: because they didn't listen to Manitobans. That's the problem. That's the problem and that's the problem for a party that's supposed to represent or acclaim—self-proclaim to represent low-income Manitobas.

I can tell you they've done nothing. They've done nothing, Madam Speaker, except for raise things like the PST that impacts low-income individuals the worst.

Our government is taking concrete action—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: We've increased the Rent Assist budget by over \$39 million; 2,200 low-income Manitobans, are supported. You could fill a convention centre twice over with the amount of people that our government has supported through the Rent Assist program.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Personal-Care Homes Senior Immigrant Population

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I wish I had the eighth question, but I could not get that.

Many senior immigrants can't speak English and have difficulty learning due to age. Newly established ethnocultural communities lack culturally sensitive senior and personal-care-home facilities.

Does the honourable minister have any plan to consider constructing culturally sensitive senior and personal-care homes for such communities?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the question. He is certainly correct that Manitoba has been and will continue to be built by the many new Canadians who are coming to our province, who look to our province as a place where they can raise their families, who look to a province—they can do so in peace, that they can have freedoms that they may not have in their own individual countries. And, of course, they look to Manitoba as a place of hope, as a place of opportunity, Madam Speaker.

And in all the different things that those individuals who are coming and bringing to Manitoba are looking for, we, as a government, are open to that. We want to work with them. We want to ensure that Manitoba continues to be the open and welcoming place that it's always been, that Manitoba will be the home of hope for everyone who wants to come to Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Access to Health Care

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by Sherry Vendsel, Hilario Barreo [*phonetic*], Galina Bartel and other Manitobans.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

Fourth, the provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Allum: —a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Olive Hillier, Penny Parynchuk [*phonetic*] and Kalyne Lepine; many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

* (14:40)

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

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

Signed by many, many Manitobans, including many of the Manitobans that we have in the gallery today.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The—I would point out to the member that she has breached the rules of the House in terms of adding extra commentary to her statements, so—to her petition. So we do accept her apology.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Ruth Allen, Gail Matriation [*phonetic*], Dianne Cooper and many others.

Access to Health Care

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

* (14:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health-care facilities.

Signed by many, many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Larry Mountain, Chris Walker, Amanda Doty and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by Michelle Jack, Memory Fletcher, Maggy Botterill, and many other Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Sorry, the honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Would you resume debate on the Throne Speech?

THRONE SPEECH (Sixth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the motion of the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Families, who has five minutes remaining.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I'm very pleased to stand up here. I spoke of a number of different elements why this Throne Speech is so important. One is, of course, fixing the finances and repairing the services.

And what I'll probably do with my—rest of my five minutes is talk more or less in terms of the areas of families and vulnerable individuals. I think it's so important here. Our government is obviously committed to addressing child-care issues. We know

we're working with the federal government. We're getting—there'll be further investments, partnerships with the federal government and provincial government in terms of child care. We're on the edges of having an agreement with the federal government signed where there'll be more spaces that are created. We think that's important. We think that's an important endeavour to be a part of that.

We know that the system that was left from the previous NDP government was inadequate for parents, and it's something that left so many parents on the wait-list that it's taking a while to dig out from under.

We also are making important investments in the housing budget. There, of course, was the National Housing Strategy that was unveiled with the federal government just over the last week or so, and I can tell you that our government is very much interested. They're committed to listening to what the federal government has putting on the table.

The next steps in terms of that process and that identified through—of course, through the Throne Speech, Madam Speaker, is a partnership agreement with the federal government. We'll be having some meetings with the federal government, all the ministers, in mid-January. That's an opportunity for us to sign on to the national framework in terms of housing.

We need to make sure that Manitoba is supported on all aspects we can. There's still not some agreements in terms of some of the funding formulas. We want to make sure that Manitoba is whole, if you will. There were some promising elements to this. I do like the portable shelter benefit that has been a part of that, something, of course, that we've had in Manitoba through the Rent Assist program and increased by this government over the last two years.

*(15:00)

After the agreement is signed, and making sure it's—it makes sense for Manitobans, we'll sign a bilateral agreement, and that will mix in quite nicely with our provincial housing strategy which we've done over the last year. We consulted close to 1,500 Manitobans. We want to make sure that we have a housing strategy that's going forward that's going to make sense for Manitobans, and that's exactly what this government has done.

Turning to an important topic, and it's hard to convey everything a part of it in just over two

minutes, but our child-welfare reforms, we know the system that was left under the previous NDP government where you had over 85 per cent increases in the amount of kids in care and a 73 per cent increase in the days in care. Our Throne Speech identified a strong plan, a comprehensive plan, a robust plan that looks to address the child welfare crisis that's been left by the NDP government.

It's really a four-point-part plan. Number 1 is to develop community-based prevention sites with citizens and businesses. There's a number of groups that are out there, things that are a part of this, that do a very good job in terms of the community, in terms of the prevention, in terms of the intervention.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We want to emulate that. A good example is that through the United Way, the funding that goes to the family centres. That's a model that we need to look at.

We need to develop lifelong connections for reunification and permanence. We know, of course, under the NDP government, there was far too many children taken into care. In fact, it increased by over 85 per cent, which is a shame when you think that this is a government that really talks about child welfare but really didn't get the job done, Madam Speaker.

We're going to get the job done with everything that we've committed to. We think the partnerships with places like Ma Mawi, where you have family group conferencing that show upwards of 70 per cent reunification with parents, is important. It's important, it's evidence-based and something that we hope that the NDP and opposition members would support.

We also think that we need to provide lifelong connections through providing supports for lifelong connections through legal guardians. That's something that we know evidence suggests will support better outcomes for individuals, which I think everyone in this Chamber can very much support.

We also know that we need to redevelop and create a funding system for success. And right now, we have a system where you had individuals or organizations that are paid, essentially, for the amount of kids in care and the days in care. We want to move more towards a system where it's block funding. That's something we've heard extensively

when we've done our consultations with agencies. I think they're very happy with that process. If you can provide block funding, that'll allow agencies the flexibility to provide supports for early intervention and prevention which I think everyone would agree will make a difference for individuals and children. That is an important element. We have good support. We had Richard De La Ronde from Sandy Bay that came out. We've—obviously have Nelson House; Felix Walker, who is the executive director there, has done a fabulous job in terms of that.

The final element of our plan, which we're proud of, is a legislative review that's going to review the whole—the comprehensive CFS plan overall as well as authorities to make sure it's action.

So this government is very much taking action and repairing the services that were—

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

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): We all get a crack at responding to the Throne Speech, and I wanted to start my comments by addressing one of the themes that we hear a lot about around here: transparency and accountability for what we do. And I want to start with when the new government first came in, on their budget, they failed to be accountable on their first budget because they failed to do a summary budget. They just gave us the operating budget. And some of the things that are normally covered in a summary budget were shifted into the operating budget to have a larger deficit, which wasn't particularly helpful. And other measures were taken to puff up the numbers. And that became something that even the media figured out and called them to account for.

The other thing that was immediately eliminated from their first budget was the affordability tables, what used to be called the Manitoba advantage. And the Manitoba advantage was a methodology developed by the previous Filmon government. It was an attempt to show all the factors which contribute to the cost of living in the province of Manitoba: taxes, auto-insurance rates, electricity rates, daycare rates, tuition fees, tax-property taxes, mortgage costs, daycare costs. All of those factors were taken into account to develop an index of how much it costs an individual to live in Manitoba or a family in Manitoba. And we used to look at different types of families, you know, triple-families with three children, single-parent families, new-single individuals starting out their careers in Manitoba.

And that affordability or Manitoba advantage set of tables has been completely eliminated from the budgets of this government, at the same time as they're cranking up all those rates for tuition and other matters like that, including utility rates, which makes the affordability advantage less transparent. So there's no transparency there as well, and the affordability advantage that was looked at, called the Manitoba advantage, was something that we sorely need to look at in Manitoba so that we get a complete picture of what the Manitoba situation is, relative to other jurisdictions.

And it does seem to me very—more than coincidental that they've eliminated the Manitoba advantage affordability tables at a time when they're doing their level best to crank up our rates for electricity, for home heating, for auto insurance, for tuition fees. We'll see later on what they do with daycare. But all of these matters are very much a matter of concern.

And then there was the utility bundle. We committed that we would keep the utilities for home, heating, electricity and auto insurance the lowest in the country. And the last time they printed the outcome of that, just this few months ago, what we discovered was is that Manitoba had a \$700 per citizen advantage over other jurisdictions in Canada. Any other jurisdiction in Canada, we were \$700 cheaper. But they're no longer going to publish that either. So there goes some more transparency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's real a problem when they talk about the ability to be transparent.

And the other thing they did was they took away the legislation we had for accountability and transparency on public-private partnerships. That was put in place so that if you're going to do a public-private partnership, you had to have a public-sector comparator. Nothing unique about that; it was done in British Columbia for years, and other jurisdictions as well.

But, by not having the public-sector comparator, the public really doesn't know whether the public-private partnership is delivering the best value for the money for Manitoba taxpayers when we put in place a road, or a bridge, or a school, or a personal care home or any other facility that's entered into and delivered through a public-private partnership. So the elimination of that public comparator is, really, a concern as well, from the transparency and accountability metrics that we all talk about and commit to in this Legislature.

What about the poverty reduction program? We have a—fairly unique in Manitoba that a poverty reduction plan is supposed to be presented of as part of every annual budget; it's a requirement. And, in the first two budgets, we've had nothing, other than the barest minimum of information. No real indication of progress, no indication of what investments have been made and, in fact, we know that some of the programs and some of the interventions planned for under the poverty reduction program have been cut back. And that's really, really unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we don't have a poverty reduction plan that allows people to see what improvements are being made. We know there are good things have gone on out there but they're being ignored by not having a poverty reduction plan.

And then, of course, there's the famous debate about wait times and whether wait times are getting better. Well, the wait times used to be measured based on the average time that it takes for somebody to wait, plus an indication of the longest wait time in a facility.

So, for example, if the member from Concordia wanted to look at what was happening at the Concordia Hospital, he could see the average wait time there. So there's an app that would show this. He could see the longest wait time, and he could compare that to every other facility in Winnipeg and determine where the best place to go was, including the urgent care centre, which no longer exists at Misericordia hospital.

Well, they've changed that methodology and they now go with the median, and the median no longer identifies what the longest wait time is. And, as a matter of fact, if you have a few patients that are waiting a long period of time to be seen in an emergency room, and you have many patients which are rotating through or getting looked at in a relatively reasonable period of time—one, two, three hours—and some small number that are waiting, say, six, seven, eight hours, the median biases towards the lower number. And that is a complete shift in methodology, which leaves Manitobans not being able to compare apples to apples; we're comparing apples to oranges, based on the old average wait time and the longest versus the median wait time, which no longer gives us information about the longest time to wait, and it no longer gives us the average amount of time that person's supposed to wait.

So changing the methodology doesn't mean improving health care; it means obscuring the ability

to compare whether progress is being made. And we have the minister standing up every day in the House and in public, saying things are getting better but using a different metric to measure that. And that is hardly transparent and fair for the people of Manitoba, when they change the rules in midstream and aren't accountable for it, Mr. Speaker.

*(15:10)

So let's be a little more humble about how we talk about transparency and accountability when we constantly toss out measures which give people information and substitute other measures, including no measures at all, which let people know what's going on.

So education, another example: There was an initiative to reduce class sizes. The minister continuously talks about the PISA scores. What he doesn't talk about is the Canadian education system is in the top 10 in the world no matter where you live in this country, and it's one of the best education systems. He never mentions the fact that the graduation rates have dramatically improved in Manitoba. They were 73 per cent; they're over 87 per cent now. That means more young people are completing high school and that includes—that doesn't include the number of people that are going through high school after going back to an adult education program or an ESL program and getting an upgrade to their education.

So, if we're going to talk about education success, surely we would want to know that as many young people as possible are completing high school. That's the fundamentals. If you complete high school, that's a ticket into community college or university or a trade or another career where there's a requirement for a high school education in order to be able to enter into that profession or trade.

So, by eliminating that discussion and constantly focusing on simply the ranking of an education system which is among the best in the world, really is a disservice to Manitobans.

How are we doing on graduation rates? Are they getting better in Manitoba? Are they being improved? Are we getting more young people completing high school? That is a very relevant stat we'd never discuss under the new government, and I think it's a wasted opportunity.

Now, the government likes to make a point that they've increased the amount of money in the budget to a record level as a reason to just—and then they use

that as a defence against cuts that have been made. Well, the question is: How reasonable are the cuts? When you cut Rent Assist, are people better off? No, they're not; they're more vulnerable. When you cut—when you increase the rates for people that live in social housing, are people better off or are they worse off? They're worse off. When you reduce and cap the minimum wage, do people have the ability to enter the labour force and do better? No. They are automatically excluded from getting a better minimum wage by the cap that's been put on it.

So, if you're limiting Rent Assist, if you're increasing social housing rental costs and you're keeping a hard cap on the minimum wage, Manitobans are going to get poorer relative to the opportunities that they had before and relative to what's happening in other jurisdictions in Canada where the minimum wage in some provinces is going up to 14 and 15 dollars an hour. That is not progress.

What about what we see with QuickCare clinics? Primary health care? I had a member of our caucus say today that he could not find a QuickCare clinic open anywhere in Manitoba this week when he was looking for it. They've all been shut. That was a front-line service that was providing primary health care to Manitobans. It was making an enormous difference in taking people's needs and addressing them as quickly as possible and diverting them from being in emergency rooms or even in urgent-care centres, and it was being done very cost effectively because the service was being delivered by nurses and nurse practitioners which have a fixed salary and a predictable budget that you can have for operating that QuickCare centre—QuickCare clinic.

And that is being—has been destroyed and we've lost that resource in Manitoba, and yet it's being innovated under different names in many other jurisdictions across Canada as a way of providing a low-cost entry to the health-care system for the non-critical life-threatening issues that Manitobans and citizens all across this country face every single day, and so that is a real shame, Mr. Speaker.

Just this week we learned that when it comes to physiotherapy, we know that those services are being cut and privatized in Manitoba. We saw Dr. Murray at the St. Boniface Hospital, who for 25 years worked with a team of health-care professionals to help people with hand surgery fully rehabilitate themselves through physiotherapy and other treatments which allowed them to start functioning

not only in the community, but back in the workforce as quickly as possible.

That 25 years of expertise, that teamwork that had been put together there has now been completely eliminated in the province of Manitoba. It's a complete waste of a resource and the expertise of a doctor and his team of professionals that put that service together, and it's something that benefited working people, people that needed to use their hands to make a living. And let's not kid ourselves, not everybody just makes a living by flapping their jaws. A lot of people actually use their hands to make a difference in the quality of lives of Manitobans, and they need that treatment. They need that hand-care physiotherapy which will now be lost to them.

What will that mean? They might be on workers comp for a longer period of time. They might have to change the trade or the occupation that they're doing because they no longer can have the proper use of their hands and sufficient strength to do the tasks that are in front of them. And I can tell you that it's a terrible loss of a resource.

And I know others have commented on what's happened to women's health services, lactation consultants, et cetera, in Manitoba, and those are a loss as well.

In our neighbourhoods, in the inner city, the member-members that represent inner-city neighbourhoods, all the Neighbourhoods Alive! programs have been dramatically destabilized. They used to get five-year funding and focussed their efforts on making those communities safer, on providing recreation programs, on providing housing safety programs and helping people have access to driver's licences and literacy programming and ESL, EAL programming, English as an additional language programming. They would adapt what they did to every neighbourhood that they worked in, and those programs have been gone from five-year contracts to not knowing whether they're going to be funded in a matter of months.

And so we're seeing good people that have devoted their careers to working in high-risk or neighbourhoods where there's a need for those services leaving those jobs. That is destroying the social infrastructure in neighbourhoods, and that will increase poverty and that will increase the demands on the health-care system.

And how is that progress, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I don't think it is. I don't think it's moving us forward in any way, shape or form.

The bus funding, there's been a lot of talk about the bus funding. Working people use the bus every single day to get to work so they can have a job, and now their minimum wage has been capped and their bus fare is going up far higher than the rate of inflation, which is all they're getting on the minimum wage. So their costs are going up, their wages are being stagnated at a time when there's opportunities in this province to have good jobs. And so that is a real mistake, to cut that 50-50 funding.

And then we heard today that the ambulance service—the ambulance service, that funding is being capped as well—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —on the argument that there had been a very dramatic increase in previous years.

The government said it was going to reduce ambulance fees—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Are they going to reduce ambulance fees at the same time as they cut the funding to ambulance services? Who's going to make up the difference? We'd like to know and we'd like to see the explanation for that.

Now I have to talk a bit about what's happened to some of the services in St. Boniface.

Flavie-Laurent: c'est une organisation qui aide les pauvres, les plus démunis ici dans la Province of Manitoba. Ils ont reçu une coupure dans leur budget qui a fait une énorme différence dans leur capacité à rencontrer les besoins des citoyens et citoyennes à travers le province de Manitoba, et en particulier dans la ville de Winnipeg.

Le Bureau de l'éducation française : depuis le commencement, il y a un sous-ministre adjoint là. Ça n'existe pas maintenant, c'est coupé sans aucune consultation. Nous avons passé dans une façon unanime dans cette législature le projet de loi numéro 5 pour l'épanouissement et la reconnaissance de la francophonie ici au Manitoba, et maintenant il n'y a aucune consultation avec la communauté avant ils ont coupé ces services, avant ils ont coupé la position du sous-ministre adjoint dans la province du Manitoba.

C'est un désastre, c'est une tragédie, ils ont fait ça dans une période quand il y a de plus en plus de jeunes familles qui aimeraient d'avoir accès à une éducation en français, et une éducation en immersion ou la possibilité d'aller à l'Université de Saint-Boniface, d'avoir leur formation postsecondaire dans une profession, dans un baccalauréat des arts ou sciences ou même dans un collège technique où ils peuvent le faire dans la langue française. On a perdu le leadership pour ça maintenant. C'est un énorme problème dans la communauté francophone ici au Manitoba et dans la communauté où il y a beaucoup de parents qui aimeraient leurs enfants d'avoir leur formation en français même si dans un programme d'immersion ou dans un programme de français cent pour cent. Ça, c'est un désastre.

And il y a les opportunités manquées ici au Manitoba.

Translation

Flavie-Laurent is an organization that helps the poor, the poorest here in the province of Manitoba. Their funding was cut, which makes a big difference in their ability to meet the needs of citizens throughout the province of Manitoba but especially in the city of Winnipeg.

The Bureau de l'éducation française has, from the beginning, always had an assistant deputy minister, but not anymore. The position was cut without any consultation. Bill 5, The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act, was unanimously passed in this Legislature, but there was no consultation with the community before they cut those services, before they cut the position of the ADM for the province of Manitoba.

It's a disaster. It's a tragedy. They did this at a time when there are more and more young families who would like to have access to an education in French and also to immersion, and the opportunity to attend the Université de Saint-Boniface to receive their post-secondary education in a profession, earn a Bachelor of Arts or Science, or maybe go to a technical college that offers programs in French. But now we have lost the leadership for that. It's a huge problem for the Francophone community here in Manitoba and in a community where many parents would like to see their children receive their education in French, in an immersion program or in a Français program. So that is a disaster.

And there are also the lost opportunities here in Manitoba.

English

There's missed opportunities going on. We know that there's \$15 million over the next three years sitting on the table for daycare services. It doesn't require a provincial match. That money is a 100 per cent available to Manitoba to provide additional support for working families in daycare. And what are we doing? We haven't signed the agreement. The agreement is still languishing, and daycares are going broke trying to look after the kids that they've admitted and the families that they're supporting in those daycares. It's a missed opportunity.

* (15:20)

How long will it take Manitoba to sign the new housing agreement? The new housing agreement has multiple millions of dollars on the table for affordable and social housing in Manitoba. It also has a Portable Housing Benefit. We would—could be the first province to sign that agreement. Why could we do that? Because we have Rent Assist, which is a portable housing—a benefit which the federal government has copied in their program. We could be one of the first provinces to sign that agreement because we have the program in place right now. We don't have to start from scratch.

We could do the match with them on the portable housing benefit, access the social and affordable housing money and provide jobs to people to build housing in the province of Manitoba, housing which is desperately needed, as newcomers come here and young people want to start families and people want to have stability, because having stability in your housing allows you to go to the same school, it allows you to know your neighbours, it allows you to have a chance to succeed. And a housing first policy is critically needed in this province. And we have the money sitting on the table and we're not taking advantage of it and that seems like a great shame, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The current government has passed the new Children's Advocate's act. They've taken some good ideas and they've broadened the scope of responsibility of the Children's Advocate. The Children's Advocate can now investigate complaints with respect to whether children are being treated properly not only in the child welfare system, but now they can expand to take a look at what's happening kids in the education system, in the health-care system, or indeed any system that the Manitoba government provides a service to children

within. And they can make an independent report to the public about what's going on. They no longer have to report to the department of Family Services.

They passed the legislation, why haven't they proclaimed it? It's not effective until it's proclaimed. The sooner they proclaim it, the sooner we can empower the new Children's Advocate to play a role in advocating for children in the province of Manitoba. And that would be something they could move on quickly instead of it being another missed opportunity. And it's got to be something that we do.

And the climate change program, my goodness, we've been talking about that for—ever since the government came into place. They brought in a commitment to a \$25 an hour—\$25 a ton carbon tax. When will it be implemented? When will we see the commitment to allocating those resources to creating green jobs and reducing carbon emissions in this province?

When will we see the new channel being built on the north side of Lake Manitoba to provide relief—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —to the people of Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin in partnership with First Nations?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: It hasn't occurred yet. They're talking about it, they said they would get it done right away—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

It's hard to—there's a lot of conversation here right now and I could—it's hard to listen to the person who's speaking right now, so if—the member speaking—so if I just—could I have quietness and let—give respect to the person who's actually up speaking.

Thanks.

An Honourable Member: All I want to say is that if you're going through a period of rapid change in the world and you're going through the rapids and you're in a kayak and your solution is to stick your paddle in the water, the only thing you do is overturn the kayak and make things worse. You actually have to learn to paddle through the rapids and make a decision to move Manitoba forward, whether it's on

child welfare, whether it's on poverty reduction, whether it's on housing policy, whether it's on economic development or northern development. You actually have to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time's up.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to speak on last week's Throne Speech, which explains the new course with our broad and ambitious plan, one that will focus on long-term, sustainable measures, that will fix our finances, improve the services and rebuild the economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's just been over a year and a half since Manitobans elected a Progressive Conservative government, and I'm very proud to be part of a hard-working team that believes in positive results to benefit all of our citizens of this great province. I am proud to be part of this Progressive Conservative team because we have a lot to be proud of in the short term—short time we have been in government.

But, before I go on, on listing some of our government accomplishments, let me just say that I'm proud and honoured to serve as the MLA for St. Norbert. I love how there is such a great representation of diversity in the areas and communities I represent in the constituency. I love serving the people, whether it's attending an event like recently at a Foodorama at the Winnipeg Grand Mosque, or last month at the fall supper at the Eagles club on Pembina, and also the fall supper at Mary, Mother of the Church on Kirkbridge, or the coffee and conversations I have at the local McDonald's on Pembina and Bairdmore.

I'm also a sports fanatic and love to support the local teams as much as I can as well, whether it is at the Subway soccer complex at the U of M to support the south Winnipeg soccer teams; watching the Saint-Norbert Collegiate football team, who were finalists this year in the WHSF bowl; or supporting the south Winnipeg Richmond Kings hockey team at their pancake breakfast fundraiser they had at Applebee's.

And did I mention also attending and supporting the Pembina active 55+ events, allowing me the

opportunity to engage with our seniors who reside in south Winnipeg?

There are no shortage of events in St. Norbert, and I make myself available as much as I can to support my constituents.

One important day, though, this year, was October 3rd, the day when the Vic-Victoria General Hospital, transitioned into an urgent care. The months prior to that, I was out on the streets at the doors of my constituency informing people of the necessary changes that our government had to make to improve patient care.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though Manitoba had more emergency rooms per capita through any other province in Canada, Manitoba had some of the worst health-care outcomes in Canada. Manitoba had the longest wait-times in the country, Manitoba lacked key health-care professionals, Manitoba had bottom-of-the-barrel wait-times for surgical and diagnostic procedures. And it's just unfortunate that only—the only way newspapers can sell is through the—using the negative headlines—our government—which is simply not true—towards the government which is simply not true.

And, to add, we continue to hear the fear mongering and ideological rhetoric that we hear from the NDP and the Liberals. Well, I was pleased to hear just last month when I was at a seniors' event that a senior came up to me and said: Hey, Jon. I did something to my shoulder and it really hurt, so I went to the Victoria urgent care. And I responded, yes, and? The senior replied: I was in and out in an hour and my shoulder feels great.

These are the positive headlines that you hear on the ground. Why? Because I value being on the ground hearing from my constituents, unlike those who get their feedback from false and negative headlines and wasting taxpayers' money by putting up fear-mongering signs. They had 17 years to repair health-care services, did nothing, and yet they continue to question us, even though there's showing of early indications of reduced wait-times at emergency departments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is also great to see that our government is investing in paramedics, as they are a very important part of the health-care system. That is why enhancing staff resources with investments and 24-7 full-time paramedic positions will reduce reliance on all call—and call-back staff in rural Manitoba. All paramedics, whether they work in the

city or in rural areas, play a vital role in health care, as I witnessed it personally when I had to call for an emergency myself for a friend this past summer. To see an emergency situation in action gave me more—a great deal of respect for our first responders and, in this case, paramedics.

So all those who fear that just because an emergency-service hospital is geographically farther that servicing will take longer when you call for an ambulance is false, because (1) the emergency services, emergency personnel and equipment will now be centralized at three yards which will equate to shorter wait-times, and we must not forget patients will also be treated and stabilized as best as possible from our highly qualified and professional paramedics. Again, I've seen this first-hand, and I want to thank all first responders for what they do to help save lives and to facilitate patient care for our ER personnel.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the past summer, I was fortunate to travel to some parts of rural Manitoba with my kids to visit my colleagues and to see their way of life in their communities. I went to Shoal Lake, Manitoba, with my kids, where my good friend and colleague, the MLA from Riding Mountain, resides. We were there to see the Snowbirds perform at the Shoal Lake air show. It was their only performance in Manitoba this year. While in the beautiful constituency of Riding Mountain, through the connections of the MLA, my kids and I were able to visit some farms, talk with farmers and to see what they do. It was a great experience for this city slicker. Learning the names of types of farm equipment like swather and a sprayer—[interjection]—swatting. And it was great to see my son having the opportunity to ride with one of the local farmers in a swatter. [interjection] Swather.

Of course, we saw farm animals, which my kids enjoyed, meeting with more farmers, and we got to even see Manitoba bison from a distance thanks to my friend from—the MLA from Riding Mountain. I also learned that the best farm equipment is either manufactured by John Deere or New Holland. I had a great time in Shoal Lake and so did my kids.

*(15:30)

I also went to Dauphin, Manitoba. I was invited by the local air cadets legion and local city council to assist in the unveiling of Canada's most decorated war hero, Dauphin's own Billy Barker, and I was able to join my colleague and good friend, the MLA

from Dauphin, and the late Mayor Eric Irwin at the unveiling. Rest in peace, your worship.

What is also in Dauphin, I appreciated more and more about farming and agriculture on the farm of the member from Dauphin, at the time of year, it was the harvest season. He showed me the different types of crops that were harvested, and at the time, it was soybeans and canola. He showed me all the land that had to be harvested, and I even was able to ride on a combine with my good friend, the member from Dauphin, and he showed me some of the operations involved with harvesting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, going out to farms and visiting rural Manitoba was a great experience, and I have a great appreciation and even more of a great deal of respect for farmers. And, as said in the Throne Speech, I am proud to be part of a PC government in partnership with the federal government that is investing \$176 million into agriculture industry over the next five years, working to capture emerging market opportunities and to improve environmental outcomes. We need to do as much as we can for Manitoba farmers. That is why our government has worked to remove pointless and burdensome red tape that has held our agriculture industry back while ensuring our environment is protected.

Farmers help us city slickers bring food back on the table, so on behalf of all city slickers, thank you to all the farmers.

As my good friend, the member from La Verendrye, mentioned two days ago, governments do not create jobs. Government must create an environment for businesses, for private sector companies, to create those jobs. That will result in a stronger economy, allowing us to retain people in our province.

Case in point, as stated in the Throne Speech, our government was proud to stand with Roquette to announce that they are investing \$400 million in Manitoba with a new pea processing plant in Portage, creating 150 new jobs. This is the largest—single largest private investment in Manitoba history.

And, most recently, speaking of job creation, it is great to see other international business investing in Manitoba by setting up, like the Jollibee corporation out of the Philippines. Jollibee just opened its second location in Winnipeg this—yesterday morning, which equals 100-plus jobs. Their first location was said to produce 150-plus

jobs, but I'm sure both locations share the same personnel.

What I can say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is truly open for business, creating the type of positive business environment that our province needs to help those businesses create jobs. It gives me great sense of pride, also being a Filipino-Canadian, that Jollibee has set up shop in Winnipeg, Manitoba, given that we have a large Filipino community in Winnipeg, but also in towns like Neepawa, Steinbach, Russell and more.

I was glad to have some of my colleagues present to experience the blessing of Jollibee two days ago at their second location, and boy, did they have great fried chicken and peach mango pies. Just ask the members from Swan River and Riding Mountain. But the member from La Verendrye absolutely loved the pineapple juice.

Do you want to hear more good news about international companies investing in Manitoba? Well, Mitchell International, a San Diego-based firm that works closely with MPI, has selected Winnipeg to be its Canadian home—new Canadian home. I'm proud to be part of a government that has been working to assure the private sector that Manitoba is the right place for a business to invest, build and grow. More and more companies are choosing to set up shop in Manitoba.

You want to hear more good news? Another international food franchise is opening up in 2018, which again will create more jobs. My good friend, former president of the Manitoba Filipino Business Council, Hipolito Alibin Jr., along with his siblings, will be opening up Max's Restaurant, another international business from the Philippines. Since 1945, Max's Restaurant is known as the cuisine of the Philippines, and you can be—rest assured that my colleagues and I will be there to support Max's Restaurant next year and future business that makes Manitoba their home.

With 11,000 new private sector jobs in Manitoba so far this year, among the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, we are working to build momentum with a long-term approach to economic development, a strong economy for a truly better Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing we realize as Conservatives, there are going to be those who need more government services, social services, in society. Our government has to be there for everybody, and especially the less fortunate. And

that is why last month our government launched a new plan to end the crisis in the child-welfare system and create better outcomes for children. Our government committed to develop a comprehensive plan that acts on many outstanding reports and recommendations from sources such as the Office of the Children's Advocate, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and indigenous organizations.

As my colleague, the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding), stated, Child and Family Services can't change alone. We must work in collaboration with government, indigenous and community partners, as we all share the same goals for our children's futures. We want to keep children and youth safely within their family networks and home communities. We must reduce the number of children coming into care by supporting families, communities and neighbourhoods and inviting them to be part of the solution.

And there are four essential areas of reform which in-will guide the Province to develop a community-based prevention model that involves demonstration sites; co-ordination of cross-departmental services and increases alignment of federally funded services on reserve; create lifelong connections for children through unification and permanence, which includes improved emergency placement resources, the shortened duration in care through early-case planning and family reunification, through a multi-disciplinary assessment team and availability of family group conferencing as well as evidence-based permanency initiatives such as subsidized guardianship and modernized adoption; fund for results through initiatives such as block funding pilots through Child and Family Service agencies and fund based on outcomes rather than provide incentives for larger caseloads and longer stays in care; and reformed legislation, which includes the creation of legislative review committee to modernize The Child and Family Services Act and support a shift in practice.

My very good friend Richard De La Ronde, executive director of Sandy Bay Child and Family Services, is excited about the block funding pilot project and the 'unprecent' flexibility support families in a way that was not possible before, and has stated that our government child and welfare reform takes into consideration the innovation happening within communities providing those services.

I played high school basketball with Richard, and we served briefly together in the army reserves

many years ago, 1990, to be exact. So we were teammates, you could say, and you develop trust with our teammates and even, in some cases, when you are not on a formal or official team.

Well, you know, what my good friend and teammate Richard De La Ronde told me? Richard told me, who happens to be the director of Sandy Bay Child and Family Services, that he has gotten more done for the children of Sandy Bay with our government, in the brief meetings he had with the Minister of Families, versus the previous NDP government. Now, does that surprise you?

So we will continue to repair the services, like Child and Family Services, for a better Manitoba.

Speaking of repairing more services, as stated in the Throne Speech, we'll continue to work with the federal government to ensure that newcomers to Manitoba are given the supports they need to find homes and jobs in their new country, by streamlining application procedures for immigrants who want to establish new economic opportunities in Manitoba.

In my constituency of St. Norbert, which includes Waverley Heights, Richmond West, Fairfield Park, South Pointe, Bridgwater Trails, Prairie Pointe and St. Norbert, immigration is very important, given the number of immigrants in my constituency. Our PC government knows that immigration is a driver of economic growth, a way to address targeted labour market needs, and a gateway for innovation in our economy. Again, I just want to remind everyone that it was a Manitoba PC government which was led by our former Premier Gary Filmon, along with the former MLA for River East, Bonnie Mitchelson, who helped create what we know now as the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

And, as Progressive Conservatives, our government knows that immigration is important and is still important to Progressive Conservatives and our current PC government. But what we inherited was a mess. Mr. Deputy Speaker, and under the NDP, the Provincial Nominee Program became so poorly managed that both the stream for skilled workers and the stream for business suffered. Thank God, Manitobans made the right choice—the right choice—by electing a PC government last April, to fix the finances and repair the services certain programs—services and programs such as the Provincial Nominee Program.

And may I remind those who sit in opposition, many people who put their lives on hold overseas wait for up to three years and to only get their PNP applications refused. The previous government made not only applicants wait but their family members wait, causing them a lot of grief and anxiety. They say they represent immigrants but the NDP represent immigrants poorly, as a backlog of more than 5,100 applications had compiled, some dating as far back as 2013.

Our PC government want to see immigrants succeed, who have applied through the Provincial Nominee Program, and that is why a new labour strategy–market strategy will support renewal of the PNP by better matching skilled worker applicants to Manitoba employers.

Manitoba's 2016 to 2022 labour market projections indicate a strong need for skilled immigrants. These projections indicate a need for almost 170,000 job openings, 25 per cent which are to be filled by newly skilled immigrants.

The new PNP includes innovative partnerships with industry, priority selection for skilled workers, priority selection for business nominees and a cost-recovery model that reinvests revenue into improved settlement and training supports.

*(15:40)

What else has our PC government accomplished? Well, as of April 2017, as the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Wishart) has stated, the backlog created by the NDP has now been cleared, and what we have found out: that some of the former backlogs dated back to 2008.

Bottom line. We want to see new Canadians succeed in Manitoba because Manitoba is truly the home of hope. In order for new Manitobans to succeed, in order for all Manitobans to succeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government must continue to stay on course in terms of our finances, and that is why I'm proud to be part of a PC government that has reduced the deficit of \$147 million. For the first time in five years, Manitoba's deficit is less projected in the budget.

We know that fixing our finances is essential to the province's future economic and social health. We know that our government inherited an unsustainable situation, which included downgrading credit ratings, deteriorating public assets and missed budget targets. We knew Manitoba's debt and deficit were growing and red tape and high taxes turned investors away.

And our PC government wasn't going to sit down on our hands like the previous NDP government did.

What did we do? We held prebudget consultations to have all Manitobans involved, be it through surveys or local town halls, even inviting members opposite, but they did not want to be part of the process due to their divisive and ideological pride.

We continue to fix the finances. We see NDP abuse by throwing money to the problems, by thinking it would solve the problem with no plan. Fail to plan, plan to fail, and the NDP failed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we will get it right.

In St. Norbert and in Manitoba, Manitobans are satisfied that we're taking time to provide a functional design study for the reconstruction of the south Perimeter Highway, including the proposed featured St. Norbert by-pass, a study that is expected to take two years to complete and will include consultations with the public and stakeholders. And that is why our government will continue with our ongoing commitment to making strategic infrastructure investments and take the time to analyze, such as the reconstruction of the south Perimeter Highway and the future proposed St. Norbert bypass based on real value and money, as we continue to make progress on inherited fiscal challenges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know change is never easy, but our government must make changes for the better. We realize more work needs to be done to make our province better in the long term, so that we can become Canada's most improved province.

And that is why we'll continue to consult on the ground with our constituents, with community leaders, seniors, students, all Manitobans. By working together, we will be better together for a better Manitoba.

We will continue to repair the services like child and family services, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, health care here in Manitoba, through recruiting more doctors to practice in rural Manitoba, co-ordinating medical services for all Manitobans, and broadening access to mental health, addictions and chronic care treatment space.

We will fix the finances by not having government trying to attempt to spend more that was planned, restructuring how our province attracts investment by restructuring our economic 'diland'

efforts, and by ensuring the key economic indicators that show optimism remain that way.

We will rebuild the economy by attracting more international business investment, resulting in local jobs and more immigration and less outmigration, as in years past with the previous NDP government.

Throne Speech 2017 set a new course for our government to be bold and ambitious. We must be conscientious to do what's right for the long term and best interests for the citizens of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Throne Speech. I want to thank you. I want to thank Madam Speaker, the pages, clerks, Sergeant-at-Arms and the whole team here, whether they work in the House or outside the House. And most of all I want to thank my constituents of St. Norbert. To serve as their MLA, it is indeed an honour and privilege to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It is my honour to put a few words on record to support this side of the House amendments to the Speech from the Throne.

As I read through the Speech from the Throne, I have a couple of quotations that I want to provide a rebuttal to. For example, quotation: Manitoba is a home of hope. End quotes.

Well, Deputy Speaker, I beg to differ. This hope does not exist in northern Manitoba, especially when our northern families have been—have seen their services cut, jobs lost and needs ignored. And my question is: When will this Premier (Mr. Pallister) stop thinking about the North as just—as a tourism opportunity and realize its potential as a vibrant part of Manitoba's economy?

For example, Deputy Speaker, I've said numerous times and I need to say it again, by examining the Look North strategy and being involved with a meeting that had happened in The Pas, I—as an indigenous woman and as a northern Manitoban, the Look North strategy, I have to say, is a backwards strategy.

My question is, how are we supposed to be full participants in this strategy for economic development when we're still struggling with issues of housing, overcrowding in housing, access to health, infrastructure, roads, food insecurity, education, drinkable water? So, again, I have to ask, how are we supposed to build healthy education—

educated communities in order to support economic development strategies in the North?

And that was always something my late father has always said about these social economic issues that have to be addressed in order for us to be full participants within the economy: development in northern Manitoba.

My next is duty to consult. This government does not consult with northern communities or indigenous peoples. This was quite evident in committee when we were discussing the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corp., where a constituent of mine, Mr. Langford Saunders, the president for the Norway House fisheries co-op, he explained that no consultation was done with their fishermen. Another group of indigenous fishers said the same statement and—which to me was quite disheartening, especially the history of the traditional use of fishing, it's not just a—something we do on vacation, it's something to do with our livelihood to put food on the tables for our families. And also, too, just by fishing—fishing, excuse me—just by visiting their office, just seeing the amount of pictures of our elders who have served on this board for many, many years, so this speaks volumes as to how this is—tradition has passed on generation by generation. So with this, this government's—their very nature is to ignore the needs of the people they are forcing 'decisions' on, just like what happened with the freshwater market co-op.

This Premier has a predetermined agenda. They have ignored the consultation process because they're more interested in the bottom line, not northern Manitobans who rely on front-line services to access food, jobs, education and health care. Yet the Premier claims that he has embarked on the largest consultation process in Manitoba history. Yet I heard from my communities, Deputy Speaker, and leadership, they have no little contact with Broadway. Again, this was evident in committees.

I want to address cuts to the North. Again, reading the Speech from the Throne, I quote: committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada. End quote. Well, I'd—I have to disagree. This government has ignored the North. This province includes the North, okay? They expect to make deep cuts that put front-line services farther out of reach for northern families. For example, like I mentioned before, ignoring First Nations fishers and dismantling a vibrant economic industry in the North, downloading vehicle-for-hire services to municipalities, forcing small northern

communities to create regulation and oversight without funding needed for infrastructure.

And again, going through the speech, Northern Health Region, I quote: better health care, sooner, remains this government's top service priority. End quote. I don't think so. By cutting our—The Pas Clinic, does not provide health care, sooner, to the people in The Pas and our surrounding areas. Millions in cuts were asked by our regional authority to cut about \$6 million, plus some. We still haven't got a clear answer what that plus some is, so we'd appreciate if we can get that.

There's not enough doctors in northern Manitoba and no plan to attract and retain more doctors. For example, like what I shared in the House during question period, right now there are no doctors in The Pas that are accepting new patients, Deputy Speaker. Currently, their panels are all full.

* (15:50)

I received an email from a constituent: I just moved here, I love this community, I want to stay, but I have no family doctor. Can you please help me find a family doctor?

So, to me, I had to think back when we were in government, we were ready to go. I was honoured to make an announcement at the town council office, Town of The Pas, to announce The Pas health-care clinic. Everyone was excited because we no longer have to sit on the fourth floor of our hospital, in a crowded area with little offices that look like closets, to sit and see a doctor. In fact, Deputy Speaker, the hours—the walk-in clinic hours vary each week because of lack of doctors, and they also vary. They change every month.

So, to me, if this investment into Manitoba health care, such as building The Pas health clinic, went through, we wouldn't be in this situation. We would've had a wonderful facility to house doctors, to house specialists, and these people could've been there for us instead of us being shipped out to Winnipeg to take time off work, loss of income if we don't have any leave or sick leave, children missing school, when, in fact, we're coming to Winnipeg, probably for, like a five- to 10-minute appointment. So, to me, that's a waste of resources from our pocket when this clinic could've been built and helped us meet our medical needs halfway instead of us travelling six hours to see a doctor.

I want to put out a few words on record, too, about northern children in care. We know there are

too many indigenous children in care. The legacy of 'coloneeism,' residential schools and the '60s scoop means we need a reconciliation-centred approach to child-welfare reforms. I'm disappointed that the government's proposed amendments to the CFS act failed to include recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In fact, when you look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations—there's 94 of them—the first five recommendations, with eight subsections, are the first to be addressed in this report. Very important to state that. Why? Because this is a main—one of the main foundations as to why a lot of our children are in care. My parents, my grandmother, great-grandmother, grandmother and my mother all went to residential school, and, as a child myself, I was once apprehended, and now I'm a foster parent myself. So I truly understand as to why they focused on these child-welfare recommendations. With that, we must assure that northern communities can fully participate in the customary-care models so that northern children can grow up within their communities, their home and family.

And also, too, I really need to put it out there that the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations need to be honoured and acknowledged and even the title spoken in this Chamber, because we need to honour that journey that the Honourable Murray Sinclair went through across Canada, collected these stories, collected these recommendations, took them to heart, put them on record, and with that—all that work done, we need to respect and honour that journey that went across Canada and talk about it in this very Chamber, like we did with The Path to Reconciliation bill that we passed.

So, with that, we need investments and prevention programs, long-term addictions treatment, cultural safety training so that families struggling can stay together and get the support they need. Youth in care must have access to strong education and indigenous cultural frameworks so they can understand the impact of 'canolies'—colonization on their lives instead of feeling that this is normal: this is normal to be in the CFS system; this is normal to be facing barriers, because I, myself, as an indigenous person—I'm sure, you too—have—grew up being conditioned that this is as good as it gets.

So we need to get rid of that stigma for our own people and as indigenous people.

I'm disappointed that the—oh, I just want to reiterate, my own family has been involved with

Child and Family Services. I understand the hardship that indigenous families face trying to navigate through their system. As a foster parent, as their aunt, as their mother, I can speak at many volumes as to what our families have to go through to navigate through the system.

So I just need to comment more that comments from this government that blame the NDP for children in care aren't helpful. In fact, we need to work together in reconciliation to do better for our children. And what I mean by working together is that I do not like it when politics is blamed in captioning only 17 years that add to this problem. We need to go way back, you know, during the time of colonization, residential schools. So we need to acknowledge that, instead of just getting political on it and blaming that on the fact why we have children—high number of indigenous children in care. We all need to work together and—towards a common goal, to reduce those numbers and produce healthy children.

Northern Health Summit in Thompson, I noticed the Speech from the Throne mentioned chronic disease. Well, one of them is diabetes. The Northern Health Summit discussed—the whole focus was on diabetes. There was concerns about access to health care. People—we even listened to a presentation downstairs regarding diabetics—people blame themselves for their lifestyle, their foods they choose. But you know what, Deputy Speaker? We don't have that choice in northern Manitoba. In fact, I seen—I've seen somewhere where pork chops in northern Manitoba was \$67 versus if we—if I went to Safeway in the village, probably be about, I don't know, 19 bucks?

But—so we don't have that choice. And that's why that stigma is with us that it's—again, it's regular. It's normal for us to be diabetics. My family is diabetic, myself and, just recently, my brother was diagnosed to be a diabetic and he's still trying to come to terms with that.

Prevention, we need to look into prevention, which means food insecurity has to be addressed. Not once has this been mentioned in the Speech from the Throne in regards to how to make it more easier to buy and access more healthier food, rather than buying the cheaper processed food that's provided up in northern Manitoba. Again, studies show that

residential schools' contribution to this epidemic is there.

Also, too, I just want to acknowledge the project in OCN that is addressing food insecurity. Right now, they're—excuse me—addressing—they're growing vegetables by LED lights. It's still an ongoing project and it's still quite remarkable to go visit there whenever I can. And, in fact, OCN wants to expand this project further north so they can, too, grow and eat their own produce to—as a way to battle this epidemic.

Mental health and addictions, again, page 6 on this northern—Speech from the Throne. We met with the Manitoba Nurses Union this morning. And, again, mental health and addictions were addressed, and I can say that there is no mental-health services for children in northern Manitoba. I shared here last year that the reason why my daughter was shipped out for self-harm five times, the last trip we took was to Brandon because there's no mental-health services in northern Manitoba.

So imagine the parents', you know, anguish and stress. It's a nightmare, having to leave your community and then leave your child in Winnipeg for a week while you have to go back up North or leave your child in Brandon while you have to go back up North to attend your other kids. That's not right. We need mental-health services for our children up in North—in northern Manitoba.

Cross Lake hospital, page 7 on the Speech from the Throne, it states that the government will work on providing more, you know, health services on reserve? All right, here's your opportunity to invest in the hospital that's being planned for Cross Lake. Last year, I was there in July. I believe I was the only provincial representative there. I was there with the Minister of Health, MKO grand chief, our MP Niki Ashton, and we're all there to hear this wonderful investment in regards to providing access to northern Manitoba, particularly Cross Lake. And one thing that was really profound that the chief said that a lot of our babies that are born in Cross Lake and surrounding areas, they have to go to Thompson. And, she said, when the baby—when a baby is first born in the Cross Lake hospital, they're going to frame that birth certificate: Cross Lake hospital, first baby born. So I thought that was really, truly significant.

* (16:00)

So here's an opportunity for this government to invest in this hospital, because they say they are providing services on reserve. All right. But yet how is this addressed when there's evidence that they are not participating in ongoing discussions to plan and implement cost savings for the delivery of health care in northern Manitoba?

So right there, Deputy Speaker, here's an opportunity to put—to walk the walk or—in regards to your ideas in your Speech from the Throne by investing in this hospital.

So I just—one more thing I just want to address is that I thought it was pretty rich coming from this government when they were addressing the hunting—night hunting issues. I just want to say that, again, when I was being asked to comment on this, the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) irresponsible remarks, that I just want to make clear that while I was doing this interview, I was sitting beside my daughters on the phone with the interviewer, and one thing I just couldn't get over is that here I am trying to raise my girls to become proud of their culture, proud indigenous women, and hoping for a better future that they don't see the amount of barriers that I had to face and maybe you had to face, Wab, when we were growing up, so, when I heard these comments—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Just to remind the member that when you reference to somebody in the House that—by their name or—by their constituency name or their position.

Ms. Lathlin: —the member from Fort Rouge can relate to, but—so it was just disheartening because the leader of our province, the Premier, made these comments and I thought it took us a step backwards in working towards reconciliation, and I just looked at my daughters and thought, wow, you know, so there's got to be more.

So, with the remarks—I mean, with the night hunting provisions in here, there could have been an opportunity to insert a still-outstanding apology, and with apologies it's never too late to do so.

So, with that, I just want to thank the constituents of The Pas for putting me in this position to represent our constituents, especially on important issues such as access to health care and everything that affects our lives. And I just want to say that it's an honour to stand here amongst everyone here to put on record our concerns, our

rebuttals to all our debates that we participate and enjoy here in the Chamber.

Thank you.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): It's a real honour today to be able to put a few words on the record regarding our Throne Speech that I was very delighted to see tabled last week and some of the key initiatives that it outlines. If I had unlimited time to speak here today, I could touch upon all the wonderful initiatives that were laid out in this blueprint from our government. But I will contain my remarks to three key areas that I am specifically passionate about, that I was very pleased to see the Throne Speech addressed, and that includes our protection of the environment, as well as how our—how we will become the most improved province in specific relation to the two secretariats that I'm responsible for, namely the Status of Women and the Francophone Affairs.

So, in regards to enhancing initiatives, equality for women, it is almost entirely impossible to decouple the conversation about gender-based violence from the conversation about how we can achieve equality for all women, because I do believe, and many people in this House would agree with me, that when women and girls are subjected to gender-based violence, it—not only does it play a role in helping them achieve equality in society or in the workplace, it also provides—or it leaves lasting scars on these women and girls who are subject to gender-based violence. And we know here in Manitoba that we have some of the worst rates of gender-based violence in Canada, and we must do better here in Manitoba.

This was the consensus at the recent Status of Women meeting that I'd had with my provincial, federal and territorial counterparts, and I do want to highlight that one of the initiatives that came out of this FPT meeting was a consensus to move towards third-party reporting in our nation and including in Manitoba, and I was pleased that law enforcement in Manitoba and people who are at the front lines of sexual assault are in agreement to work towards improving third-party reporting.

And what third party reporting is is it offers an avenue for women and girls who are victims of sexual violence to reach out and get the support that they need to be able to report the incident to police in a more conducive way than—actually a lot of women have experienced barriers to walking into a police station or reaching out to law enforcement to report

that they are victims of sexual violence. And third party reporting will offer them an opportunity to make their report through a counsellor and also, in the meanwhile, receive some of those supports that they desperately need in the aftermath of experiencing sexual trauma.

We know that less than 17 per cent of all survivors of sexual violence ever reach out and receive—and get the supports that they need. And we think that third party reporting will not only enhance the number of women who are making those reports to police but it will also enhance the number of women and girls who are getting the supports that they need in the aftermath of sexual violence.

So I was very pleased, and I want to thank all law enforcement and people on the front lines of sexual violence support for helping bring this initiative into Manitoba.

We are also prioritizing the issue of family violence by moving the Family Violence Prevention Program, transitioning it from the Department of Families to the Manitoba Status of Women, and we do believe that this will achieve better outcomes for those families who are affected by violence. And to co-ordinate the transition and guide the program's work going forward, we have also created the ender-gender-based violence committee of Cabinet, and it is an absolute honour, and I'm humbled to chair the ender-ending gender-based violence Cabinet committee. And this committee will work to better meet the needs of Manitobans in these very critical situations.

I'd like to turn my attention to some of the enhancements that we are doing for the francophone community.

On a fait plus pour la communauté franco-manitobaine dans notre premier session que le NPD a fait en dans—en dix-sept ans. Par exemple, notre loi 5, qui est l'engagement le plus signifiant pour la francophonie depuis le Rapport Chartier de 1998.

Translation

We did more for the Franco-Manitoban community in our first session than the NDP did in 17 years. For example, our bill 5, which is the most significant commitment for the Francophone community since the Chartier Report of 1998.

English

We have also expanded our bilingual capacity in government to 805 positions in 2017 compared to the

744 positions last year. We will continue to increase the number of bilingual positions across government to improve support to our francophone community. More than 10 per cent of our appointees to agencies, boards and commissions speak both French and English.

Building on The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act that was unanimously adopted by this Legislature, we want to energize and add 'dynamism' to the francophone community, for example, by attracting more francophone visitors and immigrants to Manitoba.

The repositioning of the francophone tourism initiative supported by our government and spear-headed by Enterprises Riel in collaboration with Travel Manitoba is a visionary project which places Manitoba's historic francophone community at the heart of a new tourism strategy.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

This initiative will have far-reaching effects for economic and cultural development within the French-speaking community for all Manitobans, and it will help attract visitors specifically interested in our franco-Manitoban culture, and it will create jobs and programs designed for these visitors to provide services to this particular client base.

Our vision is that of a vibrant, dynamic and diverse province, and that includes our francophone community that takes ownership of its culture and its assets, a community empowered to add—to further add to our societal and cultural makeup that makes Manitoba so great.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to now turn my attention to some of the things that our government is doing to protect the environment. And on October 27th, we were very proud to unveil our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan that is the result of consultation of—over a year's worth of consultation with community stakeholders. And I'd like to highlight and thank the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Prairie Climate Centre, to name just a few of the institutes that helped contribute to our plan and provide input into our plan and who were also leading the change when it comes to informing society about the effects of climate change.

* (16:10)

I'd also like to thank the hundreds of Manitobans who have contributed to our Made-in-Manitoba

Climate and Green Plan through consultation on the website or in attending one of the many, many sessions that we've held throughout the province.

So, Madam Speaker, acting on climate change is not an option. The price of doing nothing on climate is too great, and we have to act now. In Manitoba more than anywhere else, we are feeling the effects of climate change. We are the polar bear capital of the world, and, as my officials had told me last year, it was December 7th when the polar bears were able to get out on to the ice because the ice had failed to freeze prior to that. And it was the latest year in recorded history for the bears to stay on the land.

And that has devastating consequences not just for the polar bear population itself, but for the community at large. And it is absolutely imperative that we ensure that we slow global warming so that these polar bears will not be endangered by the slow formation of that ice in Churchill.

We also know that forest fires are greatly affected by climate change, and we're seeing the effects of that here in Manitoba. We had fires late into the season. In fact, we were still battling fires in October, and my officials once again have told me that this is one of the latest years in which we have been dealing with forest fires. And there is also a significant change in the wind patterns, which is making the forest fires all the more difficult to battle. And we know that those are partially attributed to climate change.

Here in Manitoba we also depend on extensive roadway network of winter roads, and those winter roads are fast-melting, and the melting patterns of these winter roads are causing unsustainability in many cases. And, for those who depend on those winter roads, climate change has devastating consequences.

So, like I said, doing nothing on climate change is not an option, and our government is acting towards mitigating and working towards transitioning to a low-carbon future.

We know that during members' opposite time in government, they failed to come up with a meaningful plan to address climate change, and the Auditor General had released a report not too long ago that had said that the cost of doing nothing on climate was very expensive and that not only did members opposite fail to come up with a meaningful plan on climate change, they had absolutely no targets and no way of achieving any meaningful

results on climate change. And we saw carbon emissions continuously increase under the former government.

So our plan is comprehensive; it is robust; and it is detailed. And it will help reduce the cumulative carbon emissions over a five-year period.

Our climate plan is based on the four pillars of climate, nature, water and jobs. We do believe that there is a way that we can protect jobs and protect the economy at the same time, and we have set out an ambitious plan that will do each of those things.

Now, our plan also included a price on carbon because we were faced with a situation where we had to act on climate change and help reduce our footprint. Manitobans have always been good stewards of the land. We have been good stewards of the land since 1906 when we started developing renewable hydroelectricity. And we have received broad support for our plan. And the price on carbon at \$25, we have—our modelling has proven that it will achieve the results for Manitobans. We will achieve 80,000—we'll have 80,000 fewer emissions under our plan based on climate price alone in comparison to the federal government plan which brings in a carbon tax at \$10 and accelerates up to \$50.

So, our plan, we're going to keep \$260 million in the pockets of Manitobans while achieving more emissions than the federal backstop plan would, and we're very proud of our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

In closing, I would like to thank all of my constituents in Riel who have supported me in—as their MLA and who have attended my coffee and conversations, who have provided me with their feedback on our Made-in Manitoba Climate and Green Plan and all of the other aspects of our government's blueprint for the next year with resounding support. And I thank the residents of Riel for giving me the opportunity to serve them.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank my colleagues across the aisle for that standing ovation even before I got started. What a welcome. That was amazing. The thumbs up from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler). Why I couldn't ask for a better start to this reply to the Speech from the Throne, and, of course, the member from Flin Flon always quick to encourage me with his generous and kind words. I've

got to make sure that he's shouted out on the Hansard record.

Madam Speaker, the people of Manitoba are fair-minded people. They're hardworking, generous, compassionate people, but above all else they're fair-minded people. I've seen this spirit all across the province in the journey to becoming Leader of the Opposition here. You know, I saw it in the educator in the old St. Boniface School Division who used to pull us out of class and take us to extracurricular activities to try and make school fun and to inspire a passion for learning and education.

I saw that spirit in the nurse who came up to me at a health-care rally this summer and said, Wab, you know, you need to fight for the mature women's health centre at Victoria General Hospital. And I saw this spirit, you know, just not too long ago when I spoke to a farmer who feels very passionately that night hunting has to stop, and yet in the same conversation he invited my sons and I to come hunting on his land. And so we see that fair-mindedness in people who are willing to understand the challenges that our province face, but also are able to take nuanced positions on issues and understand the distinctions that are necessary in this age.

Now Manitobans are fair-minded people, and they gave this government a chance in the last election. And yet, as I speak to people across the province, they seem to be having a change of heart. They seem to regret the choice they made at the ballot box in the last election, particularly when they see the never-ending stream of cuts to health-care services, front-line services, being delivered by this government.

So Manitobans are looking for a new alternative, a new direction in government. If I'm being honest, Madam Speaker, the voters in this province, fair-minded people that they are, they sent our party a message in the last election, as well. And they said that we ought to return to basics, to start listening again and to work hard every day to re-earn their trust.

And that's why I'm proud to tell the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) that a newly energized team of New Democrats is working hard crossing the province—crossing the province listening to the people of Manitoba, bringing their concerns forward to this House, and ensuring that a government that is not willing to be transparent is forced to cast its

harmful actions into the light of day so that they can be held to account.

Now we know that they're heading in completely the wrong direction when it comes to health care. It seems as though every day we find out about a new series of job losses or closures of emergency rooms, health clinics or the reduction of services. It seems that today we're talking about cuts to ambulance services right here in the city of Winnipeg. We know that ambulance services—after, you know, my colleague for Minto and I spent the last few days hearing about these concerns from people in Boissevain, in Oak Lake, in Swan Lake, in Grandview, and all across Westman in the Parkland region, we know that this is about as front line as it gets. It is the transportation for somebody who is injured, somebody is sick, somebody who has a car wreck, transportation for them in their time of need to the acute care centre that will make them well.

And yet this government has announced that they're going to make cuts to these services. It's completely the wrong approach. There is a challenge with respect to our health-care system in this province, but our challenge is not that we have too many nurses or too many health-care aides or too many doctors. The challenge is that many Manitobans have unique and complex medical needs, whether that's MS, renal health or diabetes.

The only way that we're going to be able to meet those challenges and to ensure that our health-care system is sustainable in the long term is not by cutting the services that helps to make those people well, but rather it's to rethink our whole approach to health care around earlier interventions, upstream interventions completely designed around keeping people healthy at home.

* (16:20)

Now the areas that we know we need to focus on upstream include primary prevention, mental health and Pharmacare. If people can't afford the drugs that they need under our current Pharmacare plan, they're more likely to have to go to the emergency room to get those needed pharmaceuticals.

If people have undiagnosed mental health issues and can't access strong, community-based mental health options, then they may need to head to an acute-care centre. And, of course, if a kid grows up in our province where it is cheaper to buy a can of Pepsi than it is to get a bottle of water, then we know that they are far more likely to come down with

chronic conditions like diabetes or renal health problems.

So we have to move upstream. We focus on those early year interventions, and, in the medium- to long-term, those moves will save us money, which will allow us to reinvest in the acute-care centres that we need, be they emergency rooms in Winnipeg or EMS stations in rural Manitoba.

So we're embarking on a health-care listening tour. We are going to listen to Manitobans. We hear over and over again from health-care professionals who tell us that they're not being listened to by this government. And so we're committed to listening to them, and we will bring their concerns forward here to hold this government to account, but also, as we design a health-care plan for the future of our province that will keep Manitobans healthy and well.

We also hear from health experts that some 40 per cent of the people on wards in hospitals in Winnipeg at any given time are indigenous people. And there are long-standing historic needs that need to be addressed, but there's also current challenges faced by people in the indigenous community. So we know that any plan to make our health-care system sustainable in the long term also needs to have a specific focus on indigenous health. If we're trying to meet the challenge of 40 per cent of people in our hospitals in Winnipeg, then we have to devote some particular attention to that. And that's why we will be bringing in, in consultation with indigenous leaders, indigenous health experts and members of the community, we will be bringing in an indigenous health act to look after these needs that need to be addressed so urgently in our province.

I know that members opposite always get excited when I talk about Teslas. They love this idea. So, you know, we do have ideas for ways that the carbon-pricing revenues can be used to maximal effect here in this province. And what we think is that a portion of these revenues should be devoted to no-interest loans so that consumers can buy their first electric vehicle, so that businesses can green their fleets and that transportation systems, such as Winnipeg Transit, can upgrade to modern and zero-emission vehicles.

And I'd like to particularly shout out the member from Wolseley for all his work on this subject. He's a great advocate—

Some Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kinew: —great advocate on the environment.

And, finally, jobs, Madam Speaker, one of our key priorities, right up there with health care; jobs, is priority number—tied for first, basically, I should say.

Having a good-paying job, we understand. Everyone understands that it allows you to put food on the table and to provide for your family. But what's more than that, having a good-paying job also brings to you the pride, the sense of self-worth, the sense of satisfaction that is so important to people all across our province. And so we will continue to stand up for people in our province who want their jobs to be protected, even as the neo-liberal agenda pursued on the other side of the aisle dictates that they pursue free trade in all forms, never once standing up for fair trade. Instead, we want to pursue a plan that brings together leaders from business, leaders from industry, student leaders, who will be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, to come up with a jobs plan for the next 30 years so that we can assure that everybody in this province in the decades to come not only has a good-paying job, but also has the discipline, the pride and the sense of self satisfaction that comes along with putting in a hard day's work.

So we know that there are many challenges in this province's future, whether it's the rise of automation or whether it's climate change or whether it's the damaging cuts that are being pursued by the government across the aisle. But what I know of Manitoba people is that they're fair minded, they're hardworking, and they are willing to meet the challenges of the future, and we will be an opposition party that works hard to re-earn their trust, first, in bringing their concerns forward here, but in also ensuring that this is a one-term government and that sensible government returns to Manitoba in 2020.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Deputy Premier): I'm pleased to rise today and put a few words on the record with respect to this fantastic Throne Speech produced in this House.

Madam Speaker, this Throne Speech is a blueprint for success. It is a blueprint for prosperity. The innovative, bold and courageous action outlined in this Throne Speech highlight our government's commitment to improve the lives of the people in Manitoba.

What is telling, Madam Speaker, is the reaction from members opposite. It's clear that new leadership in the part of their party hasn't resulted in new direction. Instead, we hear the familiar and

tiresome phrase: spend more here; don't reduce spending there. But members opposite never answer the obvious question. Where would they reduce spending? Would they instead send us over a fiscal cliff as the previous government tried? What is their hidden agenda and why won't they answer? Perhaps it's because they don't have an answer to the question.

The only answer they had in their alternative throne speech was a consultation tour—oh, and maybe a few Teslas as well, Madam Speaker.

But I have a simple question for them: Where have they been? Where have they been? We have been consulting with Manitobans since we formed government. In the prebudget consultations we have undertaken, nearly 60,000 Manitobans participated in that process.

Madam Speaker, that is our record. We believe in reaching out and hearing and listening—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —to the views of those who employ us. Those are the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Where was the NDP's consultation in previous years, Madam Speaker? Even on an increase in the PST, the members opposite could not be bothered to re out—reach out to the people of this great province of ours. We will take no lessons from the members opposite when it comes to serving in the best interest of the people of Manitoba. Manitobans know that. Just like in our personal lives, we cannot live beyond our means.

Governing well means making the crucial choices that will preserve our province for generations to come. Those choices are not always popular, but they are necessary, Madam Speaker. We are fixing our finances, which is essential to our future economic and social health. We are opening up government to provide more accountability to all Manitobans. We are repairing our services by pursuing innovation here at home and examining best practices elsewhere. We're making changes that will improve our health-care system for a generation, and this remains our government's top service priority.

Madam Speaker, child care and early years education are also being improved to ensure our youth grow up to be healthy, successful and

prosperous leaders in our communities. And we are rebuilding our economy. Optimism is returning to this province after a decade of stagnation.

Madam Speaker, in contrast to the opposition's status quo message, this Throne Speech outline a vision of positive change for Manitoba. We are making difficult choices, and what does the opposition want to do? Spend. We are fixing our finances, saving us from going over the fiscal cliff—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —and what does the opposition want to do? Spend. We are improving the economy for all Manitobans, and what does the opposition want to do? Spend.

Leadership is about developing a vision and then implementing it and I am proud of our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this team of ministers and MLAs that are doing just that, Madam Speaker. Manitoba is the home of hope and for this province to fulfill its destiny we must stay the course. We must right the wrongs. We must be steadfast in our approach and we must always defend the interests of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, it is a solemn obligation and also an honour to represent the people of Manitoba. And for them, we strive. For them, we serve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

The hour being 4:30, pursuant to rule 47(3), I'm interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux), that is, the subamendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the subamendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is the House—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the subamendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, pleased say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

I declare the subamendment lost.

Recorded Vote

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

Madam Speaker: Does the member have support of three other members? It appears the member has support.

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

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux), that is, the subamendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (16:40)

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 17, Nays 37.

Madam Speaker: I declare the subamendment lost.

Madam Speaker: We will now deal with the amendment.

Do members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Having heard a yes, I will read it.

THAT the motion be amended by adding the following words at the end:

But this House regrets that the Provincial Government has:

- (a) failed to protect front-line health-care services that Manitoba families and seniors depend on by pushing ahead with the closure of emergency rooms, urgent-care centres and the elimination of outpatient physiotherapy and occupational therapy services; and
- (b) failed to invest in upstream interventions in health care such as primary prevention, pharmacare and home care in order to keep Manitobans healthy at home; and
- (c) indicated an intention to cut more front line workers, on top of the thousands of job losses already ordered, hitting Manitobans hard, especially in northern communities like Churchill, which was not even mentioned in the Throne Speech; and
- (d) failed to have a jobs plan for the future to address technology change; and
- (e) failed to offer a climate change plan which sees all revenue from a price on carbon directed to initiatives that fight global warming and help low-income Manitobans access green options; and
- (f) indicated plans to further download responsibility for services onto municipalities across the province, including road renewal, after freezing grants for two years and eliminating an historic cost-sharing agreement with municipalities for public transit; and
- (g) failed to put forward a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that raises families and children out of the cycle of poverty and has instead cut funding for prevention supports, increased tuition for post-secondary education,

and put the availability of child care further out of reach for many Manitoba families.

As a consequence of these and many other failings, the provincial government has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: A recorded vote.

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

Order.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that is, the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

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

Clerk: Yeas 17, Nays 37.

Madam Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

Madam Speaker: The question now before the House is the motion of the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that is, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the motion read?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for Seine River, that is, the motion of an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

* (16:50)

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard,

Helwer, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

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

Clerk: Yeas 36, Nays 17.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Will you canvass the House to see if there a willingness to call it 5 o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is there a willingness to call it 5 o'clock? Leave? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

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