

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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	Man.
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	Ind.
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
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
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, Hon.	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
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	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 1, 2018

*The House met at 10 a.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. Good morning, everybody.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

## House Business

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** Good morning, Madam Speaker.

On House business, pursuant to rule 33(9), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum). The title of the resolution is Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview. The title of the resolution is Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—  
PUBLIC BILLSBill 233—The Health Services Insurance  
Amendment Act

**Madam Speaker:** And, as previously agreed, this morning, we will be resuming debate on second reading of Bill 233, the health services insurance act, with the question to be put at 10:55 this morning.

The bill is currently standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris, who has nine minutes—nine minutes remaining.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Well, good morning, Madam Speaker, and it's always a pleasure to rise in the House and participate in the democratic process and continue my remarks. And I have no doubt that in the first minute of my speaking to The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act brought forward by the member of Minto, I was probably on the verge of swaying members opposite to the view that they did indeed leave our health-care system in the shambles that we inherited.

But it's—I think the timing of this debate is actually quite interesting with last night being Halloween. And I think, like a lot of Manitobans found when they voted NDP in 2011, they went around to people's houses; they knocked on their doors, Madam Speaker, and they promised them all sorts of treats and such. And then, of course, after they got elected, Manitobans learned those treats turned into tricks, and they ended up with buyer's remorse.

Madam Speaker, it's almost like when after—you know, post-Halloween and, you know, you have this bag full of candy and then you look and you find out it's those little wrappers with the little ghouls and ghosts on it that are all stuck into the candy that you never want and, you know, those are the last ones you possibly eat. And that's sort of how the NDP presented in terms of government.

So now the irony of this private member's bill brought forward by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) is it's proposing a referendum, Madam Speaker, a referendum that says that Manitobans should not be subject to a health-care premium, or, should they, that they actually have the right to vote on the imposition of a new fee or tax or whatever you may want to call it; in this case, a premium.

Now, the irony, of course, Madam Speaker, is during the 17 years of running the, you know, being aboard the S.S. Minnow for members opposite, before they crashed into the rocky shores of the—an angry electorate, they went and they took the original balanced budget legislation brought in, by Mr. Filmon back in 1995, and they took it, and they amended it. And then they would bring it back, and then they would amend it again, and then they would bring it back, and then they would amend it again—bring it back and amend it again.

Four—on four separate occasions, the previous administration amended the balanced budget legislation, and most of those 'abendments', Madam Speaker, were done with the purpose of making it easier for them not to balance books.

So, originally, the idea was you had to balance your books every year, but the NDP said, well, no, no, that's just too difficult, we need the rolling average. And then, you know, well, those penalties on Cabinet ministers, those are too much; we need our raises. And so they cut those in halves and gave them all a raise, and I think that was under the guidance of one Jennifer Howard when she was Finance minister.

But, despite all of those changes and the ability to drive a truck through the remnants of the balanced budget legislation, one thing that the NDP always kept intact was the referendum provisions at—on any change to a major tax. Whether it's a sales tax, whether it's a business tax or whether it's a personal income tax, Manitobans had the right to have a say.

And then, of course, we fast-forward to the infamous 2011 election, where the NDP stood and told the electorate right in their eyes that the idea of them raising the PST, and I am quoting the NDP, was total nonsense. It was ridiculous, that—their words, Madam Speaker, not mine. Because if I was going to use the word ridiculous, I'd actually use it towards the NDP themselves and their policies and their 17 years in government, as opposed to the idea of them raising the PST.

But they went and they made that solemn commitment to Manitobans, Madam Speaker, and then, of course, they knew the whole time that they were planning to raise the PST, not actually—in freedom information briefing notes of—have informed Manitobans that they were actually looking at raising the PST not from 7 to 8 but from 7 to 9 per cent. So you can obviously imagine what was going on behind the scenes.

And, I mean, I have no idea—or I have no doubt that the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) may rise and give an opportunity to put some comments on the paper—or on the record and share some of those behind-the-scenes situations. I mean, some of them, and many of them were done before the camera. And, in fact, I mean, they held news conferences to throw their former leader under the bus, Madam Speaker.

But, again, the core of their commitment was that Manitobans would have that right to say. But, of course, when push came to shove, Madam Speaker, and when that commitment that Manitobans had the right to have a say in the raising of a fee or tax, it became inconvenient to the NDP at the time. And so they actually took Manitobans to court to fight Manitobans on the idea that you actually had the right to have a voice.

So, Madam Speaker, like I said, so it's ironic that the same government that took Manitobans to court to say you have no right to have a voice are now saying, well, Manitobans should have a right to voice. It almost—you almost wonder if the NDP can get out of bed in the morning with the way they tie themselves in to pretzels as to how they try to perform and fit every policy that they put forward.

\*(10:10)

Because, in their own defence, Madam Speaker, as they fought against Manitobans' right to have that voice, they argued—and, again, this is the NDP. They went before the court system here in Manitoba, and they told the court that Manitobans had no right, that no legislature can commit any future legislature to any referendum provisions and that it is up to the governing body to make those decisions.

Now, so, Madam Speaker, they expend a lot of energy, they expend a lot of financial resources fighting Manitobans to prove their point, that you, as a Manitoban, as a voter, have no right to that referendum provision. And yet today the member for Minto wants to rise in the House and say, you know what, we need a Health Services Insurance Amendment Act. We need to ensure that health care premiums go to the people for an opportunity to hear from them.

Well, we heard, Madam Speaker. Unlike members opposite, we actually listen to Manitobans. And so in—when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) was holding his pre-budget consultations, and he hold—and he heard from a record number of Manitobans, literally thousands of face-to-face meetings, tens of thousands of meetings through the portal and as well as telephone conferences with Manitobans, every opportunity to engage Manitobans.

And what they heard from Manitobans is that Manitobans did not want—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Martin:** –a health-care premium, Madam Speaker.

And so we made it clear that we are not propose—and we have no intentions of moving forward with the health-care premium, because, again, unlike members opposite, we respect what Manitobans have to say. We believe that Manitobans should be the ultimate decision makers. And that's why it was actually a Conservative government that brought in the very referendum provisions that, when the NDP were in office, they decided to expand taxpayers' dollars to fight against and to ignore.

But I don't—I—in the one instance, though, I will say to the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), I agree wholeheartedly with him on the idea that Manitobans should not be subject to a health-care premium. Now, the simplest solution for Manitobans is to continue to elect a Pallister government, Madam Speaker. And I have no doubt that that will continue for years going forward as we fix the finances and repair the services and rebuild the economy after the disaster left by the NDP and their complete inability to manage the affairs of government.

But, to that end, we do believe Manitobans should have a voice, and we continue to want to hear that voice. And we're prepared to support this legislation going forward to committee to, again, to hear from Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

With those brief comments, I thank you.

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations):** Good morning, everyone. Thank you, thank you.

Well, it's, again, always a pleasure to rise in this House, Madam Speaker, and today is no exception. And certainly it's great to put some facts on the record, unlike our members opposite. And you know, after a decade of decay and decline, the NDP let us down. Manitobans elected a Progressive Conservative government to fix the finances, repair our services and, of course, rebuild our economy that the NDP had their hands on for far too long.

This—of course, this is the third time the NDP have raised this issue, and we have been very clear that this is not a route that we are going to be exploring, Madam Speaker. I mean, I guess we know that in the past that the members opposite have a difficult time obviously understanding and not only, I guess, listening, so this is a prime example. We're here today, talking about The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act that—Bill 233 that,

you know, quite frankly, as my member—colleague mentioned earlier that, look, we're obviously not going down that road. We've talked about that.

So, you know, let's talk about Manitoba's fiscal situation. When we first took government, Madam Speaker, we were facing a very serious issue, as you know, in this province as the fiscal situation in Manitoba was worse through—due to the NDP's mismanagement. And we have several highlights that I'd like to touch on, as I only have eight and a half minutes, but, certainly, I'll be able to touch on some of the areas that, obviously, Manitobans in 2016 decided enough is enough.

We need to move forward in this province; we simply have to stop borrowing money, Madam Speaker. We can't spend money at five times the rate that we're earning it. Coming from a small business background, I appreciate the fact that, you know, sometimes you have to spend money to make money. There comes a time though, that there has to be a payback on that investment. And that's one thing that the members opposite clearly don't understand is that eventually, somebody has to pay the piper, and it's unfortunate that generations now, my grandchildren and their children will likely be paying off the mistakes and the mismanagement of the former NDP government.

In not addressing this fiscal hole, Madam Speaker, has serious consequences that I just spoke about and again, threatens that of course, the services that Manitobans rely on: health care, education, of course. You know, under the NDP we were headed to \$1.7 billion deficit. One point seven—incredible. And actually, just a number that I don't think average Manitobans would even understand. It's like, \$1.7 billion, you know, that is just—\$1.7 billion. I can't say it enough.

Well, thank the Lord that Manitobans chose, in 2016, to turn course, Madam Speaker. And that's exactly what they did by electing a Progressive Conservative government. A record number of MLAs, Progressive Conservative MLAs, here, in the Manitoba Legislature, that I am proud to serve with each and every day. They're working hard for Manitobans, continue to work hard, from Thompson down to Steinbach. We are working hard, east, west, north and south, right across this great province.

Manitobans—members opposite again are in no position to talk about fees in this province. They show, yet again, their hypocrisy regarding higher fees for Manitobans. Again, we'll go back to—in

2013, 2014, Madam Speaker, when Manitobans—the NDP went to the door in 2011, and they knocked on your door and they looked you straight in the eye and they said, we are not going to raise the PST. That would be ridiculous. Total nonsense. We would never do that, everyone knows that.

Well, guess what? Two years later—no, we'll back up a little bit—a year later, they broadened the PST, Madam Speaker, they broadened the PST on things like haircuts and insurance. Again, I come from a small business background and I know that this had a terrible effect on our business and our staff and our employees. I mean, the bottom line is, now we were paying PST, we're paying 7 per cent PST on insurance. And I can tell you that that 7 per cent makes a difference. It's another employee or two that we just could not hire. We had to hold off on building our company because we had to now redirect and understand that look, we need to somehow now be—pay this PST on health coverage for our valued employees. And that's quite frankly, is just clearly wrong. Certainly, they don't understand that.

Over the last 17 years, tax increases accumulated in costing Manitobans over \$700 million annually. By 2016, the equivalent to raising the PST to 10 per cent. And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that members opposite, they weren't going to stop at 8 per cent. No, they weren't. And I think my members—my colleagues know this. We know that they were not only going to go from eight where it currently is to 9 per cent. Can you imagine? Nine per cent. Now, that would cost Manitobans millions of dollars, and you know what? The NDP will do what they do best: they take money off Manitoba families' kitchen table. Every single day, they did. Shameful, just shameful.

The NDP raised 15 taxes in 14 years, including raising the fuel tax by 18 per cent; increasing the PST by 8 per cent as we talked about and expanding the base. Again, that base was just incredible, how they expanded it and then they rose it 1 per cent after that. It just really had the effects on the pocket books of every day Manitobans. The NDP party record is obviously quite clear. They certainly like to get into the wallets of Manitobans and their appetite for taxes is quite evident.

\*(10:20)

And, even today, in this House, as they sit in opposition, Madam Speaker, they talk about things like, oh, let's talk about the carbon tax. Well, we

know that of course, our—the federal Liberals are prepared to enforce carbon tax here in Manitoba. We disagree with that. We know that this will affect Manitobans while the NDP are in support of ensuring that they—I think—colleagues, I think maybe somewhere 50 to 100 dollars a ton carbon tax, I think, was mentioned by the member opposite, the leader of the opposition.

Unbelievable where they're going to be taking this, and, you know what, Manitobans are wise to them. They understand that they will not be able to tolerate further tax increases by this NDP government, Madam Speaker.

You know, our prebudget consultations—and I switch gears a little bit here, because I'm—see, I'm running short of time. I'd love to be able to talk for hours on this, because there certainly is a record of recklessness that the NDP certainly put on Manitobans for the last 20 years. But our prebudget consultations provided Manitobans the opportunity to share their views.

And I'll go back to last year when we started prebudget consultations. We had over 30,000 hits to our website, Madam Speaker, with Manitobans, everyday Manitobans, wanting to talk about areas of importance to them and their families here in Manitoba. Investments in health care and education, of course—very important, protecting front-line services, all the things that we ran on in 2016 that we're currently doing and continue to do in collaboration with our front-line workers and in areas of health and education and, of course, families. Again, very important where—we were left with a mess, not only a fiscal mess but a mess right across departments in families.

And we talk about it in this House, often, where we have the most kids in care, Madam Speaker, than any other province, in Manitoba—shameful. We are working—I know the minister is working very hard. The new minister is working very hard, and we continue to ensure that children are taken care of in this province—very important. I know I have four grandkids now at home, and I'm expecting our fifth grandchild in two weeks, so we're very excited about that. And we want to make sure that we, as a government, and—have the—first of all, we're privileged to be here to serve Manitobans, but we want to make sure that we can help steer the course to ensure that our kids and grandkids have a future here in Manitoba—live, work and play in Manitoba.

And I guess I'm a little biased. I, certainly, want them to stay in the rural Interlake area where they currently are and raise their families and enjoy, you know, the great things that the Interlake has to offer—has to offer, like Lake Winnipeg, which—and I wish I had another couple of minutes, but we'll talk briefly about the mess that the NDP left Lake Winnipeg in, especially when it came to their climate plan.

I don't have the napkin in front of me, but I did see a copy of it, I think, a couple years ago when they devised their plan on a napkin and, quite frankly—I don't know; maybe it's in the opposition's caucus room, but I'm sure it's hanging pinned up on the wall, saying this is the biggest failure ever.

Madam Speaker, where the NDP got all this wrong, we're going to get it right.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Good morning, Madam Speaker. It gives me pleasure to rise today to talk about the member from Minto's bill, No. 233, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act.

The NDP—it surprises me with the NDP's record over the past 17 years, where they showed very little concerns about Manitobans' wallets—all of a sudden this new-found concern about a health-care premium.

You know, Madam Speaker, this is the third time this issue has been raised in the House, and I think every time we've said, no, we're not going to have a health-care premier. So I don't know why we're debating it again this morning, but I'm pleased to put a few words on the record to satisfy the members on the other side of the House that we're serious about this: There's no health-care premium coming. *[interjection]*

Well, I can hear from the heckling they don't believe it, but I only speak the truth. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Back in 2013, Madam Speaker, as my colleague from Gimli so eloquently stated, the NDP ignored Manitobans and took away their right to vote on major tax hikes by 'implemating' the highest tax increases in a generation—

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, I think they had their say.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** —with the expansion and subsequent raising of the PST—and the member for Elmwood

(Mr. Maloway), he had a big role in that. I'm sure he didn't speak up at the table and say, no, we don't want those tax increases; instead, he didn't object at the time—at least not what we heard.

So, in 2016, when this government was elected, all—how many of other—40? Forty were elected in 2016. We, in—*[interjection]* Yes, I can't even think how many. There's just so many. We in—reinstated the referendum requirement for any increase to the PST—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** —payroll tax or any income tax rates. So that means the public will decide if there's any tax increases here in Manitoba, major tax increases.

This legislation also establishes a framework to reduce the government's inherited deficit by annually showing progress towards balance. Progress, Madam Speaker, that's what this government is proud to show.

We're also ensuring ministerial accountability for results by the withholding of ministerial salaries beginning immediately at 20 per cent and progressing to 40 per cent if progress is not made towards deficit reduction. We're serious about deficit reduction, something that side of the House never was.

Thanks to the decisions our government has made, the 2017-18 year-end financial results show a summary deficit of \$695 million. Now, that's no small number, Madam Speaker, but it's \$145 million lower than the budgeted deficit of \$840 million.

So the members opposite are in no position to talk about fees in this province.

The NDP, in 17 years, missed budget targets quite often, especially since 2003, resulting in annual structural deficits. This resulted in Manitoba's debt doubling—doubling—in just six years—that's two times as much—and debt-servicing charges reaching record levels, right now, of almost \$1 billion.

And, Madam Speaker, the NDP also depleted the Fiscal Stabilization Account from \$864 million to just a little over \$114 million in just six years. We have taken steps already to bolster that fund.

And the NDP had the opportunity but chose to ignore the urgent need to replace the FleetNet public safety radio communications service, which was declared obsolete a number of years ago. In fact, I'm told parts were being obtained from eBay.

Now, members opposite not being from the rural area might not understand the importance of FleetNet in the rural area. It's a lifeline for the EMS people, fire departments, RCMP, and those emergency providers deserve to have a good system that they can rely on. And this government has taken steps to put in \$400 million to restore the FleetNet system, plus enhance it.

Now, we're talking about the health-care premium today, so I'll get back to that part of the bill and—so last year, when we introduced the idea to the public, it was to get feedback. And we took the time to listen to people. Back in our constituencies, we talked to people on the street, at public meetings, and we were told that that's not something they're really interested in right now. And that's why we told this House we would not move forward with it. I think the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was quite clear. Then, all of a sudden, this bill pops up.

So, in talking to Manitobans, we found that they generally believe that we're on the right path and want us to stay the course on health care. They agree that reduced wait times and new equipment are priorities, and the way to fund those is to find cost savings within the system. We are finding cost savings within the system while continuing to spend record amounts on health care.

So this myth of cuts that the members opposite keep putting forward is just that: a myth. It doesn't matter how many times they repeat it, it's not true.

So 17 years of NDP mismanagement carried through to most departments, and Health was certainly one of them. And I'm proud of our previous minister and the current minister for making tough choices and tough decisions in order to get the health system turned around.

\* (10:30)

So I guess, on this side of the House, often our ministers in question period will say they're not taking any lessons from that side of the House, and I think I want to say that today we'll take no lessons from you over there.

Health care is certainly the largest spending item in our government, as I think everyone's aware. And under the NDP, they also spent the most of any province, but they received the worst outcomes. And we had the worst wait times in the country. That's certainly not something the—be proud of, Madam Speaker, and 17 years they had to get it right; they didn't. Our government, in a short two and a half

years, has taken big steps toward changing the health-care system and transforming it into a system that Manitobans can be proud of and will be sustainable in the future.

Winnipeg, here in particular, emergency room wait times were the longest in Canada and physician recruitment stalled across the province. I think most members in here from the rural areas, at least, will recognize they've had physician shortages in their communities a number of times.

That's something citizens, I guess, grew to accept. They finally rebelled in 2016 and decided, why? Let's try a new government. Let's try a government that can change things, that's willing to take risks—

**An Honourable Member:** Willing to listen.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Willing to listen, as the member from Lac du Bonnet said.

So on that side of the House they promised to end hallway medicine, but they were left with highway—we were left with highway medicine here in—[interjection]

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

Yelling back and forth across at each other is not really serving the purpose of what this debate is about, and we have students here in the gallery right now. I would ask for everybody's co-operation because there's heckling going on from both sides of the House, and I don't think it's beneficial to presenting to all these students what democracy is all about and how effective debate actually occurs.

So I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, that we can properly and respectfully listen to the person that has the floor.

The honourable member for Riding Mountain.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Oh, thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm usually not known for the one to criticize members opposite, and I'm not meaning—I hope they don't take it personally, but I'm just trying to reflect the record as it shows, just put the facts out there.

So I think I'm going to talk a little—about something a little more positive right now—is our record, and our plan to provide health care sooner is working here in Winnipeg despite what they like to say. Be—we—our wait times have shown an 18 per cent drop since August 2015; so that's in three short years 18 per cent.



Ambulance fees is another thing; again, I'm referring to rural Manitoba; that's where my constituency is. That's a big cost—is ambulance fees. We need an ambulance to go anywhere. And the fees the NDP were charging in the end were just ludicrous. People were loading people in half-ton trucks to get to hospitals. Our government has taken steps to reduce those fees, and we're going—to \$340 now, and we're going to further reduce them to \$250 in 2019.

Now, of course, those ambulances need to be staffed. We were relying on volunteers in rural Manitoba under this previous government, not that the volunteers weren't good, but we need full-time paramedics, people that are trained in the field and do this on a day-to-day basis. We've hired 29 new full-time paramedics and are going to hire 60 more shortly. We'll have full-time paramedics in these stations in rural Manitoba ready to respond on a moment's notice to go where necessary.

We made a commitment to improve patient access and wait times for surgeries, including hip and knee replacements and cataracts. We're moving towards that even further.

So, Madam Speaker, in my closing 10 seconds here, I want to reiterate once again: This government will not be charging a health-care premium, no health-care premium. Bill 233 is not necessary.

Thank you.

**Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** I'd like to start off before talking too much about the health-care services insurance amendment act to talk a little bit about the Ste. Anne Hospital and the recent disruption that they had as a result of a few of their doctors actually getting sick and one of them actually having to go on mat leave.

The NDP left us in a situation that now this hospital actually has to reduce its hours because they didn't look ahead. They were always looking at throwing money at everything but the future and looking to proactive type of thinking.

The health-care services insurance amendment act's purpose is to insurance no premium fees are required for Manitobans to have access to their health care. This is not a route that the PC government is willing to take.

Madam Speaker, when we—when first taking government, we were facing a very serious issue as a province as the fiscal situation for Manitoba

was worse than thought to be due to the NDP mismanagement, and I touched a little bit on that mismanagement with Ste. Anne's. Under the NDP, our deficit would have hit \$1.7 million by 2019-2020.

Over the last 17 years, NDP tax increases cumulated in costing Manitobans over \$700 million annually by 2016, the equivalent of raising the PST to 10 per cent. And we already know how the NDP felt about raising taxes. Not only this, Madam Speaker, but the NDP raised taxes, 15 taxes in the 14 years, including raising the fuel tax by 18 per cent, which hurts every Manitoban; increasing the PST to 8 per cent; as well, expanding the PST base to more goods and services including home insurances and hair cuts, and even tattoos, which I'm quite familiar with. The NDP party's record shows that they have had little concern about Manitoba's—Manitoban's wallets. This is not the type of financial management that Manitobans want to see in their province.

Madam Speaker, our government is working to put more money in the pockets of Manitobans by reducing red tape and finding efficiencies throughout the province. Thanks to the decisions by our government—that our government has made, the 2017-2018 year-end fiscal results show a summary deficit of \$695 million, which is about \$145 million lower than the budgeted deficit of \$840 million.

Madam Speaker, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act and the health-care premium brought forward by Mr. Swan is not a route that we are willing to take—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Just a reminder to the member that we are not to be referring to members by the names, but by their constituencies.

**Mr. Lagassé:** So sorry about that. I should have said the member for Minto (Mr. Swan). I'm going to call it a rookie mistake.

This has been clear since it was first brought to our attention. Last year we consulted on the idea of a health-care premium. We wanted to hear from Manitobans; we didn't just want to push it through. Our government took the time to hear from everyone and we were told that the health-care 'premun' is not—premium, sorry—is not something Manitobans are interested in. This is why we did not move forward with it.

We know that cleaning up 17 years of mismanagement sometimes involves making tough

decisions, something the previous government proved themselves to be incapable of. That being said, we have committed not to imposing a health-care premium. This is what Manitobans want. They have clearly communicated it to us through the prebudget consultations and continued dialogue.

Madam Speaker, the last prebudget survey showed that Manitobans believe we are on the right path and should keep going. Unlike the previous government, we want health care to work well for each individual Manitoban. We are reducing wait times and cleaning up the past 17 years of health-care inadequacies.

Madam Speaker, the NDP's decade of decline witnessed ER times rise, and Winnipeg's emergency room wait times were the longest in all of Canada. It was said that you could fly to Toronto and back before you'd even get to see a doctor. And physician recruitment was stalled, which I touched a little bit on with the Ste. Anne's hospital there. This continued to spiral downwards and is something we cannot support or replicate under our government.

We will take no lessons from the members opposite on health care. Manitobans deserve better, and they voted for better in 2016. Madam Speaker, Manitobans expected a system that improves their health and provides quality care, and that's why careful consideration must be given when making changes to our health-care system.

\* (10:40)

Our government's health-care record, Madam Speaker, we made a commitment to improve patient access and wait times. Manitobans want a health-care system that is cost effective and focused on delivering the right care at the right time in the right place.

We have received the final report on the wait times reduction force report. Acting on the recommendations of the report will help us in achieving our goals of shorter wait times and better care sooner.

WRHA emergency department wait times show an 18 per cent drop in median wait times since August 2015, and MRI wait times have declined by 30 per cent as of July 2018, when compared to July 2017.

Our government committed to reducing ambulance fees by 50 per cent, which is something I heard a lot of on the campaign trail, 'expecially' from

the seniors in my riding, also in Ste. Anne. One of the top complaints I got, 'expecially' at the Coffees with Bob, as well, was that these fees were just way too high. There's a hospital right next door to this seniors home and they had to pay one of the highest ambulance fees to go less than a block.

During our first term in government, we have successfully reduced these fees to a maximum of \$340, and we will further reduce them to \$250 by 2019, all the while hiring 29 new full-time paramedics in 2017. And we will hire 60 more in 2018.

Our plan to provide better care sooner is working. At this point, Madam Speaker, I'd like to touch on a few highlights of the NDP track record on health care. Health care is the largest spending item by our provincial government. Under the previous government, Manitoba spent the most on health care of any province and received the worst outcomes and wait times in the country. Winnipeg's emergency room waits were the longest in all of Canada and, as I said before, physician recruitment stalled. The NDP promised to end hallway medicine, but under the NDP's decade of decline, Manitobans were left with the highway medicine, where too many Manitobans travelled elsewhere to get care they needed.

The NDP decade of decline witnessed ER wait times, as I touched earlier, to rise, and Winnipeg's became the longest in Canada. Maintaining the status quo simply was not an option for our government.

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

Tough decisions need to be made about the future of health care in Manitoba. The NDP did not make a single tough decision while in government. Careful consideration must be given when making changes to the health-care system, as the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) had done a wonderful job in leading the way in those health-care reforms. Manitoba expected a system that improves their health and provides quality care. Members opposite failed to deliver results in health care for the last 17 years.

Now let's touch a little bit on the PC record. Our plan is to provide better care sooner, and it is working. Our government is committed to reducing ambulance fees, as I said. And that is also going over very well in the constituencies. We hired 29 new full-time paramedics, as I said earlier. We made a commitment to improve patient access and wait times for surgeries, including hip and knee

replacements with cataracts—and cataracts, sorry. Hip and knees can't have cataracts.

As we have received the final report on the wait times reduction force, as I had touched on earlier, and our PC plan is working. Under our government, MRI times went down. Yes. And if the members opposite would like better outcomes than what this—if the members opposite would like better outcomes—*[interjection]*—yes, I know, I should have taken a drink of water in between the—yes. *[interjection]*

Okay, anyways. The initiatives we are taking have brought better care sooner to Manitobans. We are happy to see that our health-care plan is a result—is resulting in better results for Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** It is a real honour and a privilege to—every time to get up in this House and have an opportunity to speak on resolutions and bills that are brought forward from the—from all parties that are here in the Legislature. It's always an honour to have a—say a few words.

And this one, Bill 233, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act, I'm especially pleased to talk about this because it gives me an opportunity to really remind the people in this House and just the incredible, horrible record the NDP had when it comes to health-care services in the province. And it gets to the point where you just—there's—you can't—*[interjection]*—I thank the member from Fort-Garry Riverview from the help, but I think that kind of help I don't need right now. But really, anything health care and the NDP, those things just don't seem to line up with any sincerity whatsoever.

So I know when our—if we looked at our fiscal situation, the situation, the legacy of the NDP that we inherited when we first took government, we did face a very serious issue as a province, as the fiscal situation for Manitoba was worse due to NDP, much more worse than we thought and it was all due in part—large part—to NDP mismanagement.

So I'm glad that we're—our government is taking concrete steps to address this fiscal situation and the risks the NDP has put on all Manitobans and, in particular, our health-care service and the outcomes that Manitobans expect from their health-care system. We're very pleased to be working on the numerous challenges left over by the NDP.

And, you know, just as early as this morning, we had a—I was at a breakfast meeting, and there was a lot of very kind and encouraging words put forward by Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce in terms of the actions that we're taking, in terms of transforming the health-care system. And I know we're on the right path here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're on the right path and a lot of people are showing their confidence in us in addressing the health-care challenges that we were left with on the NDP.

But our plan is to provide better care sooner, and it's working. And it's pretty simple to manage effectively if you have the right help and partners. And I know we've—have a number of reports from experts in the field that are helping guide this. I know those reports were shelved by the NDP and that was pretty normal. They didn't want to see how badly they were managing the health-care system. They didn't want to come to terms with it, and quite—in fact, they probably—there was probably forces beyond them that just said, you know what, you guys cannot make these changes. And I think that played out for many, many years, and Manitobans that were looking for better health-care outcomes and better services were poorly served by the previous government for many, many years.

And again, I'll go back to what—the actions our government has taken and—to improve the health-care system right now. It's a very well thought-out strategy in management, a plan for improving the health-care for all Manitobans.

I know, you know, in terms of emergency care our government—we hired 29 new full-time paramedics in 2017, and I can say that transformation in—of the ambulance services hits particularly important in my constituency of Dauphin. I know there's a number of locations where there's going to be 24-7 paramedics with more qualifications, higher—the ambulances themselves are going to have more equipment in them. And in real terms that does provide a much more effective emergency service for a lot of rural Manitoba, instead of trying—like the NDP, like, tried to maintain numbers of hospitals. Like, we've made some major changes in the city of Winnipeg and condensed that. Emergency service, so that you can have the expertise in a few places, rather than having little services all over the place. It's that condensed sort of emergency care, which is really what's playing out when you look at the ambulances and the paramedics in—throughout rural Manitoba.

\* (10:50)

So we know that the people that are coming to on-scene are going to be more highly skilled. We're making that investment in that process, in those people, enabling them to provide better care on-scene, and being able to be linked into a shared health system, which is going to be able to provide better care on the ground where it's actually needed.

And I know that in talking with a number of paramedics on this operating system, this is really a very effective way to provide emergency care at the right time and being able to transfer those patients to appropriate hospitals for the appropriate care.

So these are concrete things that we're doing as a government to respond to some of the health-care challenges, some of those many challenges left over by the NDP, which really, really didn't care about performance. They didn't—weren't concerned about outcomes at all. It just seemed that once things got working poorly, their solution was to just throw money at it. Throw more money at it, over and over again. And, of course, we have a system that the NDP left which is burdensome. It's costly and we need to—and of course the results are showing. And what we inherited was a legacy of poor outcomes, high wait times, high MRI times.

And that also gives me an opportunity to talk about the MRI in Dauphin. And what we talked about the realized commitment—the realized commitment of our government to get the MRI into Dauphin. This just happened over the last month. I know the community is very, very excited about this. And I know from experience that, you know, the NDP, they promised this thing for over 12 years. And, in spite of reports that showed that, you know, there should've maybe been an MRI in Dauphin 10 years ago, they ignored that. They ignored the reports of the Auditor General that showed that the wait times were incredibly high. There were lots of inefficiencies in the system, and yet they chose not to even though they continually promised it to the Parkland and promised it to Dauphin.

So I'm really glad for the people of Dauphin, glad that the government fulfilled their commitment. They realized the commitment that we will bring the MRI. But it had to—it had to be put on hold for a while and that was just the responsible—total responsible action of the current government because we knew what we had inherited was a mess. It was way out of control. And the only thing you could do

was put the brakes on it. And I really do want to thank—I do want to thank the people of the Parkland for being patient on this as we realign, as we come to terms with the disastrous record of the NDP. And all you could responsibly do was put things on hold. So again, I want to really—do thank the people of Dauphin, across the constituency—Swan River, that entire area and to the north. And again, thank the government for making the significant, realized commitment for the Parkland and MRI services that are going to help all of western Manitoba and all Manitobans.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski).

Order.

As previously agreed, I am interrupting the debate to put a question on this bill. The question before the House, then, is the second reading of Bill 233, the health service insurance act.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I hear a no.

**Voice Vote**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

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

**Recorded Vote**

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** A recorded vote, madam—

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

Order. The hour—one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am now

therefore directing the division bells to be turned off and the House to proceed with the vote.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 233, the health services insurance act.

### Division

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

### Yeas

*Allum, Altemeyer, Bindle, Clarke, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Pedersen, Reyes, Saran, Schuler, Smith (Point Douglas), Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.*

### Nays

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Yeas 46, Nays 0.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway)—the time for—is 11. It's time for private members' resolutions.

The honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). *[interjection]*

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hour being 12 p.m.—

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** —the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, November 1, 2018**

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