

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	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
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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
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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, April 11, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand and table the statutory review on The Personal Health Information Act

Madam Speaker: Further tablings?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table A Review of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Report and Statutory Review, April 2019.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Campaign

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on a topic that surely all of the members in this Chamber can relate to. With nearly one in two Canadians expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, we know that everyone is affected in some way.

One of the organizations that is committed to the fight against cancer is the Canadian Cancer Society. The Canadian Cancer Society is a national, community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer. Their vision is to create a world where no Canadian fears cancer. They are the country's largest national charitable funder of research into all types of cancer. They educate people on how to reduce their risk of cancer and how some types of cancer can be found early through screening tests. Their support services help people with cancer and their loved ones at a time when they are scared and anxious.

Since the 1950s, bright yellow daffodils have arrived in communities across Canada to mark the

beginning of the Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Campaign. The daffodil is a resilient—is resilient as it survives our harsh winters and is the first flower to bloom in the spring, a time of renewal and hope.

The daffodil is a symbol of strength, courage and life. Every April during the annual Daffodil Campaign Canadians rally around this symbol and take action to help fund research and support services so no one has to face cancer alone. Many of us have seen first-hand that while cancer can change a person, it doesn't have to define who they are.

During the Daffodil Campaign you can show your support for people with cancer by dedicating a digital daffodil today at www.mydaffodil.ca.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming my guests to the gallery from the Canadian Cancer Society: Sarah Hawkins, Kyra Gawalko, Jana Pringle, Rob Cunningham, Al Shell, Nimmi Ramgotra and her husband, Baldev Singh Ramgotra.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet?

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, I ask leave to enter the names of the board members of the Canadian Cancer Society to be submitted into Hansard as well.

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

Canadian Cancer Society Board Members: Brian Beveridge, chair; Elmer Gomes, past chair; Trish Bergal, Michael Holmes, Janet Mayor, Carmen Nedohin, Al Shell.

Post-Secondary Education

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Manitoba was once one of the few places left in Canada where young people could still afford to live and access quality education. But after an agenda of deep cuts, universities and colleges have had to find savings wherever they can.

Manitoba students saw the biggest tuition increase in the country last year after the

PC government lifted the tuition cap. Madam Speaker, \$13 million has been cut from post-secondary funding since 2017, forcing Red River College to cut two programs, St. Boniface to cut four courses, and an across-the-board reduction in teaching staff.

When the cost of living and education continues to rise and job prospects are harder and harder to find, these barriers can be demoralizing for Manitoba youth.

But Manitobans are standing up against the Pallister government's harmful changes. School trustees are working together to oppose school board reductions. Youth Employment Services is offering a mentoring forum on May 15th of this year to help young people gain employable skills.

We need a government that works with Manitobans to support students and gives them the tools to succeed. Youth should feel empowered to pursue their dreams.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Lester and Margaret Everett

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): In 1991, after years of struggling with the lack of employment opportunities and frustration at the constant fight to feed themselves and their four kids, Lester and Margaret Everett opened their very own store in Berens River First Nation. They named their business Oshetoon.

The couple started off as a hardware store, selling building materials to the First Nation and to band membership, all housed within a modest building.

Being First Nation entrepreneurs in that age was challenging. Margaret and Lester had to use a Caucasian friend to help them negotiate a deal to become clients of the Sexton buying group.

They began to sell confectionery items, and one day, a customer brought in his pay voucher and asked if he could entrust it to them and that his family would slowly deplete the balance. They soon were stocking groceries in hopes of capturing this market, and they did.

The business was growing but the building was not. The couple could not secure the loans needed because finding someone to insure a First Nation business was quite challenging. After many closed doors, they found a small, willing start-up. The

couple was soon approved for a \$200,000 bank loan, and then they built a massive addition.

The couple worked hard at stocking their store as Berens River was a fly-in-only community at the time and they have many scary stories of boating on Lake Winnipeg with freight.

In a short time, the loan was paid off, so again in 1999 they expanded to include an automotive section.

This past winter road, I was so proud to see their brand new addition of an enormous gas and diesel fuelling station. They also now are a chain as they have opened up a new store in Poplar River First Nation, which is 90 kilometres away from Berens.

I ask my colleagues to honour the tenacious Lester and Margaret Everett who have not joined us in the gallery because they are busy at work.

Megwetch, Madam Speaker.

U19 East End Wings

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): My community of Transcona has, for many years, been a training ground of excellence for ringette. That continues this year with the U19 East End Wings.

The core of this team have been together for four years and this year were a dominant presence on the ice, posting a perfect season of 45 wins and no losses, outscoring their opponents 377 to 145, winning gold medals in tournaments in every month from October through March, and then finishing the season by winning the gold medal at the Western Canadian Ringette Championships in Alberta.

Team Toba's unblemished record for the year, though, was in serious jeopardy in the round-robin portion of the tourney as Team Alberta took the lead in a game with less than a minute left. Our buffalo girls dug deep and, with mere seconds left on the clock, tied the game and kept that spotless record by winning in overtime.

At a competition at this high level, teams sometimes, as rules allow, have a male hockey goalie in net to shore up their defence, and some of the teams our girls played did have to face young men in the goal. These ladies here want everyone to know that, just because the opposite sex was in net, they weren't going to take it easy on them; they owned those goalies.

This team also gives back to its community, volunteering at east end's Breakfast with Santa and coaching the game they love at the younger levels where they are proud to help it flourish.

At the westerns, they had a large group travel with them for support, and when the Manitobans' megaphones were confiscated, a trip to the local Dollarama got them the requisite buckets and noisemakers a proper Manitoba contingent needs to make their presence felt in the building.

Special recognition for—to tournament all-stars Janelle Darragh, Natalie Derbowka and Mackenzie Vincent, and to double ice sport champion Cierra Melnyk, who also won gold as part of Murdoch MacKay's girls hockey team this year.

Please join me in congratulating the East End Wings' players and coaches for an exemplary season.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona?

Mr. Yakimoski: Madam Speaker, I ask leave of the House that we may enter the names of the players and coaches of the team into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include all of those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

U19 East End Wings: Alexyss Carman, Berri Cook, Janelle Darragh, Natalie Derbowka, Rachel Haner, Mason Hollebeke, Amy Marques, Cierra Melnyk, Jacqueline Midford, Jenelle Sernowsky, Keely Soloway, Jordyn Spitula, Jordan Takenaka, Mackenzie Vincent, Shelby Mitchell. Coaches: Carly Butland, Katy Butland, Len Grieve, Tom Mark, Shania Neyron. Manager: Candace Sernowsky.

Chris Maxemuck

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Today, I would like to draw your attention to an outstanding community member, visionary, team player and Dawson Trail hero, Chris Maxemus *[phonetic]*. Seventeen years ago, Chris and 40 hockey players from Lorette and surrounding area were asked to take part in an event that would be the beginning of a new recreational facility for the town. The 36 Hour Hockey Marathon was born.

Hockey was played for 36 hours straight in hopes of raising awareness of need—of the need for a new facility. The 36 Hour Hockey Marathon was a great success, raising an astounding \$80,000.

These funds were used in renovating mould-ridden dressing rooms in the current facility. The remaining funds were set aside for the new complex, but Chris' efforts didn't end there.

In October 2018 Chris began the last and final chapter to the 36 Hour Hockey Marathon story. Residents were asked once again to show their support for a new complex. This time it was a little different. For \$10 you could choose a puck that had been customized by a local business and organization in the community. The result was the sale of over 1,500 pucks, and with the additional donations they raised \$20,000.

Chris says: Looking back on the 36 Hour Hockey Marathon activities, it is with great pride. It was awesome to see the positive energy and people working together to build the community one goal at a time. The 36 Hour Hockey Marathon has raised, in total, \$100,000 towards a new community complex. Although the new Lorette Community Complex has not yet come to fruition, the community continues to fundraise for this project.

Chris Maxemuck joins us in the gallery today. Please help me in recognizing him for his outstanding work in his community.

Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery, from Garden Valley Collegiate, 56 grade 9 students under the direction of Briar Hildebrand, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Friesen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, it's been just over two years since the Premier first announced his plan to close emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre here in Winnipeg.

Now, we know that that was nowhere to be found in the PC 2016 election platform. Nobody in

Winnipeg remembers any of these MLAs knocking on doors and campaigning on a promise to close emergency rooms, and nobody understands how this plan is going to make health care better when there's less health care to go around. Already we've seen the impact of the cuts. We've seen more mandatory overtime for nurses. We've seen longer waits for ERs, longer waits for surgeries and increased cancellations of cardiac surgeries here in the city of Winnipeg.

Now that it's been two years, the Premier has had ample time to reconsider.

Will he confirm for the House today that he does not intend to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, quite the contrary, Madam Speaker. We actually ran on a commitment to Manitobans we would repair the services of our province, and we're acting on the advice the NDP had. They were given the advice, actually. The Peachey report was part of that advice, and it said that we were last in terms of wait times in Canada.

But, apparently, the NDP wasn't willing to take up the challenges of improving the system, Madam Speaker, and that's too bad because Manitobans had to wait a long, long time to get services, and now we're the only province that's making headway on reducing wait times; and good for this government for doing that, good for Manitobans and bad on the previous government for not having the courage to make those improvements to the system.

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

Concordia Hospital Lab Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Wait times at emergency rooms in Winnipeg have gone up since the Premier started closing ERs and an urgent-care centre here in Winnipeg. The most recent numbers show that emergency room wait times have gone up both month over month and year over year.

Now, we know that the Premier understands that his plan isn't working and he also understands that Manitobans aren't buying this plan to cut health care. That's why, about a year after he made the announcement of the closure, he went out and

said that northeast Winnipeg would not be losing health services. One of the commitments that he made on June 1st of 2018 was to reassure thousands of northeast Winnipeggers that they would not be losing access to a lab at Concordia Hospital.

However, we've learned that lab services actually will be lost at Concordia Hospital as of June 1st; that's one less health-care service for families in northeast Winnipeg.

Why is the Premier shutting down lab services at Concordia Hospital?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Here's what the member's party was told, Madam Speaker, when they were in government: if you want to make improvements to health-care system, you're going to have to concentrate your resources in fewer emergency rooms. That's what they were told.

That's what Calgary did and they got lower wait times. That's what Vancouver did and they got lower wait times. That's what Ottawa did and they got lower wait times. They had governments that had the courage to act, and Manitobans didn't have a government that had the courage to act until they got this government and we have the courage to act.

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

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Since this Premier started cutting health care and closing emergency rooms, wait times have gone up in the city of Winnipeg. Most recent month shows that ER wait times went up month over month and also compared year over year.

And now those people in northeast Winnipeg, who were reassured by not just the Premier, but also the members for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski), for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) and for River East (Mrs. Cox) that they would, in fact, still have lab services at Concordia, are finding out that that just isn't the case.

In fact, lab services at Concordia Hospital will be closing on June 1st, right about the same time that this Premier and his MLAs from northeast Winnipeg are going to close the emergency room at Concordia.

Of course, those are just plans at this point; there's still time.

Will the Premier change course and keep the emergency rooms at Concordia and Seven Oaks hospitals open?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member has a little bit of confusion, perhaps purposed confusion, Madam Speaker, about the facts.

We are actually investing over \$400 million more in health care this year than the NDP ever did. In fact, Madam Speaker, the most important thing is we're getting better results as a consequence, and so the Canadian institute of health information report just a few weeks ago said that nine provinces' wait times were getting longer at emergency rooms, but they said one province's was not, and that was Manitoba.

In fact, the two–last two years the NDP were in charge versus the first two we were in charge, the comparative data is out now. We saved Manitobans almost 50 years of waiting in waiting rooms in pain and in fear.

So, Madam Speaker, the results are coming. It's not easy. The member wants it to be easy; change isn't easy.

The NDP didn't have the courage to tackle the change challenge, but for the good of Manitoba health care and for the good of Manitobans, this government does.

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

Manitoba Hydro Profits Rate Increases

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just like to correct the Premier: the most recent CIHI data showed that wait times were going up in Manitoba.

Now, on this side of the House we say that hydro bills should stay affordable. We should say that the monthly bill payments that people have to say–have to pay should stay affordable, and that it's very important to manage our most important Crown corporation very well.

Now, here are the facts when it comes to hydro. Again, with zero–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –increase to people's hydro bills in Manitoba this year, Manitoba Hydro would still turn a profit of \$64 million. That's more than double what Hydro said would be a comfortable amount of profit for them just a few short months ago.

So, with this in mind, with the fact that no rate increase is required, will the Premier agree that Manitoba Hydro should not increase people's bills this year?

* (13:50)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member talks about wait times going up in one month. Madam Speaker, the most important thing is they're a heck of a lot lower right now than they were when the NDP were in charge, and that's great–great.

You know, it's a struggle, and it's a struggle to deal with Crown corporation management in respect of Hydro because the NDP debt on Hydro is enormous, and it's going up. In fact, just in the last five years it went up by almost \$10 billion, and in the next five years it's projected to go up by \$5 million.

That's about fifteen–billion, I'm sorry, billion, Madam Speaker. That's enormous. It's an enormous amount of debt and it will soon exceed the provincial debt in its entirety because we're getting the core government under control, getting closer to balance, and that's what Manitobans deserve and want.

But the member talks about a short-term gain at Hydro. He's not letting himself be aware of the long-term pain. The long-term pain is a \$675-million debt-service cost this year alone.

So Manitoba Hydro has its challenges. The NDP created them. We're addressing them.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier's answers just don't make sense. Even after fulfilling its obligations, Manitoba Hydro, without increasing bills one cent, would still turn a \$64-million profit. Those are the numbers in black and white, and they just underline the fact that the only crises that Manitoba Hydro has faced in recent years have been under his watch. They were when his first hand-picked board decided to balloon debt repayments by paying it back twice as fast, and then it was when that same board decided to storm out on the Premier because he simply could not work with that board.

Keeping in mind that hydro bills should stay affordable in the province and that Manitoba Hydro is in a strong position to remain profitable, both this year and for the foreseeable future, will the Premier simply agree that Manitoba Hydro bills should not increase this year?

Mr. Pallister: I got a little bit of news for the member opposite, Madam Speaker. He might like to concern himself a little more with the long term and sustainability as opposed to the short term.

In the long term our Hydro debt is going up so fast that moneylenders are congratulating us for facing the challenge, but at the same time they're saying that the NDP legacy of Hydro debt may imperil our credit rating as a province in the future.

Madam Speaker, the member refuses to take the issue seriously. We take it very seriously. The fact is we're talking about 5 billion additional dollars the NDP committed us to spending just in the next five years: \$5 billion.

The member is so caught in the short term; he says, look at that money, let's spend it right away, like he said about David Chartrand: let's cut a cheque for \$70 million to David Chartrand and make him happy.

Madam Speaker, take a look at what's right. I ask the member to take a look at what's right for the people of Manitoba, not just what buys him short-term popularity.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Premier can stand up for moneylenders. We will stand up for the people of Manitoba who have to pay hydro bills, Madam Speaker, and, again, we know—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—that the Premier passed a law, a Crown corporations governance act law, here in Manitoba that gave himself the ability to issue a directive to a Crown corporation regarding any, and I'm quoting here, matters of policy for the corporation. End quote.

So we know that the Premier has already done it once for Hydro. He's already saw fit once to direct both that Crown corporation and others on a matter of policy. The issue that we're bringing up today is a very important issue of keeping rates affordable for Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

So will the Premier commit today that he will use the powers that he has given himself to stand up for the people of Manitoba and ensure that their hydro bills don't go up this year?

Mr. Pallister: Gosh, I love it when the NDP raise a Hydro question in this House, Madam Speaker. Ed Schreyer said the NDP couldn't be trusted to run a lemonade stand in reference to Hydro, and he was absolutely right.

The member gets up and he talks about protecting the people of Manitoba. They told—the NDP told the people of Manitoba—they went right across the province, they had mailers in as many households as they could, they said the bipole line won't cost you a penny, they said—and maybe they were anticipating the penny would be thrown out of production, I don't know. But the fact is \$5 billion later we're still paying for NDP mistakes, amazing boondoggles, and the member stands in his place and talks about caring about Manitobans.

They could care less about Manitoba ratepayers; they don't care about Manitoba taxpayers. We do, and we're going to clean up the mess the best we can, but it's a big mess.

Finance Minister's Comments Fixed Election Date Law

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, here's a mess: two days ago the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) told Manitobans the tax measures announced in the budget could not come into effect unless the budget implementation bill was passed.

Yesterday, I asked the government to provide any advice to back up that claim and, instead, the acting Finance Minister got up, directly contradicted the Minister of Finance, and said the tax changes will happen as were announced on budget day.

Will the Premier apologize for sending out the Minister of Finance to mislead Manitobans in an attempt to justify the government breaking Manitoba's election law?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): They're caught between a rock and a hard place, Madam Speaker. They're now advocating for the PST to go down on July 1st.

Thank you very much for supporting us in that effort. Madam Speaker, I thank the NDP for that. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Madam Speaker, why are they advocating for the PST to go down on July 1st? Why? They'll have to answer that question.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, it's always inconvenient for the Premier there's this thing called Hansard. So I'll table for him the acting Minister of Finance's words from yesterday: I can remind the member it's going to happen on July 1st. And, indeed, that confirms what the Premier said in March. That would accord with the advice from the courts, from the practice in Manitoba and other Canadian jurisdictions.

But we just need to know—*[interjection]* Well, you know, maybe members could listen.

I'd like to know why the Premier sent out the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) to contradict his own words other than as a pretext to break Manitoba's election law.

Mr. Pallister: Let's think about the NDP position for a minute. It fairly makes the head spin.

First of all they promised they wouldn't raise the PST. They called it nonsense and ridiculous. Then they raised the PST. Now we're lowering the PST and they want us to do it sooner.

Madam Speaker, they've got to explain their positioning on this issue; either they want it higher, or they don't. It's that simple.

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

Mr. Swan: I think it's this Premier that's put the Minister of Finance into the witness protection program.

You know, it's not just the opposition that have noticed the problems with this government's story—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Even the Winnipeg Sun says the Pallister government's attempts to break Manitoba's election laws amount to cheating, and the Sun's verdict on the Finance Minister's most recent performance two days ago is, and I quote: Its lameness is eclipsed only by its complete inaccuracy.

So with its flimsy excuse in tatters and with the Minister of Finance being thrown under the bus yesterday, I just ask the Premier: Will he apologize to Manitobans and confirm his government's

commitment to respecting the date set in law of October 6, 2020, for the next general election?

Mr. Pallister: Everyone here already knows that the NDP just is worried about the subsidy. Everybody here knows and soon all Manitobans will know as well, but I appreciate any question from the member about throwing things under a bus, Madam Speaker, because that is the culture of the NDP, was—it was a part of the culture when he was there and he was the major bus-under-thrower.

So I get that he's asked the question on which he has some experience and authority, but he has—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —no experience at all, nor do any of his colleagues, in lowering the tax burden on Manitoba households. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: If Manitobans want higher taxes, they've got the NDP for that; if they want lower taxes they've got our government for that.

Safe Consumption Site Request for Government Support

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Premier is not only choosing to draw conclusions from scientific journals and his own departments that feed into his archaic views, but he's also choosing to misconstrue comments from BC Premier—from the BC Premier's comments on the effectiveness of safe consumption sites.

So I'll clarify for the First Minister. The Premier of BC stated, and I quote: Overdose prevention and supervised consumption sites save lives and are a critical part of BC's response to the overdose crisis. Together with increased access to mental health and addictions services and supports, they have contributed to saving thousands of lives in our province. End quote.

* (14:00)

Will the Premier set aside his archaic and partisan views, look at the facts, listen to the experts and commit to opening a safe consumption site today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate any question from the member referencing archaic and partisan, Madam Speaker.

The fact remains that—and I'll put the comments on the record again—other premiers where consumption sites exist know they were set up, not for meth, but they were set up for opioids, and opioid deaths in BC, for a number of reasons, are rising. They are the highest in Canada, and the Premier has acted as he felt was appropriate for British Columbia. But he's also committed to me that he understands that an opioid injection site in Winnipeg is not supportable because the demographic reality is different here than it is in Vancouver, where users are concentrated in one area.

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that there are unintended consequences. The Premier and I discussed those, and those unintended consequences may well be very, very serious for all, including those who, unfortunately, choose to inject meth into their bodies.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The bottom line, Manitoba—Madam Speaker, is that safe consumption sites work. While the Premier and the Minister of Health continue to rise in this House and put on the record that safe consumption sites do not help people struggling with meth addiction, research articles, reports and real-life examples continue to validate the effectiveness and the demand for these spaces.

In contrast, BC's Premier states, and I quote: Our government has nearly doubled the number of overdose prevention and supervised consumption sites in BC. Between July 2017 and June 2018 alone there were over 1 million visits to these sites with thousands of overdoses reversed and no deaths reported.

Will the Premier commit—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: The member continues to attempt to mix sites available—made available for people who choose to use opioids, unfortunately, and sites for meth and tries to make her case using false data and a false situation which she cites, Madam Speaker. That's not how to make a case.

We're acting on this issue. We're acting in concert with others who are concerned. We're opening—we have opened five Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics throughout the province and we have doubled the amount of—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —women's treatment beds. We are joining with Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund. We are joining forces with federal and municipal governments that want to arrive at real solutions to help people find a road to recovery, Madam Speaker, and not just a treadmill to tragedy.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Front-line experts continue to say that a key barrier to a safe consumption site in Winnipeg is the archaic views of this Premier that we see repeatedly, day after day.

The Premier of BC understands the response needed to address a public drug crisis. The Premier of BC is not a barrier. The Premier of BC understands that safe consumption sites work as they continue to expand these services. There are now over 30 overdose prevention sites and supervised consumption sites in BC with no recorded deaths.

Will the Premier take note what—the Premier of BC's commitment is to safe consumption sites and actually commit to getting one started and established here today?

Mr. Pallister: Of course, Madam Speaker, the archaic and partisan approach the member chooses to take is one which ignores all the actions we are taking and that others are taking in concert with this Province to address the issue. She chooses to ignore all of those, and her one-size-fits-all recommendation is that we—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —set up a site where meth users can get meth more easily.

That's not what British Columbia did. She's citing an example which doesn't work to support her own case. They set up sites to help people quit opioid addictions. Fentanyl was the reason, and that is not working as effectively as the Premier and others would like. In fact, the death rate is going up in British Columbia, not down.

Madam Speaker, the reality of the situation is that it is more complex than—the member's simplistic solution would not suffice to address the complexity of the situation. A warm hand, warm cup of coffee and a chance to get off meth is far better than just a cold needle for everybody that wants to inject meth.

Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities Caregiver Training and Wages

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): There are over 6,800 adults with intellectual disabilities in Manitoba who depend on caregivers, and because of their disabilities, these people are very often very vulnerable. Individuals with disabilities will have hundreds of caregivers over their lifetime, which means there's little continuity of care. And these workers are the front line of the front line, caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our society, people who deserve to be treated with dignity; yet workers are expected to do work that health-care aides and even nurses cannot do for as little as \$12.15 an hour with no training.

I table a petition with 9,368 signatures calling for this government to increase the pay for people caring with adults—for adults with disabilities.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) step up to make sure that vulnerable people are properly cared for and workers properly paid in this province?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I thank the member for this question.

We take the issues and the challenges surrounding persons with disabilities very seriously, Madam Speaker. That's why we're increasing the funding in the budget by more than \$13.6 million for this—for persons with disabilities.

And I would suggest that members opposite voted against that, so if they really care about this issue, that—I would suggest that voting against it is not the right way to go.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, this government ran on a promise to protect the most vulnerable. We are talking about with—people with disabilities who depend on others to care for them. I've been visited more than once by the parents of those vulnerable people.

Caregivers in Manitoba require no training. They only have to have a grade 10 education. Yet, with no training they may be expected to dispense powerful medication that even nurses with extensive medical education would not be allowed to do. They are expected to do work that health-care aides cannot do, for a fraction of the cost.

Will this government protect people with disabilities and support caregivers by making sure there is training for caregivers to prevent medical errors?

Mrs. Stefanson: I do want to just take this opportunity to thank all those caregivers who work—and the incredible work that they do with persons with intellectual disabilities in our province. The work that they do every day just is incredible for these individuals, Madam Speaker.

I've already stated that we're increasing the funding by more than \$13.6 million in CLDS budget, Madam Speaker, and what did members opposite do? They voted against it.

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

Funding for Advocacy Agencies

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, disabilities advocates have made it quite clear that that extra funding is only going up because there are more people entering the system. It isn't actually adding to any extra pay.

This government is once again charging ahead with changes without asking stakeholders and patients how they'll be affected, using a process called Building on Abilities that is a holdover from the NDP.

I table a news report from today that shows the Manitoba league for persons which—with disabilities, which was founded in 1974, has had its funding cut. They said this government made it harder to get funding. Tried to set up—they tried to set up meetings to find out the criteria for applications and how to submit applications, but the talks went nowhere. We've heard that agencies are now facing cuts of 14 to 44 per cent.

The league for disabilities treasurer says, quote, there are so many gaps in disability health care that Manitobans will suffer, end quote, because if the league isn't around there'll be no one to fight for equal treatment.

Why is this government undermining agencies who are only advocating for equal and fair treatment for vulnerable people?

Mrs. Stefanson: If the member opposite truly cares about persons with intellectual disabilities in our province, Madam Speaker, he should not have voted against our budget.

I would suggest that he should listen to Manitobans, listen to those caregivers, listen to those with lived experience in intellectual disabilities. They will know that within this budget there is more money there for persons with intellectual disabilities.

The member opposite should get on board. We're about finding solutions to very challenging issues in our province, Madam Speaker. He needs to get on board and help with this.

Personal-Care Homes Projects and Funding

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): One of the first acts of the Pallister government was to cancel personal-care-home projects across Manitoba, then they cut funding to existing personal-care homes not once, but twice.

* (14:10)

We FIPPA'd the government, asking how much has been spent of the \$160 million that they promised in the election in 2016 to personal-care homes, and I'll table that. The answer was \$39,200, Madam Speaker.

Why has this government broken the promise to vulnerable seniors in Manitoba and not built personal-care homes?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, the member must have missed the memo, because on February the 22nd we were pleased to announce, with hundreds of Manitobans present, a new personal-care home for Carman, and two days later, a new personal-care home for Steinbach, Manitoba.

But Madam Speaker, the facts are these: that for years and years, the NDP—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —did not build personal-care homes, and they left seniors to go to personal-care homes 50 kilometres, 75 kilometres, 100 kilometres away from their home. We have said the right care, in the right place, at the right time; and this includes the good investments we're making on personal-care homes. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mrs. Smith: Well, Madam Speaker, Calgary place, Concordia Place, Misticordia *[phonetic]* place,

Sharon house, Altona, Winkler, Oakbank, Ste. Anne, Steinbach, Hartney, The Pas and Flin Flon; those are just some of the personal-care homes that our NDP government built.

Now, this Premier (Mr. Pallister)—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —said he will fast-track construction on personal-care homes. Instead—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —three years later he's spending millions of dollars on horse racing, but less than the cost of one bed on a personal-care home for a vulnerable senior.

Why does the minister care more about horses than he does about seniors here in Manitoba? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, I think some of the investments that that member just referred to were actually brought under Ed Schreyer, so I don't think she should be taking credit for anything like that. Some of those things she's mentioned were from 45 years ago.

Madam Speaker, the facts are these. For years and years the NDP did not prioritize the appropriate development of personal-care-home beds. We're doing that now in collaboration with Manitobans, looking to communities for partnerships and innovation; doing it better.

We've made a commitment to Manitobans. The difference between us and them? We will keep our promises.

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

Mrs. Smith: Calgary place, Concordia Place, Misticordia *[phonetic]* place, and I can go on and on and on. There's dozens of personal-care homes—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —that were built under our government. As for this government's \$160-million commitment, again, we asked how much they spent: \$39,200. In three years this minister has spent millions on horse racing while leaving seniors without needed homes.

Why doesn't this government care about seniors in Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: I note that the chief executive officer for HavenGroup in Steinbach stated that when it came to the Steinbach personal-care home, the approval to proceed with an expanded Rest Haven Nursing Home is a testimony to effective partnerships with the community and the Province of Manitoba.

Now, I understand that the NDP doesn't know a lot about partnerships, but our government does. We're building trust. We're building partnerships with Manitobans and we are providing personal-care-home beds. We've made a promise to Manitobans. We intend to keep the promise.

We know that when it comes to the NDP, they never did keep their promises. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

City of Winnipeg Road Funding

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): My constituents—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'm going to call the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) to order, please. I have asked repeatedly, I've looked over there a number of times and I would actually—I'd call him to order now.

Mr. Teitsma: My constituents understand the importance of working co-operatively and working productively with the City of Winnipeg, especially when it comes to funding for priority road projects.

Recently, there has been some confusion regarding the generous funding that the City of Winnipeg receives from this government.

Can the Minister of Municipal Relations please tell the House about the support our government is giving to the City of Winnipeg so that they can deliver on the priorities of Winnipeggers?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'd like to thank my colleague from Radisson for that great question.

Madam Speaker, the City of Winnipeg received \$37.9 million of provincial funding for roads just this month, sufficient to fund all of City of Winnipeg's

2019 regional roadwork and enables the City to defer and repurpose most of its own projected spending on regional roads.

With our confirmed '19-20 capital commitment, Madam Speaker, the City of Winnipeg is receiving up to \$148.5 million for road funding from our government. In addition, I'm pleased to see the City has received more than \$40 million in unconditional federal gas tax revenue that can be spent on roads this year as well, and, again, it's unconditional.

I look—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Emergency Room Services Consistency of Care

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Julie Eyers, daughter of Verna Eyers, has a complex seizure disorder. She was able to receive excellent emergency care from the Victoria hospital at the emergency room until it was closed by this government.

In the months since its closure, even with an affiliation letter from the Health Sciences Centre, emergency care has involved what Verna calls hospital tours: setting out for one emergency room, then being redirected to another, and sometimes being redirected to a third before being seen.

Is the government planning to continue with such hospital tours to get emergency care, or will the government make sure a person like Julie can get consistent emergency care at one site?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for River Heights for the question.

This is actually one of the things that we are addressing in our health transformation. We know that the evidence suggested in Manitoba there were far too many interfacility transfers, transfers between hospitals, transfers between emergency rooms. This is inefficient. It creates patient outcome challenges. It is costly and it takes time. It's one of the reasons that we have embarked on this transformation of our health-care system, to make sure that in time these numbers will continue to fall, getting people the right care at one facility and not multiple facilities.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, there's no need to cause chaos when making changes.

Julie is a frequent user of the Winnipeg emergency-care system, and her mother Verna has come to know it well. Compared to the certainty and excellence of Julie's care before the closure of Victoria hospital, the current system is flawed. Patients like Julie are routinely redirected from one hospital to another before getting care.

Even when she's having a seizure and needs urgent attention, she's 'routinely' turned away from the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital emergency rooms because they're full.

When will the minister correct this problem? When he—when will he correct this treadmill to tragedy?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the member knows, as in all cases, if there is a case that he would like me to have more details on, our office would be happy to receive the particulars in this case and we would look into this woman's experience because, of course, we care.

But that member also knows that he seems to be demonstrating a desire to go back. We know that the Canadian Institute for Health Information said that for years and years in Manitoba, despite spending some of the highest amounts in health care, they got the worst results.

* (14:20)

We will not go back to the past. The back pointed to failure and wait times. We're cleaning up those wait times and getting better health care sooner for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, on one occasion Julie was directed to the Health Sciences Centre, then redirected to St. Boniface, and then it was full and so she was redirected back to the Health Sciences Centre. On another occasion she went to the Health Sciences Centre, was redirected to St. Boniface, and it was full and she ended up at Seven Oaks.

Verna Eyers calls these hospital tours bumping around until one finds a place to land. This is neither adequate nor appropriate care for a person with a seizure who needs prompt attention, as this letter to the minister, which I table, shows he's already aware of this problem.

Will the government address the major problems it has created in making the current system?

Mr. Friesen: The member knows I'm—be happy to receive more information if he has it—look into this particular case. But he also knows that we inherited a mess. We inherited exactly the system that he described: for years and years in Manitoba, patient transfers, the worst wait time results, the highest ER—in fact, in one year CIHI reported that Grace Hospital had the highest emergency wait times in the entire country, and the next year they said now it was Concordia.

We are fixing these problems, Madam Speaker, relying on evidence, relying on expertise of Manitobans and getting better results for all Manitobans. We are on a road to recovery.

Early Childhood Education Grant Funding Concerns

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): We on this side of the House have been spending some time reminding the government of some of its broken promises that it made from the last election. So I wanted to remind them and add to that list.

This PC government campaigned on a promise they would, and I quote, increase incentives to become an early childhood educator and promote ease of access to ECE training by expanding the training program. But what have they done, Madam Speaker? Instead they've—on top of freezing the operating funding for three years and cutting nearly \$1.4 million in grants to child-care centres, they've also cut training grants, recruitment grants, tuition support and wage-enhancement grants for ECEs. All of this is setting up our daycares to fail.

Why is this government cutting our early childhood educating?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): The member opposite is just wrong, Madam Speaker. In fact, I look forward to visiting various communities across Manitoba where we have invested more money in daycares.

And, Madam Speaker, Manitobans elected us to repair the services of this province. This is one area where the members opposite made a complete mess, and we're committed to cleaning it up.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: Twenty-six thousand Manitobans, including parents, families, early childhood educators, they have spoken up and they're calling on this government to recognize the importance of quality early childhood education in this province.

We understand the stress that parents are under. That's why we're proud to bring forward petitions every single day in this House representing their concerns. Pressures are increasing on daycares, and yet this government is only cutting.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) listen to the 26,000 Manitobans who have written and—petitions and supported those to make child care a priority in this province and commit to funding in this province?

Mrs. Stefanson: That's exactly what we're doing. In fact, we've committed to more than 3,100 new child-care spaces in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, 1,600 of which are in this budget alone.

When members opposite had a chance to stand up for child-care spaces, for children, Madam Speaker, what did they do? They sat down; they voted against it.

I will take no lessons from members opposite.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Klassen: —learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a

fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately 'renumerated'.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

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

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Access to quality health care is a fundamental right of all Manitobans, no matter where they live.

(2) The Premier has slashed budgets and cancelled projects for northern communities, making it harder for families to get the primary health care they need.

(3) The budget of the northern regional health authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the northern patient transport program.

(4) With limited services in the North, the Premier is forcing families and seniors to travel further for the health care they need.

(5) On November 6, 2018, the northern regional health authority announced that obstetric delivery services at the Flin Flon General Hospital would be suspended, with no discussion regarding when they will be reinstated.

(6) The result of this decision is that mothers in Flin Flon and the surrounding area will have to travel at least an hour and a half to The Pas, creating unnecessary risk for mothers and their babies.

(7) The people of Flin Flon are concerned for the health and safety of mothers-to-be and their babies, including the extra physical and financial stress that will be placed upon them by this decision of the provincial government.

(8) There has been no commitment from this provincial government that mothers and their escorts who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the northern patient transport program.

(9) Flin Flon General Hospital is a regional hub that serves several communities on both sides of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

(10) Because this provincial government has refused to invest in much-needed health-care services in The Pas, the hospital in The Pas may not be able to handle the extra workload created by this decision.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reinstate obstetric delivery services at Flin Flon General Hospital and work with the government of Saskatchewan and the federal government to ensure obstetric services continue to be available on a regional basis.

* (14:30)

This petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been signed by Paige Baschuk, Moreen Reagan, Stephanie Geddes, and many other Manitobans.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

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) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and childhood–child-care programs have received no new funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by Rebecca Ryall, Chantelle Reid, Courtney Dewar and many, many others.

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) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care

programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed Diane Martin, Marilyn Plaitin, Florimund Plaitin, and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

* (14:40)

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated; and

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by Michelle Lange, Brayden Jackson, Susan Pridham, quite a few others.

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

And the background to the petition is as follows—I'll say that again. The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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) Addictions are health and social problems that require co-ordinated responses from the health-care, social services, education and justice systems.

(2) It is known—it is well known that the number of people addicted to alcohol, drugs and other substances is on the rise in Manitoba, with a notable increase in use of methamphetamine and opioids, two highly addictive and very destructive drugs.

(3) Between April 2015 and April 2018, drug abuse and alcohol abuse were two of the top three risk factors identified by the community mobilization Westman HUB when dealing with people with acutely elevated risk.

(4) Recent Brandon Police Service annual reports show a steady increase in calls for service for crimes against property and person.

(5) In Brandon and western Manitoba, individuals seeking addictions treatment and the families trying to help them do not have local access to the services or supports that they need.

(6) There is no publicly available, centralized list of addiction facilities in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request that the provincial government consider establishing a cross-departmental team to provide leadership on a culturally appropriate, co-ordinated response to the growing addiction crisis

in our province that includes an aggressive, widespread education campaign on the dangers of using methamphetamine and opioids, along with addictions education for front-line medical staff in health-care facilities.

(2) To request that the provincial government consider providing additional addictions supports—or, services in Brandon and western Manitoba, across the continuum of care, including acute response, detoxification, long-term rehabilitation, transitional housing and support for managing co-occurring disorders.

(3) To request that the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living consider establishing a publicly available inventory of all addiction facilities in Manitoba.

Three—or (4) To request that the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living consider providing supports for the families of people struggling with addictions, including counselling, patient navigation and advocacy and direct access to free 'lenoxalone'—can't speak today.

Signed by Barbara Dornanen [*phonetic*], Adele Legault, Shirley Metcalfe and many, many other Manitobans.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase;

quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by Karen Baron, Anja Balharry, Quincy McIntyre-Brandt and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

* (14:50)

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care

programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this petition is signed by Anna Liza Cruz, Tristyn Cryderman and Matthew Joynt, and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have a Speaker's statement. I am advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for The Maples (Mr. Saran) regarding the member's selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 24 permits each independent member to select one private member's bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote.

Rule 24 also requires written notice to be provided by the Speaker regarding the date and time of the debate and the vote.

According to Bill 229, The Sikh Heritage (Creation of the Khalsa) Month Act will be debated on Tuesday, April 16th, 2019, starting at 10 a.m. with questions to be put at 10:55 that morning.

For the information of the House, any requests for a recorded vote on Tuesday will be deferred to accordance to rule 223-7 until 11:55 a.m. on Thursday, April 18th, 2019.

The honourable Government House Leader—*[interjection]*—Oh, okay.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you please call for second reading Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 16—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that the House will be resuming debate on second reading of Bill 16, and the honourable member from The Maples has 17 remaining minutes.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I reconnect to my topic I was discussing yesterday, I also want to talk about the rumour that election will be pretty soon called, and I understand we have a fixed date, and when we last time were passing that legislation, that a fixed date—there should be a fixed date and a deadline discussion between NDP and PC.

NDP, at that time, wanted the election fixed date in spring and PC wanted that fixed date in October. The reason why that because farmers are busy during the spring time, therefore election—the fixed date should not be in September. So we agreed that it will be in October.

So now I wonder whether farmers are—will be busy now or not? So why the contradiction? So I think there is something to think about.

And before we rush this budget and an election is called, I was talking about second languages, compulsory, other than French and English. That should be part of the budget. Also, I was talking about the histories of other countries: that subject should be optional.

So considering—I hope there should be some money allocated in this budget, or could be made available, money for the budget to help—but also, the other thing I was wondering: the MLAs who have English second language, and they're supported by the, also, communities who does not have command of the English.

What about if some funds are allocated in the budget? We have interpreters, and the MLAs can speak in their first language so that community will understand that language, and also interpreted, and the community in general will understand those issues. I don't think intelligence just comes with English only. It comes with all languages, so perhaps we should have that kind provision.

Also, I see there is sometimes problems to understand the accent. Perhaps we need a budget where we can have some people in the Hansard who can understand that accent so they don't have to leave the blanks, and so that could be recorded properly.

And now I understand there is cutting in the funds for the parties. To me, this is a erosion on the democracy, because with these funds parties and—can afford, and ordinary people can run in the election. But with these—removing—elimination of these funds, only rich people or who have rich friends, they will

be able to run in the election, and ordinary people won't be able to run.

So this won't be real democracy. And to bring back real democracy, I think we should go back to the previous arrangements. And I was listening, the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino), in the Philippines, their three Gs are working, because there're not such things, these kind of fund for the parties. So how the elections are fought, they're fought with the goons, with the guns, with the gold.

But I will add the fourth G: in India, it's also—election is fought with the gods. Religion is—real issues are not discussed. Actually, religion is used—let me, Mr. Speaker, give the example.

* (15:00)

There was a Muslim poor guy, and he had meat at home which was not necessarily cow's meat, but because the party is who wants to promote Hinduism, supporting the goons and these mobs—this mob went to his house and assassinated that poor guy, and, in these situations, the world's biggest democracy and—where gods are being used and minorities are under attack.

When I was telling you yesterday why near—not—the real issues are brought front. Actually, I was real—little bit 'spectical' about other issues they didn't—bringing in the Legislative Assembly. Do we really need that or not? This is something to be—think about.

Perhaps I can say—being Sikh, I can say I am Sikh. And Sikh is not a religion; it's a movement and—to talk about the human rights and to talk about the equality of a woman and to talk about the costs to the society. Maybe there is some point perhaps we can discuss this issue.

Now I will—as I promised, I will discuss the issues instead of criticizing government.

And I talked a few times about the culturally sensitive personal-care homes, culturally sensitive affordable houses. And I wonder if this budget will provide that provision.

I was in the gurdwara the other day, and they have about eight-acre land. They are willing to provide whatever we need for culturally sensitive personal-care homes, culturally sensitive personal affordable houses. Well, I wonder if this budget has some provision to help those people.

Why do we need these culturally sensitive personal-care homes and culturally sensitive affordable houses for the seniors—I'm talking about for the seniors? Because there's a language barrier, there's a cultural barrier. If they come from the same culture, if they understand the language, for them it will be very easy to socialize with each other and spend their old time and the last few days very easily.

And I really—I will really emphasize if that's incorporated in this budget. I hope the minister will pay attention and this government will pay attention.

Other topic I would like to discuss: drop-in centres and training for the people who are on social assistance or who are unemployed. What happens when people are just staying at home? They feel depressed, they will drink, they will have a drug like meth, and crime will increase. I would say three levels of the government should join. Three levels of the government should join together and fund the community centres where these people can drop in out of the cold.

When they report over there, perhaps they can be given short training, say, in welding, say, as a mechanic, or these kinds of shorter train. So those people will become confident and feel they belong to society. They will get jobs somewhere, and government will save money because they have to pay less rent assistance and other services they provide.

So this is very important that provincial, city and federal governments, they create a system where people who are social assistance, they go to these centres and also get socialization—socialize with each other, at the same time can get training, and also there should be some kind of exercise mechanism, too. So in that way, those people, we can get them out of poverty and they can become valuable members of the society.

Other issue I would like to bring in the attention of the government, medical coverage for super visa and visitor visa. And those people, when they come, they are sponsored by somebody who paying tax over here, but they are not covered for medical under the Manitoba health system. And a few days earlier, a person have to rush to the hospital and have to have different tests, and the relatives had to sign on the paper.

Now, they don't have that kind of money, about \$100,000 bill. Hospital asking, threatening them they

will give this to the collection agency, and they're under stress. They're approaching me and their MLA, and I don't know what to suggest to them.

I think as—when somebody comes over here, they should be paying some kind of fees, but should be covered under our health care. And so they should be covered by the Manitoba Health. At least the people will be worry-free over here, and people who come from other countries, they will be providing valuable services, their children, their grandchildren, and taking care of them.

So I think they deserve this kind of help. And I would ask to Health Minister really think about that and make the life easier for the immigrants whose parents or grandparents come under super visa or visa.

Also, I would like to point out that warranties, house warranties—why the government even relaxing that act. What had happened even now, if the builder—or, you call the builder, builder will say call the subcontractor. Subcontractor will—don't take responsibility.

And, at the end, you have to pay whatever is fixed. I gone through that a few times. So I was thinking maybe we should made the builder responsible and he have to call the subcontractor and he make sure whatever needed to be fixed should be fixed. But this government going other way around. They're giving a free way to do whatever they want to do.

* (15:10)

So I think we have to think about those issues. These issues, I did not just speak to for the sake of speaking. I'm thinking the government will be listening, ministers will be listening. Think about these are the practical and these are the needs of the ordinary people.

And those should be taken care of because either instead of personal-care home and senior affordable housing—only people will stay over here if they think they will be taken care of in—when they are seniors.

So let us we think about that before rushing to the election. Let us first give back that Seniors' School Tax Rebate—\$2,300. Seniors will be happy. And let's restart second-language compulsory courses.

And there are some more issues—

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before we continue with the next speaker, I just want to announce that seated in the public gallery from River East Personal Care Home, 14 visitors under the direction of Cindy Goranson. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield).

Welcome to the Legislature.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And, before we recognize the next member, I would—just want to advise the House that I received a letter from the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), designating his unlimited speaking time on the second reading of Bill 16 to the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just want to say a special hello and welcome to our guests here today. This is your building, the Manitoba Legislature, and I hope you have an awesome time while you're here. And I hope our debate actually does justice to your faith in democracy.

And democracy is a topic that I want to touch on in my very brief and short remarks here today.

Again, you know, I just wanted to begin actually on perhaps a more sombre note and just put on the record a few words in commemoration of my late aunt, Nancy, who recently passed away. So Aunt Nancy Morrison, née Kelly, was actually my late father's oldest sister. And she recently passed away just last week at the age of 90. And what a life she led.

Her Anishinabe name that she was given as a baby was Pekaamagiizhigook, which means the approaching dawn. And, as it was related to her as a young child, the elder told her when she got the name that she would see many dawns in her life—many new beginnings.

And, indeed, that prophecy, if you will, was borne out over her life experience. She was born the last generation amongst our people who lived free on the land. She lived with her people, with her parents on Lake of the Woods, on Treaty 3 territory.

Of course, she was taken away to residential school, and she experienced a terrible, terrible time there. But then, when she was a young teenager, she was given the opportunity to return home to be able to take care of her younger siblings.

And so she jumped at the opportunity. And so she was given a new lease on life—a new beginning. And she actually raised my dad and his other siblings, my uncles, as sort of their—almost like their stepmom, if you will, even though she was only their older sister.

And then, for many years, she struggled with the experience that she had in residential school. And she actually struggled with addictions quite a bit. However, through the grace of her family and the grace of God and the grace of the community around her, she was able to find sobriety and to lead a life of helping many other people in Kenora and in the surrounding area. And so, again, she had a new dawn and a new beginning in her life.

And so that sort of thing really inspires me and fills me with hope that, you know, there's people who, even though they experienced challenges, are so full of kindness and gentleness and good humour and generosity that they see fit to help others over the course of their time here on Earth.

Of course, on a personal level, I very much loved my Aunt Nancy—my dear Aunt Nancy—and would just note that she was actually the first person to hold me after I was born.

So, even before my mom or my dad had a chance to hold me as a baby, Aunt Nancy was there holding me. And, in fact, her own grandchild was being born on the same day, so I actually have a cousin born in the same hospital, same birthday.

So I just wanted to mark her passing and put a few words into Hansard for posterity on behalf of my late aunt.

One of the other things that I would note with respect to her life is that my Aunt Nancy wasn't allowed to vote into this country until well into her adult life. She would have been 30 or 40 years old before she gained the right to vote in Canada, and it's because of, you know, that history that I don't take democracy lightly.

I'm a strong believer in democracy and a great recognizer of the fact that these rights to vote, the rights to freedom of expression, and the rights to be able to cast a ballot for a self-determining

government are not rights that came to us freely. Indeed, they are rights that veterans of the world wars and other conflicts around the globe laid down their lives to protect.

And, closer to home, there have been many people who have stood up for their own rights, whether it was the suffragettes fighting for the women's franchise some hundred years ago, if there were, you know, First Nations people also who had to fight for their franchise leading up to 1960.

There were also people from other parts of the world who were discriminated against and only gained their right to vote in more recent times as well.

So freedom isn't free. That's sort of a line that we hear quite a bit, but I think it's important for us to remember that.

And it's also important for us to remember that, in the context of the debate on this bill that this House is considering today, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, because there is actually one provision in this bill that is undemocratic and stands in the way of our democracy.

And so this has been a topic of some concern. I noted, you know, the leader of one of the other parties here expressing his outrage at this provision.

There were many people in the media who said that they don't agree with removing public financing from election financing in Manitoba because that would only pave the way for greater influence of big money in our democracy.

And I have a lot of time for those arguments. I think that those arguments are well-considered and, again, that there is something very important for us to consider in terms of us standing up for our democracy from being taken over by the influence of big money.

That said, I also noted in some of the public commentary that there were some people who also said, well, we don't want to go entirely in that direction. Perhaps the status quo of election financing in Manitoba could be improved to make our system more fair.

And so I have a lot of time for this argument that we can continue to enhance our democracy and make our democracy even stronger so that we can insure that here in Manitoba we have a government for Manitobans and by Manitobans.

And so that's why my esteemed colleague sitting next to me, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), brought forth a private member's bill to try and sketch out one possible way that we could look at The Election Financing Act and rather than take it in a less democratic direction like this current bill does, we could, rather, take it in a more democratic election.

And I know that there was some debate on this in the House here, but just to recap slightly, what that bill proposed to do was, essentially, just to cap the existing amount of money and redistribute it more fairly.

One of the criticisms of the status quo is that it's just the three main parties that would be entitled to public support, and we said, well, why not broaden it out? Why not broaden it out to anybody who can secure 2 per cent of the vote? That way you could potentially have a Green Party, their candidates; you could have other parties out there, even independent candidates, if they are successful enough to tap into some of the support of their communities, that they, too, should be entitled to some amount of public financing.

The principle behind this is very clear: the reason why we do believe that there should be some public financing for elections in Manitoba is because I think everybody, regardless of your partisan affiliation, would be inspired by the idea that somebody without any money behind them should be able to put their name on a ballot and, through their own smarts, through their own hard work, and through their own willingness to engage with the issues of our time, that they could support—that they could secure support at the ballot box and on election day.

And so that was the principle behind the bill that we brought forward here, and while it was defeated on a vote, I do believe that that principle is still important for us to consider with respect to this BITSA bill.

* (15:20)

Now, I've engaged the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself on this subject, and I've shared our views directly with him, and I will be continuing to call on the Premier to allow us to strengthen our democracy and to enhance our democracy in a way that creates a level playing field and in a way that ensures that anybody, regardless of their socio-economic standing, regardless of where they come from in life,

regardless of their background, ought to be able to put their name on a ballot and to be successful.

And so I think if we are to, you know, in our heart of hearts, try and look at this bill and consider what it would mean for our democracy, I do think that there is one clause that amends The Election Financing Act that I would encourage my colleagues on the government side to vote down when we get to Committee of the Whole.

Again, if they vote down that clause at Committee of the Whole, it doesn't mean that we're not going to change anything. Perhaps we could work together and strike some sort of consensus alternative, or we could even, you know, just put that debate aside for a time, until such time that we could bring forward a new bill that would actually stand up for Manitoba's democracy and ensure not only a level playing field, but also an open door for representation of everyone in this great province within this Chamber.

So I am somebody who does not take lightly the fact that I have the great privilege of being able to sit in this place. I know that there are people whose names I have not even heard over the course of my life who laid down their lives to give me the privilege of being able to stand in this Chamber on a day like today and stand up for the principles of a self-determining, independent democracy.

And so it's with the greatest respect for those who've come before me, whether they're indigenous people, whether they're non-indigenous, whether they were born in Canada, whether they made this country their home after moving here in life, that I commit to also standing up for democracy and for enhancing democratic choice and voter choice and the freedom of elections here in Manitoba.

So, again, this is one of the concerns that I have with the BITSA bill as currently constituted, but, again, I want the ability to work together across party lines for us to improve this proposal. Again, if we step back from the current clause and re-open the debate, I think we can really forge some bipartisan-cross-partisan consensus and do something really special here.

The principle that should guide us should be that any change to our democracy here in Manitoba is so critical and so important that we should agree across party lines on a consensus before we undertake any changes. It shouldn't be up to one party alone to determine changes to our democratic system. It

should be for everybody to work together, again, based on shared values in our democratic traditions, based on a shared insight into the values of Manitobans who want the best possible representatives for themselves and for their children, that we ought to come together and chart a unified course together.

That hasn't happened to date. However, we have outstretched our hand and offered to the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—and I would, at this time, also make the same offer to the Leader of the Liberal Party—that we ought to work together to set forward a—or to set forth, rather, a path that would enhance our democracy rather than diminish it.

So, again, it's with great respect for all of my colleagues that I don't want to, you know, delay things unnecessarily, and, in fact, will keep my remarks brief.

But, again, I do just want to thank you, the Chair, thank the institution of this Chamber itself and, indeed, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly for the great privilege for being able to stand in this place and stand on the side of democracy.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, it's going to be a long, long, long couple of days. So, if everybody wants to get comfortable, I'm actually going to take my jacket off, because I am actually getting hot. That's—no other reason than I'm actually just getting hot.

I'm really pleased today to put on the record some—well, actually, quite a few words on the record in respect of Bill 16. And I think I want to actually just begin, for the many hours that we all have together, just to take a couple of minutes just to acknowledge some of my colleagues and particularly my colleagues who have spoken to Bill 16 and who have put words on the record that I think are important for all Manitobans to hear and, certainly, for everybody in this Chamber to hear.

And I would suggest particularly members opposite, as they sit by and they allow, really, the democracy in Manitoba to be threatened.

And I think it's important, Deputy Speaker, as I'm sure you probably are in agreement with me, that it is important to protect democracy in Manitoba.

It's important that, in the face of threats and a dismantling—a very methodical and strategic dismantling of democracy, it's important for people to stand up. It's important for people to stand up and

make known for all of history that they stood up or they stood for and on the side of democracy.

I haven't yet heard that from anybody opposite—from members opposite, who seem to, in the last three years, you know, just sit by while we see really egregious pieces of legislation get passed with no concern from members opposite for—with literally putting nothing on the record that would show Manitobans that they actually understand how this impacts on their lives.

And so here's another opportunity where members, you know, could have gotten up to talk about, you know, some of the things that we see in BITSA, in particular in respect of, again, just further dismantling of democracy in Manitoba.

So, to that end, I'm really proud to sit on this side of the House with members who have gotten up, not only for this particular Bill 16, but actually have got up day after day after day when we've been sitting in the House to stand against really egregious pieces of legislation and egregious policies that are coming from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and who—members of his Cabinet and members of his backbench—just sit by and allow to happen.

So I want to just acknowledge, first and foremost, actually, the member from Concordia, who is really just a phenomenal human being. And I really do appreciate, you know, to have the support of a member like, you know, the member from Concordia, who actually, you know, stands by particularly as a man.

I think that I want to put it on the record that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) is so respectful and so—he just lifts up and supports not only myself, but I know he supports also the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), who also really appreciates that, and shows just an enormous amount of support for all the women in our caucus. And I actually just want to take a moment to acknowledge him for that.

I actually have shared that with the member for Concordia's wife, because, you know, I always tell his wife how much I absolutely love and appreciate the support that he gives me. It's not very often that you have, you know, members in your life, or men in your life that you work with, that actually go out of their way to support you and to lift you up and to ensure that there's space for you.

You know, so often as women, no matter where it is—whether it's in this Chamber or it's within, you know, the business setting, or within the health-care

field—women have to fight for space to be taken seriously, to be listened to. And so I just really want to acknowledge that the member for Concordia offers and gives up that space so willingly and so respectfully.

Not only does the member for Concordia do that—and, you know, I know that for the most part people would know that, for the most part when I'm in the Chamber, I'm usually just kind of facing this way, and it is a way just to kind of—that I have—a coping strategy that I've developed to be able to kind of be able to be in this space, which I find is a—and which I've said many, many times publicly—is a very toxic space, a very—and so I'm really blessed to be able to always be looking on the member from Concordia who, you know, is always there offering a smile or support.

* (15:30)

And so—and offering a smile and support in the midst of every day, day after day, getting up in the House and trying to fight against and bring attention to what members opposite are allowing to happen and just standing by while their boss does.

So, you know, I think that that's really—well, actually, tiring as well. I think the member of—for Concordia and I were talking this—today, just saying how we're emotionally tired today, for whatever that means.

And it is something for members on this side of the House, for the last three years, to get up, just to go to rallies, to go to protests, to go—and no matter where they occur in Manitoba, particularly when we look at protests and rallies in respect of the dismantling of the health-care system. And our members on this side of the House go wherever. And that's tiring.

It is tiring, but it's an honour and it's a privilege to stand with Manitobans who are—who have that agency to be able to stand against the Premier's decisions. And that is the very little—the least that we can do as members in this House, is to go and stand with Manitobans fighting this Pallister government's cuts in all of its myriad of forms.

So, again, I just want to thank the member for Concordia. I want to thank the member for Concordia's wife, who is just a phenomenal human being and supports her husband to do the important work in—that he does and who—I also love her. I think she's an amazing human being.

So I want to, secondly, take a moment to acknowledge, of course, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith). I am going to acknowledge all of the members. I think it's important to put on the record for Hansard all of the important work that they do.

And, obviously, it's no big secret that the member for Point Douglas and myself are very close. We, as I said several times in the House here, the first time we met was when the member for Point Douglas's sister went missing, and we met—I believe that's the first time we met.

We met at a meeting with—at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs with the Winnipeg Police Service, the chief of police at the time, constable—or Inspector Bob Christmas and the member for Point Douglas's family.

And so since that time, as the years have gone by, we have done more and more work together, and quite obviously, for the last, you know, eight years, have been pretty close, in respect of the work that we've been doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Going to remind the member that relevance is important for this Bill 16.

Ms. Fontaine: I absolutely agree with you. And the relevance of acknowledging the work on this side of the House or the members on this side of the House is the work that they're doing in respect of fighting against things that have been hidden in BITSA, things that have been attempted to be embedded in BITSA.

And, you know, it is fundamentally relevant to talk about the work that members of this House are doing every single day to address the egregious legislation that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) is putting in place. It is wholly proper to acknowledge the work of my colleagues.

And so I do want to, again, acknowledge the member for Point Douglas. You know, the member for Point Douglas and I do a lot of work together, obviously because our constituencies border each other.

And we've had the opportunity to go to many, many, many rallies and protests in respect of what this government, this Pallister government has done, not to mention many rallies and protests in respect of the transit funding, the 50-50 funding, which was embedded in BITSA last time around.

We've had the opportunity to meet with many individuals to discuss what has been the Premier's legislative agenda, which is kind of culminating—I mean, I suppose there's still more that this Premier could do to tilt elections in his favour—but the member for Point Douglas and I have had many discussions with individuals about the Bill 16 and what the Premier is doing, in respect of getting rid of the rebates, tax rebates, for our candidates.

And so I want to acknowledge the member for Point Douglas's commitment to not only members in Point Douglas, which, you know, she is so committed to her constituency, but also to all Manitobans. And, you know, every time I have the opportunity—or, the member for Point Douglas and I are at events, the member for Point Douglas spends an incredible amount of time explaining to individuals what is going on in this House.

And I think it's important for Manitobans to know what's going on in this House because I would suggest that probably most of us in this Chamber would agree that a lot of people don't know what we do. We don't—they don't know what we do in the House.

It's a complicated system, you know. And, you know, they certainly aren't going to know what BITSA is if you're not paying attention or if you're not immersed in what is really a bubble in here.

And so, you know, the member for Point Douglas has spent a considerable amount of time with her constituents explaining BITSA and explaining what's in Bill 16.

And so I think it's important to lift up the member for Point Douglas and say *miigwech* for the work that she does on behalf of everyone in Manitoba, not only her Point Douglas constituents, but all Manitobans.

And actually, you know, Deputy Speaker, I would suggest this: That, you know, like the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and like the member for Point Douglas and like the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) and like the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) and like the member for Fort Garry and like the member for Logan (Mrs. Marcelino) and like the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), you know, on this side of the House, we seem to be doing the vast majority of work on behalf of Manitobans.

We are, day in and day out, fighting against, again, which is—a legislative dismantling of everything that we know to be true and to be proud in

Manitoba, and we're actually doing the work of members opposite. Like, we're standing up, not only for our constituents, not for the constituencies of Wolseley and Concordia and Point Douglas and Fort Garry and Fort Garry-Riverview and—but we're actually standing up for the constituents of Radisson.

You know, I know that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) not once has talked about, you know, the Concordia ER closure, hasn't brought it up in this House. I don't know what goes on in their caucus. I mean, from what, you know, the—what we're told and what we understand is that there's not a lot of talking in there because everybody's scared of their boss and whatever their boss wants is what their boss gets.

But, you know, I think it's important for Manitobans to know. And that's why I'm so happy that we have hours and hours and hours together, Deputy Speaker. I think it's important for the constituents of Radisson to know that we're standing up for them and we're standing up for their right to be able to access health care no matter where they live.

You know, we're standing up for the constituents of Fort Richmond because, again, I haven't heard the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) get up in this House and talk about the closure of Victoria hospital. And—not once have we heard that. And yet, they have just sat by while their ERs in their particular geographical constituencies have closed down.

So, you know, maybe we are a little bit more tired on this side of the House because we're actually working and fighting day after day for their constituents. So, you know, in respect of relevance, Deputy Speaker, it is relevant for me to put on the record for history and for Manitobans to know that we're fighting for them. No matter where they live in this province, we are fighting for them.

So, again, I want to acknowledge and say *miigwech* to the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith). I want to acknowledge and put on the record, you know, the work that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) does. And most people in the caucus know that I have a special affinity for the member for Fort Garry-Riverview. He is—and I don't know why lately the members opposite, like, kind of just mentioning him and bringing him into question period and bringing them—him into their, you know, their notes that they—when they try to deviate from their notes, but, you know, I just want to put on the record that the

member for Fort Garry-Riverview is one of the kindest, most humble individuals you'll ever met—you'll ever meet, and I'm so blessed to be able to call him a brother, and the work that he does and the passion and the dedication he has, not only for his constituents, but for all members.

* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, I just want to remind you of being relevant to the Bill 16. And it's going off—if you could come back to the bill itself. Okay.

Ms. Fontaine: I—again, Deputy Speaker, it is relevant. It is absolutely relevant to the discussion on Bill 16 because, when we look at Bill 16, BITSA, and we know that the—we know when we're looking at BITSA, when you look at it in its entirety, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview has gotten up time and time again and has joined Manitobans on the forefront of rallies and protests in protesting BITSA and what the government has, year after year, including Bill 16, the 2019, two thousand—or, 2018-2019 BITSA—and so it is relevant; it's important to acknowledge his work.

Again, it's important to knowledge his work because, in the context of being the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview, he has gotten up many times to voice his concerns and his outrage in respect of what's embedded in BITSA. And he is someone that I've had the opportunity to learn a lot with, Deputy Speaker.

As you know, he was the minister of Education. At one point, he was the minister of Justice. And everybody that's had the opportunity to work with him has had the—you know, has nothing but positive things to say about the member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

And so I can share with the House that I know the member for Fort Garry-Riverview wanted to get up and have unlimited time on BITSA, but I think—yes, I think I wanted to be able to put on the record some of the egregious stuff that the BITSA is doing.

So, you know, I'm going to get to—like I said, Deputy Speaker, we have a lot, a lot, a lot of time. So I'm going to get back to acknowledging some of my other colleagues as we go along because, again, like I said, it's important for Manitobans to know that on this side of the House we are the ones that are actually fighting for their ERs, we're fighting for their transit, we're fighting for their education and

ultimately—and why I'm standing up with unlimited time—we are fighting for the democracy of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), who spoke about the importance of democracy, certainly, if there's something that gets me riled up—and, of course, there's lots of things that get me riled up—but certainly the discussion on democracy really gets me riled up because we are so privileged to live in a country and to live in a province, that it is our basic human right to be able to partake in the democratic process of our country or our city or our province.

And what we've seen in the last three years is a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who has put in place a legislative framework, laws, in Manitoba, that tilt elections in his favour, that tilt elections in the favour of every member opposite.

And I think instead of sitting, you know, down and doing nothing, as they do, you know, and feigning some sense of pride in dismantling democracy—I can't understand why not each of them are not getting up and talking to their boss and saying—and yelling at their boss and demanding that their boss put in place back those measures that not only ensure democracy, but strengthen democracy for all Manitobans. And yet, they're doing nothing.

And so what—and I know some—I don't know which member, because I don't really look over there, but I know is, you know, making noises about it—that's what we don't understand on this side of the House is how can you just, like, poof, what your boss, your Premier, is doing.

It is—I—and I've said this before, when we presented our Bill 232 is, you know, the fact that they're just standing by and doing nothing, every Manitoban—this is what their history is going to be. This is what their legacy is going to be.

So, when you go back in the historic records, you're going to know that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), who I can't say the member for Radisson's name, obviously, but the member for Radisson's name is going to be there when everybody—Manitobans and researchers, go back and they're going to want to see, well, who was in the House at the time and allowed these things to go on.

The member for Morris (Mr. Martin), the member for Riel (Ms. Squires), the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer), the member for whatever, all of them. I can't say their names—as you know, Deputy Speaker, we're not allowed to say their

names, but Manitobans are going to be able to go back in the record and see their names and see that they did nothing—nothing—to stand up for democracy because they were too scared of their boss to say anything.

And we saw a little bit of it yesterday—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —in question period when the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton) said—*[interjection]*—Gimli—said something in question period, answering one of our questions, and his boss just looked over and shook his head at him like he was a little boy getting in trouble from his dad. I can't even imagine how scared he must be—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —and how must—he probably had a sleepless night last night, like, replaying that over and over. It was like on a loop in his head, his Premier (Mr. Pallister) like, just shaking his head. But, in the midst of all of that, you would think that democracy is something that members opposite could get behind, but apparently not. They're willing to ensure that every election, until the NDP get back in place and reverse everything that they did, every election is going to be tilted in their favour, and they're proud of that. That is disgusting, quite honestly, Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: And so, you know, I'm—you know, when you look at what goes on across the world in respect of the right to participate in democratic processes, you can go in different parts of our world and you see that individuals will line up for days to be able to vote. Sometimes it's the first time they've been able to vote. You'll see that individuals—and in the midst of signing up to vote, but under the threat of actually losing your life.

We know that there are places across the globe that often people's lives are actually taken from them, and yet they persist. They walk for miles from different places where they live or villages or cities to be able to go and vote because that is their right; that is the right that we should all have across the world and certainly a right that we've actually had in Manitoba and in Canada.

And I do want to put on the record that Manitoba at one point did take the lead across the country of ensuring fair and equitable elections. And, you know, I'm proud to be part of a government that instituted legislation that banned corporate and union donations to ensure that elections are fair and equitable and that everybody has an opportunity to contribute or be a part of a political party that best represents their values—and their morals really.

And so we see that this government in BITSA, in bill 26—or in 16 is getting rid of the rebate. And so what we've tried to do, which every member in this House voted against, again, something that they seem to be very proud of, which, again, hopefully, researchers will be going back and naming each and every single one of them for standing up against The Election Financing Amendment Act, which I want to remind everybody in the House, it attempted to do three things.

What it attempted to do was, you know, reduce the threshold from 10 per cent to 2 per cent in respect of votes. That—so that would've been able to open up rebates to more candidates and parties, which would've included, you know, the Green Party, possibly even the Manitoba Party of our colleague in the House here and his freedom caucus.

* (15:50)

Like, I don't know if they, you know, are not happy about that and don't want him here, but I think that, you know, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) has, you know, contributed to some good conversation and good debate in the House, and has a right to be able to, you know, should they see fit, try to have to have, you know, more diverse candidates, as with the Green.

And we've seen that with the reduction, or the—getting rid of the rebate certainly will have an impact on the individuals that will be able to attempt to seek the nomination or to be a candidate. Be—and I—it's important to note, for the House and for all Manitobans that that very strategically targets, you know, women. It targets individuals who are not represented in this House.

And I think that that is an important note to put on the record that, you know, we still, in 2019, still do not have a black Manitoban elected to this Legislature—not a man, not a black man, not a black woman—we still do not have a black MLA in this Legislature. We still do not have a Muslim brother or sister elected to this Legislature.

The rebate—getting rid of the rebate that's embedded in BITSA here will severely impact on candidates who are traditionally not a part of this Chamber to seek that nomination and to run as a candidate in our provincial elections. And, you know, that's not debatable. That is a fact.

It is very—it is exponentially more difficult for individuals who have not traditionally been a part of this Chamber to get that nomination and to run as a candidate, because they don't necessarily all have the same networks to be able to access that political network, but also that political expertise, and certainly, the cash that you need to be able to run an effective campaign.

And so that's not debatable, and yet every member seems—every member opposite, every member of the PC caucus, every member of the Pallister government seems to think that that's okay.

And, you know, I suppose you could argue, you know, why wouldn't members opposite think it's okay when, if you all recall—and Deputy Speaker, I'm sure you recall this, very early on, when we were all first elected and during one question period, when we were talking about the diversity of this House and the diversity of the PC caucus.

And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) had the audacity to get up in this House and very melodramatically claim that his caucus was the most diverse caucus in the history of Canada. Like, that is—*[interjection]*—and there's the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton) saying, there, there. Clearly, he hasn't looked around his caucus.

Like, I don't know if he understands what the word diversity means, but when you put up a picture of the PC caucus, it's never going to say diverse. Nobody that looks at the picture of the PC caucus is going to say, whoa, that—the first thing I see when I see that is 'diversisy.' Never. That's never going to happen. Never.

And there's, you know, the member for Gimli, all proud of that. Like, I—clearly doesn't understand how offensive that is to black Manitobans, or how offensive that is to indigenous peoples in Manitoba, or—*[interjection]*—and somebody's talking about racializing. The bottom line is that we need diverse communities—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: –and cultures in this House, and it does not exist. And the BITSA bill has attempted to entrench that in Manitoba legislation.

And so whoever, on that side of the House wants to chirp up and try to make it that I'm doing something wrong by noting that there's never been a black person elected to the Manitoba Legislature: that's a fact. And every person in this House should be ashamed that they're voting for a BITSA that entrenches that.

And I'm glad that when researchers go by—because I can tell you, Deputy Speaker, every opportunity that I have—every single opportunity that I have, when I go to speak at schools, when I go to speak in community organizations, in fact, when I have the opportunity to even speak—I was—just a couple of weekends ago I was at Broadbent with 1,500 people across the country. I noted for each of those 1,500 people how the Manitoba Legislature does not have black MLAs and any Muslim MLAs and how this Pallister government is attempting to legislate that by getting rid of the rebates.

So, you know, the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) is chirping on. I don't know what he's saying, because I've been pretty good at developing a coping mechanism of not listening to them because it just—it's so—it's—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: –redundant and it's ridiculous to try and attempt to listen to them. But I think it is so important for Manitobans to know that these members—these members that people voted, that voted for them and put their trust in them, are sitting by while the—in the last three years, their boss that they're scared of put in a legislative framework that is discouraging and ensuring that there will not be diversity because, clearly, they don't know what diversity means.

And, you know, every time at the end of the day, and you sit there and you shake your head and you're like, I don't understand what these people are doing. What are they doing? Why are they just collecting their paycheque and allowing their boss to dismantle democracy? Like, is money so important to you that you're going to risk the democracy of this province, not only for this upcoming election, which we know they're trying to tilt in their favour, but in the elections that their children and their grandchildren are going to participate in? And they seem to think that that's okay. That's perfectly proper that they're

doing that. It's—it is absolutely shameful that they're participating in that.

And let me just add, you know, there's the diversity piece in respect of the many amazing, beautiful cultures and peoples and communities that we have in Manitoba that we on this side of the House are so blessed to be able to meet every single day and that—are inspired by.

I think, you know, I've shared a couple of times in this House how every time people ask me what's the best part of being an MLA, I always say two things: (1) all of the Manitobans that you get to meet because, you know, typically you're not—you don't have those opportunities to meet so many diverse Manitobans; and (2) just to see the transformation or the transformative effects in your own community. And I've brought that over—I've brought that up over and over again.

And so here we have BITSA, and BITSA does the exact opposite of those two things. It does the exact opposite to ensure that the Manitobans that we come into contact with will actually have a fighting chance to get elected in here, and will have a fighting chance to transform their own communities so that their communities can see themselves reflected in this House. Because they do not—they do not see themselves reflected when they look at the PC caucus in any way, shape or form at all.

And so, again, I just want to reiterate how shameful it is that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) attempted to, you know, get up here a couple of years ago now and talk about the diversity of his caucus. It's shameful that he would sit here and still attempt to do that.

And BITSA—and so while we are going to be spending many, many hours on BITSA and what BITSA is attempting to do to democracy, I'm going to go back to, you know, again, what Bill 232 attempted to do, which every member stood up against, voted against, because I think it's important to recognize that and put on the record what—for Manitobans, what we, the NDP caucus, attempted to do for, you know, not only this election— which, God knows when the Premier is going to call the election—but for elections to come, you know, elections for my grandchildren.

* (16:00)

And so, you know, we attempted, again, you know, contrary to what's in BITSA—getting rid of the rebate—we attempted to expand the rebate so that

more people would be able to get access to a rebate, which would encourage a diversity of candidates reflective of the Manitoba population.

It also attempted to lower the donation from \$5,000 for individuals back to \$3,000 for individuals. I would suggest to you, Deputy Speaker, that on this side of the House, we understand that \$3,000 is actually a lot of money.

Five thousand dollars is certainly a lot more money, and, you know, not many Manitobans have the dollars—\$5,000—that they can donate to either an individual candidate or to a political party. And I would suggest to you that they—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) 'upted' that limit because he has access to more wealthy donors than, let's say, members opposite here.

You know, when I look at the constituency of Point Douglas or certainly some of the constituency of St. Johns, there's not many people that I would be able to go and approach and say, hey, can you give me \$5,000 for my political campaign? And that is a consequence of, you know, that we, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself, are in constituencies that are, you know, economically marginalized and disenfranchised.

And so, you know, it—it's pretty egregious that the Premier legislated more money—to be able to get more money from his wealthy friends and his donors to be able to, again, tilt the election in his favour.

And, you know, I think—I would suggest to you that Manitobans saw that for what it was worth. And I know that members in my constituency and certainly members in Point Douglas are pretty offended that the Premier would think that all Manitobans have access to that amount of money.

I don't even access to that amount of money. I am—[interjection]—and I know members opposite are laughing. Like, that's the whole thing about members opposite: they think it's funny that people don't have funds. Like, I am the sole provider of my house. I raise my sons. I am the sole provider.

I pay all of the bills and—[interjection]—you know, there's the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) chirping again. He can't seem to just sit there and go on his cell that he usually does during question period. Just stay on your cell. Lord knows what you're doing.

But it's not funny that Manitobans don't have access to \$5,000 to be able to contribute to their

candidate or their party. I can tell you, Deputy Speaker, you know, BITSA is, you know, limiting that. I can tell you that there are lots of constituents in Point Douglas and St. Johns that would love to give the member for Point Douglas and myself \$5,000, but they don't have it. I can't even give that to myself.

And so, you know, for the members chirping about, and thinking that it's funny that people in Point Douglas and think it's funny that people in St. Johns are struggling financially; struggling to pay their water bills; struggling to be able to pay for food; you know, struggling to—working two or three minimum-wage jobs—which, by the way, again, Deputy Speaker, and I think it's important for Manitobans to know this again.

You know, since the members opposite got into government they have only raised the minimum wage by a mere 65 cents—[interjection]—not even—two nickels, 15 nickels or, you know, three dimes, like, whatever it is. It's a ridiculous amount of money—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: –55 cents, 65 cents. It's a ridiculous amount of money. It's actually an insulting amount of money to say that every—you know, in October you're going to raise the minimum wage by another 15 cents. Like, what are Manitobans, what are members in Point Douglas and St. Johns going to do with a measley, like, dollar that—when they've worked for eight hours.

That's how little members care opposite. They don't care that their Premier, their boss, thinks so little of Manitobans that he throws at them a couple of nickels or throws at them a couple of dimes. And yet these very Manitobans that they don't give a crap about—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I just want to caution the member for St. Johns about the language in this Chamber.

And the honourable member for St. Johns can continue.

Ms. Fontaine: Yes, you know what? I caught myself there. In fact, I was going to say something else and caught myself before that because that is how—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: –how enraging it is that these members keep, like, talking and yammering about while people are struggling in Manitoba because of what they're not doing. They seem to think that it's okay for a couple of pennies or a couple of nickels or a couple of dimes, but at the same time, you're not going to lift up people and ensure that people have enough money to pay their bills and get their food.

But you're—but on the flip side, let's ask these very same people for \$5,000. Like, it's just a joke that these members think that's perfectly proper to ask Manitobans. It's a joke—[interjection]—and the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), I don't know what's going on with the member for Radisson today, but I think he wants to get up on BITSA. I think he's getting a little bit antsy because he knows that all of the—

An Honourable Member: If you sit down, I'll get up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Oh, I'm not going to sit down. I know the member for Radisson just told me to sit down. I've—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm not—this isn't a debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind everyone in this Chamber that we have to have some respect and decorum in this Chamber and for everyone on both sides, and I hear heckling from both sides of the Chamber. So I would remind everyone—

Ms. Fontaine: Deputy Speaker, I'm speaking. I'm—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I was still speaking here too. So I just wanted to—I don't know if the person from Tyndall Park has a point of order here. He was standing.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Point of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of privilege. The honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Mr. Marcelino: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my seven years in this Chamber, I have never heard nor seen so much disrespect, most specially for somebody who's trying to do her job, to speak to a bill that's

pending before this Assembly. The member from Radisson has kept up with a mind-blowing chatter that I can't even hear me. And I think that is a pure disrespect to the decorum required of all of us. We are honourable members and the member from Radisson should not be allowed to do it as if it was his licence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable member from Tyndall Park, I would like to inform the House that a matter concerning the method of which the House proceeds in the conduct of business in the matter of order are not privilege.

Joseph Maingot is the second edition of the Parliamentary privilege for Canada states that, in page 14, that allegations of breach of privilege by a member of—in the House, the amount of complaints and the procedures and practices in the House are their very nature matters of order.

He also states that, on page 223, the same edition, a breach of standing orders or a failure to follow the established practice would invoke a point of order rather than a point of privilege. On this basis, I would therefore rule that the honourable member for Tyndall Park does not have a prima facie matter of privilege.

* (16:10)

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

(Continued)

Bill 16—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

(Continued)

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a point of order.

Mr. Marcelino: It's the same set of circumstances, and I move that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park?

Mr. Marcelino: –that there should be an admonition directed towards the member from Radisson.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the Tyndall—the member from Tyndall Park that he can't move a motion on a point of order.

The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On the same point of order.

It's a Thursday afternoon, I know that emotions sometimes run high at different times. Clearly, this is an important bill on the perspective of the government in terms of reducing the PST. The opposition has different views on that. And I respect that. Opposition has the right to present different views.

I think, probably, it would be mindful for all of us in the House this afternoon to respect the different roles that we have to play, both as government and opposition. I'm sure that you will caution all of us to be respectful of that and of each other so that we can finish off the week in the manner that we would all like to finish it off in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the ruling of the point of order: the honourable member for Tyndall Park, do you have—on the same point of order?

Mr. Marcelino: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I'm withdrawing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Only if there's new information that you want to share with the Chamber.

Mr. Marcelino: I'm withdrawing my point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. Well, on that note, the same ruling is that there wasn't a point of order, but I do agree with the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) that there should be—respectful in this workplace.

We're all MLAs and we all should respect each other. The heckling, especially the continuous heckling that I did see on this side—but we want to make sure that we have respectful—that we can hear the person who wants to present on this BITSA bill. It's an important bill and we want to get this business done in this Chamber.

* * *

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So where was I? I believe that I was talking about lowering the contribution rates back to \$3,000.

So, again, like, I'm really proud of the work that the NDP caucus did in respect of Bill 232, and it's important to put—you know, attempt to, in some real

ways, challenge what is in BITSA in respect of our democracy and attempt to fight for democracy.

And so one of the ways that we attempted to do that in Bill 232 was 'lowing' the contribution rates back to \$3,000 from \$5,000 so that it restricts the ability of wealthy insiders buying an election.

So, you know, I was talking about the fact that the Pallister government, in the three years that it's been in government, has quite literally just thrown a couple of nickels and a couple of pennies at Manitobans, not in any way attempting to really lift out—lift up Manitobans who are faced with financial difficulties and financial marginalization.

But, on the one hand, you know, asking these very Manitobans to try and find \$5,000 to be able to participate in the political process—the two don't match up with one another.

You can't say, oh, well, you know, candidates are going to have to try and access funding for—to be able to participate and execute a campaign—a provincial campaign, but you're not putting in place the measures that allows individuals to earn the dollars that they would need to be able to do so.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And that's what we see in this BITSA and every other BITSA so far that we've—this government has done. It—\$3,000 is a lot of money. It's a lot of money for any one person to donate to an individual or a political party.

So I'm proud that we attempted to, you know, limit wealthy donors' opportunity of influencing a provincial election as we see with this current government and what they've done.

And, you know, we know that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is perfectly aware that members opposite, including himself, have access—more access—exponentially more access to be able to ask individuals for \$5,000 than members on this side of the House, and certain constituencies that simply will not have access to those dollars.

And while I know that that doesn't concern members opposite, it does concern Manitobans, and it does concern members on this side of the House, because everybody should be able to participate and have a sense of agency and ownership in political processes. That is their right. That is the foundation. That's what democracy is predicated upon.

It's predicated upon the ability of people to have—to be able to fairly contribute and get involved in the political process. And certainly, we are not seeing that with BITSA as it is right now, in respect of the Premier's getting rid of the rebate.

That rebate is a lot to individuals. It's a lot to be able—it certainly can be the tipping point to actually decide to be a candidate for whatever political party, but certainly for political parties like the NDP and I would even suggest the Liberal Party.

And had the members in this Chamber saw fit to actually stand in support of democracy and voted in favour of two—Bill 232, we actually would have enhanced democracy by ensuring that, you know, there was the ability or the opportunity or the chance for other political parties like the Green Party and the Manitoba Party and the Communist Party to be able to have a little bit more fair playing as well.

You know, to imagine that we all start off at the same playing field, the same level, is pretty naive and it's, you know, pretty convenient for people to kind of think that we don't. And that's what BITSA does.

So, I'm only on step 2 of what Bill 232 attempted to do, The Election Financing Amendment Act, expanding reimbursement of election expenses, what it tried to do and what it tried to counter in BITSA.

And again, I'll remind Manitobans who are going to be reading this and researchers and youth who will be reading this years ago—or years—hopefully not too far, actually, Deputy Speaker, hopefully, pretty soon—realizing what every single member opposite stood by and allowed to happen.

The other thing in the context of this whole thing, in respect of BITSA, but also in respect of Bill 232, which we had tried to mitigate, was it also attempted to limit government advertising 90 days before fixed or even unfixed elections.

Because we all know in this Chamber—and perhaps some of us know more than others—that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is attempting to violate and ignore fixed-date election laws that we have here in Manitoba with the threat of an early election, and you know, using whatever excuse the Premier seems to think is that particular excuse of the day, and—which, again, is entrenched in BITSA by its further eroding democracy.

And so what we want—attempts to do in Bill 232, which members opposite voted against,

was ensure that premiers who just, you know, willy-nilly want to decide to, you know, call a provincial election—even though we have fixed election date laws here—election laws in Manitoba, who want to attempt to just call an election whenever they can, they would still have to adhere to the 90 days.

Certainly, governments, premiers have to adhere to the 90 days—which is, I would suggest to you, probably a lot easier when we know that the election is on October 6, 2020, versus, you know, attempting to violate our fixed-election laws, as what many of suspect the Premier is doing. And the Premier is looking for any excuse to be able to do so.

And we saw a little bit of that yesterday in question period when we saw the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton) say that the PST rebate is going to come into effect on July 1st, regardless of, and in contravention and in contrast to what the minister of financing said just, I think, the day or the couple days before that, where he said that members opposite or the opposition was attempting to thwart that, which we know is not true.

* (16:20)

It's our right to be able to talk to BITSA. It's our right to be able to talk to the budget act. It's our right to talk to bills. We're not attempting to thwart anything.

And so I don't think Manitobans are going to be fooled by the rhetoric that this Premier is trying to peddle to Manitobans that somehow—and we've seen the Premier, and now the Minister for Finance, attempting to kind of lay the groundwork in the Premier's trying to justify an early election. And, you know, this final erosion or dismantling of democracy that we see in BITSA by getting rid of the rebates is just more evidence of the Premier trying to ignore the fixed-date election laws here and call an early election, to the detriment of democracy in Manitoba, but certainly to the detriment of Manitobans, where he does not allow the infrastructure for Manitobans who have traditionally not been in this House, or 'represented' in this House, to be able to have a fair and fighting chance to be able to run as a candidate in the election whenever it's going to be called.

I don't think Manitobans, though, are buying it. I don't think—they see through the Premier's attempt at trying to justify breaking the law—like, literally breaking the law in Manitoba. And, again, here's another example of members opposite—the PC caucus—not standing up to their boss and saying, hey,

like, Boss, you know, we can't break the law here in Manitoba; there is a fixed-date election and, you know, and calling to task the Premier of what he's attempted to do in BITSA and trying to muddy the waters and confuse Manitobans and mislead Manitobans in order to justify an early election.

Because also—and, again, no member is getting up and doing that. Every member seems to think that that's okay. Every member on the PC caucus seems to think it is perfectly okay to break the law in Manitoba, to ignore the fixed-date election laws. Every single—because I haven't heard any—not one single member of the PC caucus get up and say, you know, that's not right. We've got fixed election—fixed-date election laws in Manitoba and we're going to adhere to that.

Every—they've got their nominations in and we know there's some changes. We know the member from Morris is now going to be, you know, running in McPhillips, and so everybody's kind of jockeying for whatever nomination they're going to get or whatever constituency in preparation for an early election that they seem to think is okay.

But I can tell you that I know on this side of the House, members for the NDP caucus—and I would suspect even the Liberals—are going to ensure that Manitobans know every door that we go knocking on that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has broken the law in Manitoba—has broken the law—as evinced in BITSA trying to ensure that he's laid the groundwork. But Manitobans aren't going to be fooled by that.

And I would also suggest to you, deputy—Acting Deputy Speaker—that Manitobans aren't also fooled by the 1 per cent PST rebate. I think the Premier thought that there was going to be even grander fanfare and that everybody was going to roll out the red carpet for him and he was going to be, like, a hero of Manitoba, getting rid of the 1 per cent PST.

But, when you juxtapose reducing the 1 per cent PST in BITSA, which is embedded in BITSA here—when you juxtapose that to the closing of Concordia, of Seven Oaks, of 'misacordia', of the huge wait times that we're seeing—people don't buy it.

And we know—we've heard—and I suspect even members opposite have heard as well that it's not worth it. It wasn't worth it. They'd rather have their ERs. People would rather be able to access the health care that they're entitled to than, you know, attempting to, you know, strategically drop the PST

and then call a snap early election and violate laws in Manitoba.

Manitobans are smart people. They're—they know that that's—that is the Premier's attempt at ensuring another four years for his PC caucus, for his Pallister government to wreak havoc—even more havoc—on Manitoba when—if he were to win the next provincial election again.

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

Ms. Fontaine: Manitobans—and here I don't know who was saying that Hear, hear. One of the members opposite was saying Hear, hear. I just finished saying to the House that Manitobans are smart, that they know that the Premier, if he wins government again, is going to wreak havoc on Manitoba, and Hear, hear—here's one of the members—Hear, hear. He's happy about that. Who was that? I don't know. Somebody—if the member who said that wants to say it again so I can put his name in—stand up.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) said that? Oh, so the member for Thompson just got up—or just, you know, yammered on as they do about here, here, that it was—that it's good the Premier is going to be wreaking havoc, even more havoc if they win another four-year term by, Acting Deputy Speaker, breaking the fixed election laws in Manitoba.

And there's the member for Thompson—or whoever—yammering on again. I think it's important for people, for Manitobans to know that they care more about winning government again and having the opportunity to continue to wreak havoc on our health care and our education. We haven't even gotten into the education system. We haven't even gotten into that havoc yet, and, you know, like, lots of people are saying that, you know, the Premier embedded the 1 per cent PST reduction in BITSA so that he could call and justify an election before Concordia Hospital—I mean, this is the rumours—who knows, right?

Like, the only person that knows is the Premier. Maybe some individuals opposite—I don't know if members opposite know what's going on, but maybe some of them do, but, you know, before Concordia is closed, before Seven Oaks is closed, before the Manitoba government or Manitoba economy goes into a recession, the Premier is setting the stage to be able to break the fixed election laws, fixed date election laws, and call an early election.

But I don't think, and I know that us, on this side of the House, know that embedding that into BITSA while simultaneously dismantling and attacking democracy is not going to go over with Manitobans.

And so, again, Deputy—Acting Deputy Speaker, I'm actually still on the third point of Bill 232, just for folks to know where I am because, again, I think it's important. We've seen all of these signs all over Manitoba in respect of the 1 per cent PST reduction that, again, I think that the Premier is banking on.

I don't think that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was banking on the fact that people actually care more about their ERs and their health care, but here we see, you know, the signs all over Manitoba and, you know, will the Premier be in violation of the, you know, government advertising? I would suspect so. Those signs haven't come down.

There's all kinds of rumour mills on when the Premier's going to, you know, pull the trigger and call an early election and break those Manitoba laws, the fixed date election laws, but I think that it was important for us to put that into bill 32—Bill 232 to counter what we see in BITSA and to counter the other bills that we've seen thus far in the last three years.

And so I don't see any members opposite—and, again, I'm not sure who knows what opposite. I don't know if they're as, you know, who knows? Who knows what goes on in their caucus? Is it, you know, only the Premier that knows what's going on and it's based on his whim or what he wants or—but if members opposite do know, if members opposite do know that an early election is about to be called, that the writ is about to be dropped and that their Premier, their boss, is about to break the election fixed date law in Manitoba, why are none of them, why is nobody in the PC caucus getting up and saying to their boss: Hey, not only are we breaking the law in Manitoba by calling an early election, not only are we doing that, not only are we putting in a legislative framework that keeps out black Manitobans, Muslim Manitobans, disadvantaged women, disadvantaged individuals who are marginally enfranchised, not only does it do that, but we're also in violation of limiting government advertising.

Not once have I seen any individual of the PC caucus get up in this House and bring to task their boss, their Premier, their guru, their whatever, on what is going on in this province. Not one of them have 'sted' up.

* (16:30)

And so I think it's important to put that on the record because, again, for anybody that comes back and reads Hansard, which apparently people do and they do a lot of research on Hansard; I've read some amazing pieces of research. Sherene Razack—if anybody doesn't know who Dr. Sherene Razack is, I suggest that you all read her. She dismantles and she discusses racism. She has a brilliant piece, actually, about racism in this Chamber and racism as it affects several indigenous MLAs in this House. She's brilliant. I hope that she comes back and she does research in respect of under the Pallister government regime and what members opposite did to stand by, to sit on their hands, to do nothing, to allow, to justify the dismantling of democracy in Manitoba.

Not only did they dismantle it, they legislated it. There's one thing to kind of put policies in place that kind of, you know, tilt in favour towards the government and towards the Premier himself. There's a whole other thing when you legislate that, when you legislate the dismantling of democracy in Manitoba and every single member opposite has stood by and done nothing.

An Honourable Member: Shame.

Ms. Fontaine: Shame—sorry.

So we're still on Bill 232. And so I think it's important, again, when we look at—[interjection]—no, no, I was just talking—I'm just referencing in respect of contraventions of the BITSA, that our Bill 232, Acting Deputy Speaker, was to counter the dismantling in BITSA of what we see in getting rid of the rebate.

So I'm just going through the steps of the bill because I actually don't think that members opposite took the time to read Bill 232. Because I think that if members had actually taken the time to read Bill 232, in concert with what's in BITSA, in concert with what your boss is attempting to do in BITSA, with getting rid of the candidate rebate, I think, well, I don't know, no—I was—I think I was going to give too much benefit of the doubt.

I was about to say that members opposite would've supported Bill 232, but, actually, probably not, had they even read it, had they actually even considered somebody other than themselves in the next election.

And, if there's anything that we see with this Pallister government and the PC caucus, that at the

end of the day, it is about ensuring that they get their seats and get back into government again, even if that means breaking the law in Manitoba, even if that means systematically keeping out and shutting out individuals who have yet to even get in this Chamber.

And the fact that members opposite don't get up and don't talk about that every opportunity that they have like I do, I think is shameful. Every single member in this House should be supporting to attract candidates so that we can get the first black MLA in this House, male or female, the first Muslim, male or female. I think that that is important—*[interjection]*

What am I doing? Somebody just said that, and I can tell you that in respect of BITSA and what we're seeing in the reduction of the candidate rebate, Bill 232 is actually what I did, that—Bill 232 is what this member—this side of the House did to attempt to ensure that there is true representation in this House, which BITSA attempts to get rid of.

And I don't know if even members opposite have read BITSA. I don't know if they've read it and they understand what some of the provisions in BITSA is attempting to do. How can you sit back and allow BITSA? Why is nobody getting up on BITSA and talking about how egregious this is, how egregious it is that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is willing to get rid of the candidate rebate or, alternatively, directed each and every one of you to vote against Bill 232, which attempted to enhance democracy and make democracy more fair? But not one single member of the PC caucus got up to do so.

And why, again—I think it's important to put on the record again—it is simply an attempt to protect and maintain status quo in this House, to tilt the provincial election, whenever it is called, in the favour of the Premier and the PC caucus. And that is absolutely shameful. It's absolutely shameful that members opposite have not gotten up, do not get up to talk about BITSA and what we've seen in BITSA in respect of the rebate.

And I know that members opposite—again, chattering away—not getting up in the House and putting their thoughts on the record, not bringing to task their Premier, who's tilting the next provincial election in his favour while breaking Manitoba laws—not getting up to do any of that, but seem to be absolutely, perfectly fine with status quo. Absolutely, perfectly fine with the concept or the construction of diversity as they understand it, which is in and of

themselves, which I said earlier is absolutely no diversity whatsoever.

So assistant—or, Acting Deputy Speaker—*[interjection]* Thank you. I have only gotten to the rebate in BITSA. We still have a couple more hours to go. I—*[interjection]*—at least, yes, a couple. *[interjection]* Well, I thought today, but no; we only have, like, 25 minutes. We certainly have lots and lots of hours.

Actually, I want to share with you—in respect of BITSA, I want to share with you something I understood from my caucus. So, if anybody knows me, knows that I'm extremely competitive.

And so I understand that the record for unlimited speaker—speaking time right now in our caucus is the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), which is about seven and a half hours. But I also understand that the record—and I don't know if it's just in our caucus, is the former member for Thompson, Steve Ashton, which I believe is 14 and a half hours. That's what I was told.

So, if you know anything about me, you'll know I'm super competitive, especially when it comes to men.

So I once bid \$600 on a cake because I was bidding against a man. And I won. I won the cake. But in my mind, I was thinking, okay, how am I going to be able to pay for this? How high can I go up? I didn't have any money. Absolutely, I had to put it on my Visa—I'm still paying it off. But I'm extremely competitive.

So we know that it's about 14 and a half hours, so we have lots and lots and lots and lots of hours to discuss BITSA. BITSA, which is a huge bill, which does a whole heck of a lot of egregious things.

So that was only on the rebate. Where else can I go? Where else should I—where else do you want me to talk about so that I can start educating a little bit more?

I think that's it's important to talk about health care. I know that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) has been a little bit chatty today—this afternoon. Again, I don't know if it's because he, you know, doesn't get many opportunities to speak in this House and he's feeling a little bit left out, I'm not sure, or—I—or is he starting to feel his constituents' concerns with Concordia. Because, again, the member for Radisson hasn't gotten up once to fight for Concordia. How is that possible that the member

for Radisson has not gotten up once to fight for Concordia?

And I don't know how many times I can put that on the record. I want there to be no mistake for individuals when they come back to read Hansard and they see the debate on BITSA—when they see the debate on BITSA, I want them to be perfectly clear when they read Hansard that the member for Radisson has never gotten up once in this House to talk about fighting for Concordia.

* (16:40)

And so we also know that the—well, I'm not sure if any member has gotten up in the House to talk about the millions of dollars of cuts that the Pallister government has put in place for the health-care system since taking government. I don't remember.

In fact, I would suggest to you that members opposite have attempted time and time again, to put misleading notions on the record in respect of health-care cuts. And, actually, I would suggest to you, Assistant Deputy Speaker, that members opposite have attempted to champion and bamboozle Manitobans and celebrate the cuts that their boss has done in respect of health care.

I haven't heard—and again, you know, the members opposite have, you know, opportunity to debate BITSA and to talk about some of these things, but I haven't heard—not one single one of them—talk about the fact that in this year, they're cutting \$120 million from the health-care budget just this year. We know that they—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for Fort Richmond.

Point of Order

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): On a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): On a point of order.

Mrs. Guillemard: I would just like to encourage the member to stay on topic. I know sometimes it's very difficult when really good ideas are being presented when we're trying to save money for taxpayers and we're trying to move forward in a progressive manner, but I would really encourage the member to stay on topic and I have concerns that the relevance of what she's speaking right now is veering into health care, as opposed to the bill that we're talking about, which is BITSA, just as a reminder.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), on the same point of order.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order. Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

While I appreciate the level of comfort that some members are feeling when we're talking about these issues, which I know they're not proud of and they are concerned that we're bringing these issues forward, I have to remind the House that we are speaking about The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Act, BITSA.

And what that is is the implementation of this government's budget within the framework of the Manitoba fiscal picture. So, the member, I think—and I don't want to speak to the specifics of her argument, because I know she is working towards a very complex and comprehensive argument that we will, I'm sure, see the culmination of in at least a couple of weeks, but I can't say, at the very least—then talking about the biggest single department in the Province of Manitoba, that being the Health Department, and the budget of that department, is a hundred per cent relevant to what we are supposed to be talking about.

Now, I know she started with democracy, and that is a huge concern for us when it comes to democracy, but I have also heard her talk about how important it is that we lay out what's at stake for Manitobans when it comes to the budget implementation tax statutes act that this government has brought forward and its implications for Health, and I'm sure she'll get to education and all the other departments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): I'm just going to confer for a moment.

On the point of order, I'd like to thank all members for their contributions to this point of order. I'd like to remind the House that what is under consideration this afternoon is Bill 16, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act.

This bill does address aspects, which are spelled out in the bill, of implementation. It does not, however, address every element of implementation of the entire budget.

The aspects considered in Bill 16 are spelled out, part 1, 2, and so on. There are actually no health-care provisions directly specifically referenced in the bill, and so I would say that the member probably does have a point of order, and just to remind the honourable member speaking to make sure that her remarks pertain directly to BITSA or are brought back to BITSA as frequently as possible.

* * *

Ms. Fontaine: Well, yes, I would have to suggest and respectfully indicate that I think that health, while it—if, you know, I'm being advised that—I'm just waiting 'til he stops talking.

I think that, you know, it is that BITSA also does deal with the PST which fundamentally impacts on every single aspect of Manitobans' lives, which impacts on the health of Manitobans, and so I suggest that it is important to put on the record, when we are debating BITSA, the cuts that we've seen from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Pallister government, and it is relevant. It is relevant what's going on in Manitoba under this Premier and under members' opposite rule.

So I think that it's important to put on the record for Manitobans, when we're talking about health care, that they, the Pallister government, has cut \$120 million from the health-care budget this year, and, you know, that's why he's closing—the Premier is closing three ERs in Winnipeg.

We know that the Premier has cut funding by \$7.2 million for investments like new diagnostic machines, emergency room upgrades, personal-care home beds, and new primary-care clinics—that's a tough one to say—primary-care clinics—[interjection]

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Order. Order. I just remind the member that BITSA does not specifically get into the details of spending and implementation on health, and so I'd caution the member to stay—bringing it back to BITSA, please.

Point of Order

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): On a point of order, honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and far be it for me to question the ruling of the Chair and I certainly wouldn't want to reflect on the ruling of the Chair, but I do think it's important

for us here this afternoon to be very clear about the importance of talking about the BITSA bill.

This particular bill is very important, and it is something that members on this side of the House have spent a lot of time putting words on the record, taking the time to make sure that they've thought their arguments through. They've put their concerns of their constituents on the record and, of course, we've heard a variety of different perspectives on that.

*(16:50)

But the concern I guess I have here is that, you know, and I can only speak to my own experience, although I would mention that the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) has also mentioned this, that when I talk to folks in my neighbourhood, when I knock on doors and they ask me about the hospital and the cuts to health care in their community, they say, but why is the PST being cut.

And that is why, in this bill, where it talks specifically about the PST being the No. 1 priority of this government, I think it's very relevant that the member for St. Johns talks about what's at stake when those—that PST cut happens with regards to issues that are of concern to her and her constituents, that being, in this case, health and health care.

And so it's a very direct line between the government's implementation of their tax statutes amendment act in the BITSA and the cuts that are coming with regards to health, to education, with regards to other departments in the government.

There is a very direct line between the decision that was made to lower the PST, which is the substance of the BITSA bill, on top of the antidemocratic portions of the bill, which, of course, the member is very happy to talk about as well. But this is a very direct line.

And so I think it's very clear here that we have—we should, as legislators—and I know you've given that leniency—or, the Speaker, I should say, has given that leniency to all members here throughout this debate. There has been a wide-ranging variety of perspectives. Certainly, only from this side of the House—but, you know, if members opposite also want to stand up and give their wide-ranging variety of perspectives, I think that would be worthwhile. We'd love to hear that. We'd love to hear how their constituents are getting impacted.

So, you know, I know that there's a concern about relevancy. We don't want to be talking about what we're going to be doing, you know, on our next break week or when we get away from this House. We don't want to be talking about issues that are not contained within the Manitoba budget. We don't want to be talking about federal issues, for instance, if they don't relate directly to the BITSA bill. There's a lot of ways that we can go off track, and I do appreciate that we want to stay relevant to our constituents. And that's certainly what the member for St. Johns is doing, is staying relevant to what her concerns of her constituents are with regards to the budget implementation and tax statutes act.

Now, I also wanted to mention very briefly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is—that, you know, as I think the member for St. Johns actually laid out very, very well, that most Manitobans do not understand the ins and the outs of the BITSA bill. They couldn't tell you exactly what those figures, you know, in every line in the BITSA bill, what that might—how that might impact them. But I think this is where we can take their experience, we can bring it forward in a way that helps us to understand—or, helps them to understand exactly how the changes that this government is proposing are going to impact them and their lives.

So I—you know, I just want to say in the same way that I think it's impossible—or, it's been ruled in the past that the Speaker cannot rule on the quality of an argument—the truthfulness, in fact, of an argument—what we call it here is a debate over the facts, or about the facts—that is something that the Speaker is—you know, keeps their hands off of because it's not possible to give that kind of judgment. I think there's—in the same way, there's a concern that if the Speaker is judging the quality of an argument, that that steps beyond what, I think, it's usual for the Speaker to do.

Arguments are not always point A to point B; they can sometimes go off in a few different directions. But, again, if we're talking about—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Order. Order, please. Order, please.

I believe the member has made his point. If he could conclude his remarks.

Mr. Wiebe: And I—to be honest, I did not want to take a lot of time, but I did want to get that last point in, so I do hope that that's taken under consideration

as well, the fact that the Speaker is not the arbiter of the quality of the debate that happens in this House.

We come as imperfect vessels for our communities. Sometimes we make really, you know, worthwhile and succinct and beautifully crafted arguments. Most times we do not.

So I hope that we are given that leniency to talk about issues that are of concern when it relates to a bill that's before this House—in this case, budget implementation and tax statutes act—without the judgment of—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Okay, order.

Has—okay—on the same point of order, government—honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On the same point of order. Mr. Acting Speaker, we're certainly—the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) was, I was going to say dangerously close to challenging the authority of the Speaker, but I think he actually went well beyond that with his comments that may not have made it onto the actual Hansard record.

But I think on what did make it onto the Hansard record, he was also challenging a ruling that you'd already given. And while it is true that you, as the Acting Speaker, or the Speaker when the Speaker's in the Chair, is not responsible for the quality of the debate, you are responsible for the adherence to the rules.

And there is a rule about relevance, which you've already ruled upon. And the member for Concordia was clearly challenging your authority as the Speaker on a ruling that you had already made, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member does not have a point of order. We're not prohibiting discussion on health, but it must be drawn back to the BITSA bill under consideration.

And I certainly would caution the member from Concordia on potentially reflecting on the Chair.

* * *

Ms. Fontaine: So I think it's important, again—and I just want to thank the member for Concordia for attempting to put on the record that the fact remains that the implementation of lowering the 1 per cent PST has implications to the—to cuts to health care, to

cuts to Education, to cuts to social services, to cuts to Justice, cuts to women's programming and services, cuts to mental health and addictions, cuts to, as I said, Education, cuts to special needs, cuts to post-secondary.

All of those are relevant in respect of putting words on the record in respect of Bill 16, the BITSA bill. It is all relevant. So I'm not sure where the last 15 minutes have kind of geared toward, and why there seems to be a policing of what I'm trying to put on the record here.

But, as the member for Concordia indicated and as I started, whenever I started speaking, I attempted by sharing, in particular, the constituents that the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself serve.

And when the member—constituents for the member for Point Douglas and constituents for St. Johns come up to us and ask us why the

government is closing Seven Oaks and why the government is cutting social service programs, and is it coming at the cost of lowering the PST, those are relevant discussions and facts to put on the record here in respect of debating BITSA.

You cannot separate the lowering of the PST from—and compartmentalize it as if it has nothing to do with the cuts to ERs. How is the Pallister government going to make up the lack of \$340 million by lowering the PST but to cut services, and but to cut education, and but to cut women's health care, but to cut special needs for education in respect of children—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Order.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) will have unlimited speaking time.

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 11, 2019

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