

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
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 25, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Honourable members, it is my duty to inform the House that Madam Speaker is unavoidably absent.

Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would kindly ask Mr. Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Piwniuk): Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

Routine procedures? Introduction to bills? *[interjection]* Oh.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Introduction to bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The requirement of 90—the honourable Minister for Infrastructure, the 90—the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance to rule 26.2.

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Day of Mourning

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Every year April 28th is recognized as the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. In Manitoba we are observing this special day tomorrow, Friday, April 26th.

The Day of Mourning gives us all a chance to honour the Manitobans who did not return home safely from work last year. In 2018, 25 Manitobans lost their lives as a result of work-related incidents and occupational diseases. Many more Manitoba workers were hurt seriously enough to cause permanent injury or necessitate time away from their jobs.

Of course, those we lost were much more than workers. They were also our family members, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

I encourage all colleagues and all Manitobans to take part in the annual Day of Mourning Leaders' Walk, organized by SAFE Workers of Tomorrow. This year's walk will start at the Union Centre, 275 Broadway, at noon and proceed here to the

Legislative Building, where we will gather for a ceremony.

As we look to the future of our province, I invite all of us to work together to support safe and healthy workplaces. We all share in the vision of making our province stronger, and that includes making it safer for all workers.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that after other members have had an opportunity to speak that there be leave given to request a moment of silence after the replies, and then I would ask that all members stand for a moment of silent—silence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to ask for a moment of silence after all—*[interjection]*—after everybody. Okay, leave.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It's my honour to raise today to talk about April 28th.

Many members probably don't remember who was instrumental in bringing about this legislation. A fellow by the name of Dick Martin, a former steelworker president from Thompson, president of the MFL, was instrumental in bringing it into being and, as importantly, a fellow by the name of Rod Murphy, the former MP for my home riding of Churchill—was his private member's bill that brought this into being.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every day we should fight to make sure that workers in this province are protected, and yet what we've seen from this government is just the opposite. They've reduced the protections that workers have fought for, things like hearing tests that they've backed off on that, things like automatic adoption of standards that have been arrived at after years of study by professionals that know what they're doing.

This government said, no, we need to have time to understand the economic impact. They weren't concerned about the impact on workers' health.

Every day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to fight to protect workers. On April 28th it will be my pleasure to stand in Flin Flon and talk about what takes place with this government—

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

Any other ministerial speakers? Members statements?

The honourable member for Southdale [*interjection*] Oh, the point of—order, order.

Is it a will to the House to call a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

A moment of silence was observed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Budgell Bikers

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I rise in the Legislature today to introduce you to a constituent and her group that raise funds for an important charity.

The Budgell Bikers were inspired by tragic circumstances that occurred in the life of the group's leader, Dee Dee Budgell. Her husband, Harry, was a very active individual who played many sports throughout his life. In 2006, at the age of 64, Harry suffered a massive stroke and—after a triple bypass, a heart valve replacement—and was told that he would never walk or talk again.

Harry was sent to Riverview Health Centre for rehabilitation and remained in the brain injury unit for three months. The treatment was successful, and against the odds, Harry walked out of the unit and was able to enjoy his life at home for another ten years. A fall in 2016 resulted in a broken hip, an injury from which he could never recover. He returned to Riverview, where he remained until his death, due to a heart attack, later that year.

Dee Dee was informed that there was a bike available that could be used by Riverview residents to ride around the area. However, it was not one that could serve those who were bound to a wheelchair. Soon, she discovered that there was a special bike made in Denmark that could be—that could enable those who were wheelchair bound to ride.

As an avid cyclist, she assembled her group to raise funds with their Cycle on Life in order to purchase this bike; an endeavour which has since been successful. She and her group continue to cycle in order to raise additional funds for the Riverview foundation so that they may continue to improve the quality of life for Riverview patients and residents.

I ask that the Chamber rise today and recognize the—Dee Dee Budgell and her bikers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Southdale.

Mr. Smith: I ask leave to insert the names of the Dee Dee Budgell riders into Hansard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the House—give leave to put everything—all the members that are up in the gallery in Hansard? [*Agreed*]

Budgell Bikers: Warren Abrey, Jeff Arnold, Dee Dee Budgell, Tanya Misseghers, Ken Short, Karen Tazumi.

Sargent Park Flames Basketball Champions

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Basketball is a big deal in the West End, and it has been for a long time.

I want to recognize the incredible season of the Sargent Park Flames Senior Girls basketball team. The Flames capped off a perfect 20-0 season by bringing the provincial championship home to the West End last month.

In addition to winning every game in league play, the Flames won all five tournaments they entered, including Acadia, Sisler, Steinbach and their own. They defeated their perennial crosstown rival, Sisler Spartans, to win the city championship.

The path to the provincial championship began with a 65-19 victory over Dakota, followed by a heart-stopping and ulcer-inducing 49-48 win over Acadia which was not decided until the final seconds.

This set up a championship final in front of a packed gym at Tec-Voc, as the Flames faced the Sisler Spartans once again. The Flames pulled ahead in the second half to defeat Sisler 54-41. Cherissa Tugade scored 30 points for the Flames.

At the 2019 Basketball Manitoba Awards, Flames coach and West End legend Ralph Backé was named the Junior High Girls Coach of the Year. Mr. Backé is a key part of the program at Sargent Park, which has produced six junior high senior girls provincial championships this decade, which is truly outstanding. But it must be said, though, that this year's undefeated season may be the most impressive of all.

It is no surprise that Flames players are always in high demand as they move on from Sargent Park. I look forward to watching these young women

take their place on the court at DMCI and other schools, and I expect eventually, for some players, at the university level.

Equally important, however, are the lessons that the girls have learned in this incredible season and the support they give to each other. This has been a fun team to watch, and they make our community very proud.

Please join me in congratulating the undefeated Sargent Park Flames Senior Girls basketball team.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Minto.

* (13:40)

Mr. Swan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd ask for leave to include the names of our guests from Sargent Park in Hansard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to—of—to the House to give leave—to put the members of the Sargent Park in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Sargent Park Flames Senior Girls basketball: Christine Blanco, Caroline Boyd, Asaliah Calderon, Jahzel Castronuevo, Sunrah Chea, Rona Coching, Sarah Hildebrand, Aliyah Gabuna, Isabelle Garcia, Handrey Inocentes, Debbie Manila, Aliya Martinez, Gjana Millar, Jashdane Santiago, Jena Tabelina, Allyza Tabirara, Cherissa Tugade, Madeline Wynne, players; Ralph Backé, coach.

Richard Junghyun Han

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): It is an honour to stand today and speak about a young gentleman who has earned a prestigious scholarship worthy of his hard work and effort.

Mr. Richard Junghyun Han is a grade 12 student at Glenlawn Collegiate. Richard is one of 170 individuals across Canada to be awarded the Horatio Alger Canadian Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded to individuals who have shown leadership, community involvement and a dedication to whatever they put their minds to.

Richard and his family came to Canada from Korea when he was 12 years old. Richard had been a brilliant student in Korea, but Canada was a different environment. Richard's inability to read and speak the language was both challenging and scary.

Richard was determined that this would not set him back and spent extra hours studying. Richard's

hard work and drive helped him to see challenges as a learning curve and to meet each challenge head-on. Richard's motto is: I want to be able to speak for those who can't speak for themselves.

Richard has volunteered for Folklorama, St. Amant, his church and at Glenlawn school. Richard stated that Folklorama gave him the platform to teach, share and enjoy his culture with thousands of people. Richard has also been a member of the Air Cadets, his school council and Youth in Philanthropy.

Richard has earned many awards. These awards include: 2018 University of Waterloo Fermat Award; 2016 University of Waterloo Pascal Award; 2017 T.W. Moor Memorial Award; Manitoba Korean scholarship; Pride of Glenlawn for 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Richard attributes his success to his mother. He said she has encouraged, guided and believed in him. To quote Richard: She is like a strong tree that protected me from rains and lightning storms.

I would like everyone to please rise and acknowledge Richard, who is here with his mother, Jung Sook Seo, and his brother, Tony Han.

Apology Request for Members' Comments

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happened this morning here at the Legislative Building is not okay.

I'm not going to repeat what the NDP have said because it is not parliamentary; however, those NDP members know the language that they used, and I would suggest apologizing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today several members of the NDP crossed the line. The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) and the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) need to be aware that words have meaning and consequences.

I have worked incredibly hard to be where I am today. I know that I am only here because of the supportive team that I have around me, and I am confident in my abilities because my focus remains on serving others.

This morning, the member from St. Johns, the member from Fort Garry-Riverview and the member from Flin Flon took the—very, very cheap shots at me on record. They were disgusting, offensive, ageist and sexist.

I was shocked to hear today that member from St. Johns, who also happens to be the critic for the Status of Women, would give credit to my father for my work. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from St. Johns undermines every single woman, every single young person who would seek a seat in this House when she puts statements like that on record.

I would like to ask all members of this House to truly think about the words they put on record—they have—and consider the effect that they have on people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further private members' statements?

Regehr Printing

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am exceptionally honoured to rise in the House today to congratulate Ren and Karis Regehr as they celebrate the 80th anniversary of Regehr's Printing.

The Regehr story is much the same as many hard-working immigrants who travelled to Canada on a hope and a dream for a better life for their family, so it's not surprising that when Jacob Regehr immigrated from Ukraine in 1924 that he brought with him high aspirations and the will to succeed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Jacob had a vision to establish his own printing business. Funds were limited, but that didn't squash his dreams. Thanks to the support of his church and the Mennonite community, who donated lumber and helped with construction, Jacob's dream became a reality.

In 1939, in the backyard of their North Kildonan home, J. Regehr Printing was open for business.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, family is the core of Regehr's Printing. In 1960, Jacob's son Eugene joined the family business and expanded it to their current North Kildonan location. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the legacy continues. In 1997, Eugene's son Ren took the helm and became the third generation Regehr to operate the printing shop.

And while printing methods have changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Regehr's have never lost sight of their very humble beginnings. Ren and Karis are committed to giving back to their North Kildonan community. They generously donate their services to Good Neighbours, the Concordia Foundation, Siloam Mission and the Union Gospel, to name just a few, and can always be counted on in

times of need. They are pillars in our community and I am proud to call them my friends.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ken [*phonetic*] and Ren and Karis Regehr are in the gallery today, and I ask all members to join me in congratulating them on this very special 80th anniversary.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before oral questions, we have seated in the public gallery from Kelvin High School 25 grade 9 students under the direction of Rebecca Perlmutter. This group is from the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Welcome to the Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable leader of—
[*interjection*]

Order, order. I haven't called you yet.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to set the record straight that Kelvin High School is actually in the great constituency of Fort Rouge.

Now we know health care is the No. 1 priority for the people of Manitoba except, of course, for the members of the Conservative government.

Today the WRHA posted their latest emergency room wait times, and guess what? They are bad. They are up month to month and they're up year over year.

Now we know the cause. It's because the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) cuts and closures to emergency rooms in Winnipeg and across Manitoba are making our health-care system worse. The numbers have been rising ever since they started to close emergency rooms in Winnipeg, and what's their plan? Close two more emergency rooms in Winnipeg later this year.

Will the Premier stop the damage to health care? Will he cancel his plans to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The leader of the opposition is incorrect. The government cares very

deeply about making sure that Manitobans receive the care they need in a timely manner. It is why we are acting, because for too long in this province, because of the NDP not acting, throwing more money at the system and hoping to goodness that it would change things; it did not.

We are acting on evidence; we are acting on the advice of experts. The numbers that he cites are virtually unchanged from the previous month.

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

Mr. Kinew: The numbers have clearly increased, both month over month but also year over year, and it's happening under this minister and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) because they're closing emergency rooms and cutting health care.

* (13:50)

Here are the facts when it comes to health care in Manitoba under this government. It takes longer to get a hip or a knee surgery than it used to. There are fewer nurses working at the bedside. There are more cancelled heart surgeries and emergency room wait times are going up and up and up. Every single one of those things is because this government is focused only on the money and not focused on improving care for patients in health care.

Now, the Premier needs to face the facts: his plan for health care, this rushed chaotic plan is failing.

Will he please listen to the evidence, reverse course on this plan and commit to keeping the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia open?

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, not accurate, not accurate, not accurate. As a matter of fact, the member may have his briefing binder upside down.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are more nurses working in Manitoba than ever before.

There are fewer cancers—cancelled surgeries now than previously under the NDP, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, emergency wait times are down. In the second last year of the NDP that average time was 2.3 hours. In the last year of the NDP it was 2.33 hours, and I can tell you that for this last year just completed that number is 2.17 hours, down from the NDP, down from the failed record of our predecessors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: It's 2.5 right now, which is higher, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Even as we speak right now in question period, right now at a different location in Winnipeg, WRHA officials are announcing that, yet again, for yet another month and for yet another year, emergency room wait times are going up. These are the experts. These are the officials that this very government employs, and they are telling us that, yet again, emergency room wait times are going up.

Now, they've got a tall order. They have to try and spin this government's terrible record when it comes to health care. But when we come to this Chamber, we expect to hear the minister engage openly and honestly. That's why we're so disappointed when we hear him trot out these failed lines yet again.

The evidence is clear. This government is failing when it comes to health care; this government's plan is an abject, miserable failure. Will they please abandon it?

We've got a real plan to fix health: get out of the way, don't close the emergency rooms and make way for a real government that's going to fix health care in Manitoba.

Mr. Friesen: Well, that member never concerns himself with the facts, so I wouldn't imagine it would start today.

But that member knows clearly, that if he looks at any graph, it clearly shows that the wait times in Winnipeg emergency rooms are down: down from 2014-2015, down from 2015-2016, even down since the transformation of our health-care system began.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is clear is that there were no answers under the NDP when it came to the chronic plaguing questions of how to improve ERs. In one year it was Grace Hospital with the worst ER times in the country. The next year it was Concordia with the worst ER times in the country.

We are fixing the health-care system to become more patient-centred. We are on our way. Manitobans are learning every day how this plan is beginning to take effect. We'll continue to stand up for all Manitoba patients.

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

K-to-12 Education Review Classroom Visitation Request

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): This is plainly false. Emergency room wait times are up since they started closing the emergency rooms. Emergency wait times are up even since they announced this terrible—
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —plan.

Now, we know every parent with a school-age child wants their child to have more one-on-one time with their teachers; that's because they understand that that individual instruction is when a kid is going to really be able to reach their full potential. But this commission that this government has launched is pretty far from the classroom, pretty far from the experts, the teachers. We know that the chair of this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) commission is even further from those front lines.

Mr. Manness was asked yesterday if there were plans for the commission to spend some time in the classroom, and he responded, quote: I could politically say yes, but I'd be lying to you. End quote. The further you get from the classroom, the worse the education decision-making gets.

Why can't the minister's commission take the simple step of visiting a classroom as part of their review?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, when it comes to classroom behaviour, we certainly saw some of that demonstrated by the NDP this morning, and I was here and I saw it, and I would hope that the members opposite would take to heart the comments that came from the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux).

The question regarding the commission—the independent commission, Mr. Speaker—they have been assigned to get better results for Manitobans and for students, and they are doing that work independently. For six weeks the critic of Education demanded that there not be interference, and now the leader of the opposition demands that there be interference with the independent commission.

We will not bow to opposition pressure to politically interfere with the independent commission, Mr. Speaker.

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

Strike and Lockout Provision

Mr. Kinew: Well, let's talk about political interference with this commission.

We know that this minister's assistant met with Clayton Manness, the chair of this review, late last year. The topic of that meeting was a 1996 report, which I will table for the benefit of the minister, commissioned by the then-Filmon government that recommended reintroducing strikes and lockouts for schools in Manitoba.

In January the minister, after this meeting, named Manness as the chair of the commission and told him he had, quote, flexibility to examine aspects of the system according to the perspective/lens of your choosing. I would add that they also misspelled lens in that directive that they gave to the chair of the commission.

But now we find what that mandate really means is consideration of this decades-old report that recommended strikes and lockouts coming back to schools in Manitoba.

Will the minister simply commit today that there won't be a return of strike and lockout provisions for schools in our province?

Mr. Goertzen: There's not going to be a return to the time when scores for students for math, literacy, science declined for 15 years straight, as what—
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —happened under the NDP government.

For their entire time in government they never cared anything about results. All they ever talked about was pour more money into the system, more money. More money went in and the results went down. This hasn't changed at all under this current leader. He might try to brand himself as something new; he's the same old, same old NDP: give more money, get less results. Try to sell that to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: The minister cannot just simply say in a simple response to a softball—
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –question that there won't be strikes at schools in Manitoba. He can't answer that easy, easy question. Try selling that on the doorstep in Manitoba.

Teachers, parents, students, they don't want their schooling to be interrupted by strikes and lockouts just because there's a government that can't work well with educators in the province. The—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –report that I just tabled itself actually said that lengthy work stoppages are not in the best interests of students or the public. But then for some reason that report goes on to recommend that there actually be a return of strikes and lockouts to the bargaining process in Manitoba. Even more bizarre than that, this minister and his department shared that report with the review commission.

So, again, will the minister please commit simply that there will be no strikes or lockout provisions returning for schools in Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I've got some news for the leader of the opposition: all of his questions are actually softball questions because they all talk about integrity and being—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: –honest with Manitobans; and that's a softball question when it comes from any NDP member of the House, Mr. Speaker, because we know what they did and what they've even done this session. When we look just in the last few weeks, they spent all their time trying to delay a PST decrease. That's what all their focus has been. Well, they took a little bit of focus on that because, of course, they wanted more money for their political party.

So when you look back at their 15 years in government, what did they try to do? Raise taxes and get more money for their political party. What have they done in opposition? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: They want to have higher taxes and more money for their—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: –political party. No, they don't want to ask for it. They don't ask Manitobans for it. They just want to take it for them.

Keep going down that old, beaten path and you'll come back with half the rump 'caufus'—caucus you have today, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia—*[interjection]* Order. Order.

The honourable member for Concordia.

K-to-12 Education Review Commission Timeline Extension Request

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I had the opportunity last night to join with educators, administrators, parents as they voiced their concern to this government about the future of education in this province. There were incredible discussions about the importance of local voices, of respecting educators as professionals and warnings about the impacts of the cuts of this government.

But only some voices were heard at yesterday's meeting because no meetings are scheduled for the inner city, so some people won't have an opportunity to participate.

Will this minister direct the commission to go to the inner city, to the communities and to provide the commission with a longer timeline to complete their work?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, for the first two months after the commission was formed, the critic stood on every street corner and then shouted from every box he could stand on to say: There shouldn't be any interference. Don't interfere with this process.

Now, of course, he attends one meeting and he stands on a new soapbox in the opposition and says: Interfere, interfere with this commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm glad that he was at the meeting because he actually saw what true consultation is about. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: He may have even—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: –learned—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: –something, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

He should go to all the meetings. He should listen, because some day when they're back in government, 70 years from now, maybe he'll learn something about it. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member from Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Classroom Visitation and Consultations

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, this isn't interference. This is the minister's own mandate letter. Quote: All sectors of society will be encouraged to participate and provided opportunities to have their voices heard. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: This is clear direction, Madam–Mr. Speaker. But there are currently no plans for the commission to go to the inner city, and the commissioner co-chair, Manness, yesterday at the meeting made it clear they had no time to do so. He also acknowledged the imbalance when it comes to reaching out to indigenous individuals and to communities.

So will the minister enforce his own mandate letter to the commission and direct him to seek out all voices, including those of indigenous communities?

Mr. Goertzen: On a Monday and a Tuesday they're demanding that there be no interference, and then Wednesday and Thursday come and they're demanding that there be interference; such is the state of the NDP. They don't even meet with each other to try to get their message straight. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: We're glad that there is consultation, not just consultations in public—and I'm glad that many people took the opportunity yesterday, from the reports that I saw, but, of course, there are consultations online and there are consultations in many other ways. There's going to be students that are going to come from across the province, and they're going to be part of a consultation.

I know why the member opposite is upset and concerned: because they never consulted. But I'm glad he went to the meeting because he actually got

to see what a real consultation looks like. He should go to all the meetings and he can listen, and maybe in 50 years he'll have some power to do the same thing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time is up.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, the reality is many teachers in attendance brought innovative ideas to the discussion, and they talked about the changing classroom in the 21st century and the importance—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: –of educating our citizens of tomorrow, yet the commission has no current teacher representatives and no plans to even visit a Manitoba classroom. When pressed about this, of course, Clayton Manness admitted that he was—this was not in the commission's plans. He said: I could politically say yes, but I would be lying to you.

Many teachers went on to invite—personally invite—the commission to come to their classroom to see what a modern working classroom looks like.

Will the minister respect those front-line teachers and instruct the commission to actually visit—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Well, that's exciting, Mr. Acting Speaker, 300—they weren't all educators, I'm sure, but 300 people who were interested in the education system—by reports—came to the meeting yesterday. That would be about 300 more than were ever invited to give their opinions and advice under the NDP, and that's what we're looking for. We're looking for ideas and suggestions, and I'm glad it was a robust discussion; I'm glad there were 300 people. I hope those numbers continue in the consultations to come.

And people can consult and give their opinions online. They can do it at these forums. They can do it many different ways, and if even one person—if even one person—would have come to give their advice about education, that would have been one more person that was ever asked for their advice than under the NDP government.

Manitoba Housing Units Private Sector Management

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The Pallister government is backing away from support for housing. Last month the Pallister government cut home care-home repair programs for low-income tenants, and earlier this month Manitoba Housing handed over management control of 567 units to third parties, and in a recent presentation to leadership of Manitoba Housing, we have learned that the corporation is facing a \$2.7-million cut this year. As a result, the corporation is planning a further transfer of 1,000 units over the coming year and is contemplating transferring these units through the private sector.

This raises real concern, Deputy Speaker. The number of social housing units available in Manitoba has dropped over the last three years.

Does the minister intend to get rid of even more?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Certainly, we inherited a mess from the previous NDP government. We care very deeply about providing affordable housing for those Manitobans—*[interjection]*—who need it, Madam Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —and that's why we are partnering with experts in the community to ensure that we have better delivery of these services for—in the area of social and affordable housing. We will continue to work with those providers to ensure that those homes are there for those people that need them.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The contract Manitoba signed with third parties gives the ability to sell the social housing units in the future. It's real concern. The Province's commitment to keep this housing secure for low-income renters is no longer guaranteed.

Manitoba Housing is under tremendous pressure. They face a \$2.7-million cut this year. After transferring 567 units, they plan on transferring 1,000 more this year and they are considering handing these units over to the private sector. We have already lost social housing and the minister is opening the door to a loss of even more.

Why are there less social housing units available for low-income Manitobans?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member opposite is just wrong.

In fact, the transfer of management of social and affordable housing units allows us for—allows for a practical, sustainable and community-driven approach to social and affordable housing delivery in our province. We want to ensure that there's better access for Manitobans who need affordable housing in our province, and that's why we will continue to work with those experts in the not-for-profit sector, in the private sector, and everyone work together to ensure that we can provide those affordable housing units for the Manitobans who need them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas, on a final supplementary question.

Ms. Lathlin: The minister cut maintenance budget last year for social housing by 62 per cent. Manitoba Housing now faces a \$2.7-million cut this year.

She's walking away from the existing housing stock, and now we've learnt that over 1,500 units of housing will be farmed out, potentially to private operators, with provisions buried in the fine print of agreements that allow for the sale of these units in the future.

Why is this minister working to get rid of social housing units?

Ekosi.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I'm glad that the member opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has brought up the issue of maintenance of affordable housing, Madam Speaker, because we, in fact, inherited in over a billion dollars in deferred maintenance charges from the previous NDP government.

So Manitobans elected us to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild our economy and that's exactly what we are doing, Madam Speaker—Mr. Speaker.

Special Drugs Program Request to Reinstate

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): A year ago this government cancelled the special drugs program. It was once known as the life saving drugs program because that's what it did: drugs that made a difference between life and death for people with diseases like cystic fibrosis and type 1 diabetes.

One of my constituents told me his 85-year-old mother, who is on a fixed income, faced a choice: bankruptcy paying for insulin and supplies, or going

without. Bankruptcy or death is quite the choice for a government to foist on seniors on a fixed income.

Given the impact of this disastrous decision, will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government admit they made a mistake and reinstate the life saving special drugs program?

*(14:10)

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

The member knows he's asking a question about a legacy program in Manitoba that continued in parallel to the overall drug program. Our government took the decision to fold that program into the existing one.

That member also knows that when it comes to Pharmacare, we have one of the most generous systems in the entire country. We continue to get better value for all Manitobans—because it matters—through our participation on certain panels that seek to get better value for money in the purchase of drugs.

We'll continue to get better value. If the member clearly cared about issues like affordability, he would stand up for Manitoba's efforts to get a better deal in health care from the federal government.

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

Diabetes Supplies Provincial Coverage

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): The Health Minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) have often claimed they're looking for efficiencies in order to reinvest in the health-care system, but we know from the government's books, there is no reinvestment. A cut is a cut is a cut, because actual health spending is flat—flat like the prairie horizon.

What's worse, Mr. Speaker, is that this government is cutting funding on primary health, where problems are detected early, and spending more on people only once they are that much sicker.

The complications of diabetes include blindness, amputation, heart disease, stroke and kidney failure. We could be preventing untold misery and saving tens of millions of dollars, but when it comes to covering insulin pumps, Manitoba is tied for worst with Quebec. People don't stop having type 1

diabetes when they turn 18, but as far as this government is concerned, they do, because this government won't cover insulin pumps—

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

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I didn't sense a question, but I will take the opportunity to remind the member that when it comes to investments in our health-care system, well, clearly money isn't everything, because if it were, we wouldn't have the problems inherited by the NDP.

Our—we know that our per capita spending on health care in this province continues to run above the national average by a full thousand dollars. Even so, our investments in health care: \$414 million more than the NDP ever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Lamont: If the Premier were mayor of Winnipeg—and sometimes it seems he wishes he were—it seems he'd eliminate the need for sprinkler systems and spend all his money on putting out fires once they were fully ablaze.

We've seen cut after cut to primary care, where diabetes is detected. We've had cuts to insulin and diabetes testing, and instead, this government has asked for increased funding for dialysis, which is positive, but it is at crisis levels in Manitoba because of uncontrolled diabetes.

We've heard there are people with diabetes who are under-dosing with insulin because they can't afford it.

When is this government going to put prevention first and make sure that everybody who needs insulin in Manitoba can afford it?

Mr. Friesen: Diabetes is a serious issue. We know that, when it comes to chronic disease, we have challenges in this jurisdiction. They are not ours alone, but we are facing them.

The member is aware of investments we even recently made: \$2.6 million additional in this year's budget for the expansion of dialysis programs in hospital, in places like Thompson, where I visited with the member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) only weeks ago; in places like Brandon, where we are

extending peritoneal and hemodialysis services to Manitobans who can get them at home.

And, even, if he would have researched a little bit more, under the bilateral agreement, where we will be collaborating, because we stood up for Manitoba's interest, to be able to extend dialysis to even seniors through our home-care system. These are some of the examples of the great investments we are making—

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

Commercial Fishing Industry Consultation Concerns

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): The people of Manitoba deserve to know that on three separate occasions, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has told the commercial fishers of Manitoba that no changes would be made to their livelihood or way of life without further consultations. And now, three times in a row, he has broken his word.

Why?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Well, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to point out for the House that a few months back, when there were people protesting on the front lawns asking for conditions to change so that the sustainability of the lake could be addressed, members opposite ran out there. You tripped on his shoelaces running down the stairs just to join in that protest. And then a few months later, there was another group coming to protest changes that would enhance the sustainability of the lake, and the member opposite there, again, he ran down the steps, tripped on his shoelaces to take part of that protest.

So while he's flipping around like a pickerel on a dock, our government is getting real changes for sustainability on Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question. *[interjection]* Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister's proven my earlier stated point, that she is, unfortunately, quite irrelevant in the meaningful decisions that are made here. This is all coming from the Premier, and when I meet with people from both sides of an issue I think that's what he should be doing, and is not.

The insults continue from this government because on multiple occasions fishers have asked to see the raw scientific data this government claims justifies their position overlooking the complete lack of consultation in advance. On every single occasion the government's refused to provide the scientific data to the fishers who will be most affected.

So the question, once again, is: Why?

Ms. Squires: I see that the misogyny continues on the side of the NDP where they're, you know, busy calling a woman minister irrelevant.

Having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have worked in concert with many resource groups to ensure that the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg is protected; we are consulting with all user groups, including commercial fishers, to take action. We are also ensuring that the quota amounts are sustainable, not just for now, but well into the future.

And while we are working to consult with all user groups, including the commercial fishers, to land on an agreement to ensure that we've got sustainability for our lake, members opposite continue to hurl insults to women.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —the minister continues to dig a deeper and deeper hole with her completely off-topic answers. Allow me to be very clear: she's just as irrelevant as all of her Cabinet colleagues. This is the Premier's agenda that he is ramming down the throats of commercial fishers.

Now, people have noticed what he's doing. I have been honoured to receive a petition with over 500 names—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —on it of people living in Winnipeg opposed to what this Premier has done.

Will the Premier, while he cannot undo the incredible harm that he has caused already, will he today retract his imposition—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —of these unjustified, unsubstantiated changes, which he has refused to provide

any scientific data or consult with people in advance on, will he rescind that and enter—

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

Ms. Squires: I'm not surprised that this member opposite cannot recognize meaningful action on addressing sustainability issues for Lake Winnipeg. He sat silent when international organizations said that Lake Winnipeg was the most threatened lake in the world. He sat silent while many people called for measures to be taken, whether it be getting eco-certification or other initiatives on the lake to address the sustainability.

That's exactly what we're doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're working in concert with all user groups to ensure that we've got sustainability of Lake Winnipeg and cleaning up the mess that the NDP left behind.

Diagnostic Services New Outpatient Centre

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Under the previous NDP government wait times for health-care services in Manitoba were abysmal and among the worst in Canada.

Our government is committed to delivering better health care sooner, and Manitobans are seeing results. An important part of delivering better health outcomes for Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: —improving access to diagnostic services.

Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living please tell the House about the actions taken by our government to reduce the wait times for diagnostic services like CT scans?

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

I was pleased to be at Misericordia Health Centre this morning to officially open the Diagnostic Imaging Outpatient Centre. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this centre will be the first of its kind in Manitoba to be able to accommodate walk-in CT scans. It means that we are accommodating people and acknowledging the realities of their life, that they might have children to pick up, they might need a ride to their appointment. It now puts the onus in the hands of the patient to be able to pick the right time for them.

It also means something to the people outside of Winnipeg who would otherwise have to travel in twice for an appointment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$94,000 and 4,800 additional CT scans. As a result we are demonstrating our committee—our commitment to get better care sooner for all Manitobans.

* (14:20)

Manitoba's Economy Government Record

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I don't always agree with Tom Brodbeck, but when he's right, he's right, and I table his article from today's Winnipeg Sun, which points out how this government is cherry-picking stale data to paper over their dismal economic record which shows that Manitoba's growth is well below the national average in 2018.

For many years I've been warning that this government's policies would shrink the economy, and the reason is simple: all the employees that they're firing and freezing wages of also spend money and pay taxes into our economy.

At the time, I said that if the Pallister government tried to cut spending by \$900 million without investing, it could shrink Manitoba's \$60-billion economy by 1.5 per cent. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has cut \$600 million; the economy has shrunk by 1 per cent.

Does the Premier agree with Mr. Brodbeck the figures show the economy is approaching the worst it's been in 20 years, or is he going to threaten to sue the Winnipeg Sun as well?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): One thing we were wrong about, I acknowledge, the fact that we talked about the member has never had a job before. We learned out—the other day that he's an extra as a movie extra, and what he's acting like, he's acting like an actor right now, because I'll tell you what some of the experts are saying—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —about the Manitoba economy.

The 'dubunion' bond rating service is saying that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —Manitoba has the most stable provincial economy in Canada. The province continues to expect modest economic growth

with real GDP growth of 1.7 per cent in 2019 and 1.5 per cent in 2020, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamont: We've often said this government is running two sets of books. Whether it's health, education or infrastructure, if there's one consistent theme it's that they over-promise and under-deliver.

They promised one number on health and cut \$247 million; they promised another on infrastructure, then cut by \$350 million; and they're leaving \$1.5 billion in federal funding on the table.

The problem for this government is, since they're saying one thing and doing the other, Manitobans aren't fooled. That \$1.5 billion in funding could make the difference between recession and growth.

Why is this government going out of its way to drive Manitoba into a recession?

Mr. Fielding: I can tell you that the Manitoba economy in terms of the private sector growth—I know the Leader of the Second Opposition as well as the leader of the opposition don't like to hear about private sector growth, but in Manitoba—over the last two years, Manitoba's generated more than 14,000 new private sector jobs. That's a 99 per cent increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the previous two years.

And you know what? These 14,000 jobs is greater than the last four years of the previous NDP government combined: 2013, '14, '15 and '16.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Lamont: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Canada and Manitoba face extremely serious economic issues: 56 per cent of Manitobans are \$200 a month away from insolvency, and this government's policies of deliberately firing people, refusing to invest and shoving costs onto those who can least afford it is going to bankrupt people and businesses. That's not how you grow the economy.

The world has changed, but this government is stuck in the past. I table a report by World Bank Chief Economist Paul Romer from 2016. He makes it crystal clear the last 30 years of economics that this government follows has been a sham, and it's getting worse.

Is this government ever going to actually invest the money that the federal government has promised to share, or will they continue to ignore the evidence and just keep cutting?

Mr. Fielding: You know, it's—I question the fact—the member brings up the stats of the fact that the average Manitoban—56 per cent of Canadians, I think it is, only have \$200 of 'expended' income. You know what's a good cure for that? It's reducing the PST so people have more money in their pockets.

That's something the Liberals, with their federal tax on small businesses over the last years, know nothing about, Madam Speaker.

We're leading the nation in Manitoba in private sector capital investment. People are coming from Roquette. We're seeing expansions to places like Simplot, expansions of places like Maple Leaf and places like Ubisoft who are creating important, high-paying, high-research jobs here in the province of Manitoba.

We're not done yet. We're on—way to lead the nation in private sector capital again for a third year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Timeline for ER Closure

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): We're five weeks away from June, yet this minister and his government have still not let the public know when they are going to close Concordia Hospital.

Patients want to know. The community wants to know. The health-care workers that actually work on the front lines of this hospital want to know.

So will the minister get up today and tell Manitobans when he plans and his government plans to close Concordia ER?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought the member would want to know more about the excellent announcement we made this morning in respect of a new diagnostic imaging outpatient centre, to actually be the first of its kind in this province, to put the ability on the patient to choose their own time for an appointment. That will reduce wait times across the system. It will help length of stay in other hospitals and it will get better care sooner for all Manitobans.

That is what I thought that member would be more interested in. I'm happy to share with her that information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a secondary question.

Mrs. Smith: Well, Manitobans want to know when the Concordia Hospital is closing. I don't know why this minister refuses to get up in the House and do his job. His job is the Health Minister and he can't even tell Manitobans when he's going to close an ER?

Manitobans deserve to know if they're going to have an ER in that corner of that city, Concordia. He can't get up? Why is he refusing? Why is he hiding it? These people are Manitobans—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —that vote. Get up in the House today and tell them when you are planning to close Concordia Hospital.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —she has gone and done it again. She has tried to distort a situation. She has put incorrect information on the record deliberately. She just implied that, somehow, Concordia is closing when she knows full well that that hospital will continue to be more—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —important because of its more expanded role in subacute medicine and its continuing excellence in orthopedic work that it will provide to our enhanced and rejuvenated health-care system as we go forward.

She should stop putting wrong information on the record. Let her start now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Smith: This is the 13th time that I will get up in this House and ask this minister when he plans to close Concordia. He knows when it's closing. He can tell Manitobans. Why is he hiding it from Manitobans? [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: He claims to respect front-line workers, but yet he can't even tell them when the ER is going to close? [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: Manitobans deserve to know, and this government should be transparent about when he's going to close Concordia ER.

So get up in the House today, do your job and tell Manitobans exactly when you are closing the Concordia emergency room. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's the 13th time she's tried to mislead Manitobans and imply somehow that a hospital is in-closing. She knows the transformation system is showing signs now, even, that it's working. She knows it's based on evidence. She knows that Manitobans—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —want better health care sooner. She knows it's what our government is providing.

Invasive Species Awareness Recognition Week

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all cherish the beauty and diversity of Manitoba's natural environment and understand the importance of working to protect it from the negative effects of invasive species. Invasive species can have a devastating effect on our waterways, forests and landscapes, changing them forever.

Manitobans have been learning about these effects this week during the first ever Invasive Species Awareness Week.

Can the Minister of Sustainable Development tell the House how all Manitobans can help protect our environment from invasive species?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'd like to thank my colleague from Selkirk. He was the one who introduced the legislation that allowed us to have the first ever Invasive Species Awareness Week.

Our government has been working to raise public awareness of invasive species and remind all Manitobans of the constant threat that they impose and eliminate their spread.

This is in stark contrast to what members opposite did when zebra mussels came into Manitoba. The minister at the time, Gord Mackintosh, said when invasive species were infesting Lake Winnipeg. He said, oh, well, we

have 100,000 other lakes in the province; we can worry about them.

This government is standing up for all lakes and protecting all lakes and waterways from invasive species throughout the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for oral questions—time has expired.

* (14:30)

PETITIONS

Daylight Saving Time

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The loss of sleep associated with the beginning of daylight saving time has serious consequences for physical and mental health and has been linked to increases in traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

(2) According to a Manitoba Public Insurance news release, collision data collected in 2014 showed that there was a 20 per cent increase in collisions on Monday roadways following the spring daylight saving time change, when compared to all other Mondays in 2014.

(3) Daylight saving time is associated with a decrease in productivity the day after the clocks are turned forward with no corresponding increase in productivity when the clocks are turned back.

(4) There's no conclusive evidence that daylight saving time is effective in reducing energy consumption.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to amend The Official Time Act to abolish daylight saving time in Manitoba, effective November 4th, 2019, resulting in Manitoba remaining on Central Standard Time throughout the year and in perpetuity.

And this petition has been signed by Annette [phonetic] Storoschuk, Nettie Passchagoric [phonetic], Sophie Plazio and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In accordance to the rule 133-6, when petitions are read, they are deemed to be received by this House.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I wish to pretend—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.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by Danielle Manapsal, Alison Kokocinski, Deepak Patel and many other Manitobans.

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

And 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 care program-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, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is signed by Julie Kozak, Michelle McIvor and Tammy Yurkiw and many other Manitobans.

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The reason for 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 Health Region authority—excuse me, I'll repeat that—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 babies.

* (14:40)

(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.

And this petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been signed by Danica Vachon, Monique Gardreux [*phonetic*] and Danielle Neuburh and many, many other Manitobans.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) 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 was signed by Orlando Garcia, Jasmine Kithithee, Ruby Monkman and many, many more Manitobans.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): 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 impact—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 is signed by Jessica Green, Allen Walker, Markus Anderson and many, many other Manitobans.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this 'position' 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 funding—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.

* (14:50)

(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 has been signed by many, many, many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): 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.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by Irene Thiessen, Pam Coro-Driedger, Mark Ritchot and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions? Grievances? Oh, sorry, we've got a petition here. Back to petitions.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): 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.

Signed: Peter Froese, Sharon Froese, Ally Reimer and many others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions?

Now we'll go on to grievances.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please call for continued debate Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So the honourable Government House Leader has requested that we go on to Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

Is that—will the House—okay, yes, okay, sorry.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 24—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resume debate on Bill 24, and is standing in the name of—the honourable member for Minto has 25 minutes remaining.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, here we are, the last afternoon before we return to our constituencies to reconnect with our constituents and, of course, carry forward their concerns to the Legislature.

I thought this would be an afternoon, again, where we'd actually be into departmental Estimates, that we'd be able to ask ministers questions and maybe, just maybe, get some answers.

Perhaps we'd be able to ask the Minister of Health for the 14th time when the Concordia emergency room is going to close and, you know, maybe, maybe the minister would actually remember his mandate letter and his obligation given by his leader to make sure that he's respectful and truthful with Manitobans, and maybe he would recant and actually put an answer on the record so that people who live in northeast Winnipeg and people who

work in the health-care system, patients and their families and others concerned about health care would have an answer.

You know, and maybe the minister would also be prepared to answer a question about Seven Oaks General Hospital and the emergency room there. Again he's refused to answer those questions.

I'd thought we get on to departmental Estimates and we'd be able to put those kinds of questions through to ministers, but we're not. We're debating Bill 24 again, and that's exactly what we'll do, and, of course, this is another omnibus bill. I don't mean to say that in an ominous way, but I do want to put on the record, before I get into the details of this bill, some concerns about the way that this government thinks is acceptable to carry on business.

Now, I put on the record yesterday that Bill 24 is a common kind of bill. I agree with the Government House Leader. Of course, the Government House Leader can't explain why he had to have three of these kinds of bills which are now before the House in this session.

The advice I put forward is it is because this government has such a weak, lethargic government agenda and legislative agenda that it was trying to make things look more complete and, as the Government House Leader, I believe, is admitting from his seat, that that's exactly the reason why they have not one but three of these kinds of bills.

And, you know, I'll—for the Government House Leader, I'll remind him of the way that bill briefings used to happen. When the government of the day would bring in bills, what would happen is, very early, the minister's office would get in contact with the critic, the critic for that portfolio and, either by email or by even a phone call, the minister's office would say, all right; the minister has just introduced this bill. When can we arrange a briefing?

A bill briefing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course, is when—*[interjection]*—well, the Government House Leader has a lot of things he wants to say, and I'm prepared to give him leave to speak again after I'm finished my comments this afternoon—and what would happen is that the critic would have the opportunity to have a date set to come by and be briefed by the minister and deputy minister and the minister's staff who could answer questions that might happen.

And then, after the government changed, that process changed and there was no longer the idea

that the minister's office would contact the critic and try and come up with a mutually acceptable date. What happened next is that the minister's office would simply send out an email to everybody, to all of the opposition members, and say, here's when the bill briefing is going to happen. End of story.

Now, as we know, of course, if we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who can't even be counted on to be available for Estimates, how do we expect individual MLAs, with no warning beforehand, to know when a particular meeting is going to happen?

* (15:00)

And that was bad enough. And eventually we said, well, look, at the very least, we all get lots and lots of emails. Could you at least have the common courtesy to let the critic for the portfolio know? So that was, I understand, happening. But again—*[interjection]*—well, and there's the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) back at it again, who wants to debate from his seat, things he couldn't put on the record in—as my friend, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), said—probably the shortest second reading speech.

And I—you know, I—there were some of us happy that the minister wasn't speaking for very long, but when there is a second reading, it is actually the obligation of the government to put on the record some of the rationale for the bills they're bringing forward. And the point I was going to get to—

An Honourable Member: Spelling mistakes.

Mr. Swan: Well, I'm glad the minister wants to say it's only about spelling mistakes, because I think I can talk for the next 20 minutes about what this government is now trying to do by this bill. I'm glad the minister is chirping from his seat because we can talk about what's happening to democracy in this province.

But, as I was saying before I was interrupted several times, this government then changed its policy on briefings again, and the government just decided that they would just stop having briefings at all before bills are brought forward for second reading. So the government now introduces bills for first reading and more likely than not, they get up and they introduce the bill for second reading before there's even been a briefing provided to the opposition critic or opposition critics.

And that's not—this is not the first time that that's happened. It's actually been repeated this session, that this government, whether it's from their own poor organization or their desire not to have critics be briefed on bills, has insisted on going ahead on introducing the bill—*[interjection]* Well, I believe the Government House Leader's saying he's going to quit. So, if he wants to make that announcement, I will stand down and let him have time to do that.

But what has happened with this bill, as with several other bills, is the government went ahead and introduced it for second reading, which, of course, then forces the opposition to go into questions and answers before bill briefing has even been provided. Now, is this a breach of any rule? Well, no, it's not; it's not a breach of the rule because, previously, there was enough respect by the government of the day for this institution and for democracy that there would be a bill briefing that would be offered up early on.

And, unfortunately, this government has decided that's—I don't know if they consider it inconvenient, I don't know if they consider it to be a threat to the way the Premier likes to do things. We have a Premier who, frankly, wishes this Legislature could only sit for about three or four days a year. That will allow him enough time to spend the eight weeks, or 12 weeks, or 16 weeks he would spend in that case down in Costa Rica, or perhaps hiking in the desert, or doing whatever else it is that he does with his free time. I realize that's the way the Premier would like to run this Legislature.

I think the rules committee is going to have to look at the possibility of a government being unable to introduce bills for second reading unless and until there's been a bill briefing provided or, at the very least, a reasonable opportunity for bill briefing. And when did—*[interjection]* Well, no, the Government House Leader continues to chirp from his seat, so I'll continue to talk about this point.

This bill was brought forward by the government several weeks ago. No bill briefing was offered. No bill briefing happened. The government introduced the bill for second reading yesterday. The minister made a very short speech. Questions and answers then had to happen, and on we went. And had a bill briefing been offered? No.

And it finally happened—*[interjection]* Well, you know, there's the Government House Leader now saying, well, there's this omnibus bill and we refused to offer briefing, and you know what, opposition?

Too bad for you. Too bad for you, you didn't use up all 15 minutes.

Because, you know, the minister says, well it's just typos, it's just typos. And is it just typos? Well, unfortunately for this government, no, it's not just typos. And this is not the first time the government—this government, this anti-democratic government—has brought forward what they say is just a, you know, just a housekeeping bill, it's just typographical errors, and they have tried to move through with other changes.

Well, and two years ago they brought in their red tape bill, and what did they do? Well, they weakened regulation on Manitoba's hog industry, jeopardizing our water resources, our ground water, lakes and streams. We know that Bill 24—[interjection] Well and who else is chirping over there? Who wants to join the debate? It's a great day for Conservatives to stand up and talk about how anti-democratic they are. But I'll—if it's okay with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll just—I'll continue talking. Bill 24, of course, reduced the frequency of assessment of water systems that treat and distribute Manitoba's drinking water from once every five years to once every 10 years. You know, what's a Walkerton or a North Battleford between friends, really?

Because of the way that this government has contempt for so many Manitobans, last fall they introduced Bill 12. That was The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, another bill in which they did their best to hide major changes.

That bill, of course, took away rights under The Residential Tenancies Act, reduced oversight requirements on municipal spending, all of which didn't provide enough time to provide proper oversight and review of those changes.

And, of course, this session, as I've said—this is now the third omnibus piece of legislation this government has forward—has brought forward. First we had Bill 14, which, of course, does its best to take away Canada Day long weekend from hard-working Manitobans. We know the government tried to hide major changes to the election financing laws in Bill 16 or BITSA.

And, of course, if it had been up to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), he would have hoped nobody would have noticed and they would have simply and quietly taken away campaign reimbursements which individuals rely on to finance their campaigns. But

now, of course, the Premier is telling an entirely different story, as we know the Premier tends to do from day to day and week to week.

And now, what are we doing in Bill 24? Well, they're amending the reporting requirement under the pathways to reconciliation act. That's an act that was proclaimed under the previous government to ensure that Manitoba consistently moves forward on the path to reconciliation.

And it's no secret the path to reconciliation is not an easy one. It is not a short one. It is a path that we are going to have to continue to walk month after month and year after year. And, currently, that act requires that a report under that act be completed within three months of the fiscal year. And Bill 24 strikes out that requirement and instead imposes no timeline on when the report should be completed.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think—and I don't hear the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) chirping now—I don't think that falls into the category of a typographical error. There was a requirement to provide a report within three months of the end of the fiscal year and now, with the stroke of a pen, Bill 24 is going to strike out that requirement and impose no timeline on when that report has to be completed.

And, you know, I would think that this government, at the very least, would agree that reconciliation has to be one of the government's top priorities. I think it's very clear Manitobans—

An Honourable Member: I don't know that they would.

Mr. Swan: Well, they have to. Whether they want to or not, they have to reconcile. They have to take strides toward building just and equitable relationships with indigenous people.

And the requirement, which is still in law, is that every year, the minister responsible for reconciliation is required to prepare a report about the measures taken by the government to advance reconciliation, including measures taken to engage indigenous nations and indigenous peoples in the reconciliation process and the measures taken to implement the strategy.

And, again, the requirement which now exists is that within three months after the end of the fiscal year—so coming up in the next short while—it's up to the minister to table a copy of the report in the Assembly and make it then available to the general

public: indigenous people, but also non-indigenous people who understand how important this is.

And the importance of that, of course, is that this report is supposed to be tendered within three months of the end of the fiscal year, meaning that it's not up to the government to decide when they're going to release it, as long-within that three-month time period.

And, of course, we know the government failed to do that on time. There's, of course, there's no penalty. Nobody has to resign as a result of it, because we didn't think that was a necessary kind of sanction, in a bill like that. But, instead, we had the government refuse to provide that in time, and now the government doesn't want to comply with that at all.

And they now want to have more time to provide this report. Maybe they'll release it, you know, as this government's done a couple of times—maybe they'll release it Friday before the August long weekend. Maybe they'll release it during the Labour Day Classic, when the Bombers are beating the Roughriders. Who knows when they'll be bringing that forward.

What's clear is the government's doing its best to avoid its responsibility, and what I think would be a very, very—it's a very strong message to indigenous people that the path to reconciliation just got a little longer, it got a little narrower and it got a little bit more difficult to follow.

* (15:10)

And, you know, when we look at a bill which is called The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, I don't think that's the kind of provision, frankly, that should be in a bill like this. It's one thing to have a change in a French translation; it's another thing to use this bill to weaken the reporting requirements, to weaken the process of reconciliation, which I would honestly like to think should be top of mind for every member of this Legislature, whichever community they come from, whichever party they may represent, whether they're in Cabinet or whether they're a backbencher. And that is just wrong.

And again—[interjection]—well, and I believe the member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) has been having a lot to say, even if he's not speaking officially in this House. I would think the member for Thompson, given his community, would stand in his place and say, wait a second; you know, it's been highlighted

to me that as a backbencher I don't really know what's in any of these government bills. Why would this government weaken the reporting requirement on a report that's required under The Path to Reconciliation Act? Yet, instead, we don't hear anything from any government backbencher. We don't hear anything trying to justify what—this is happening. [interjection]

Well, and there's—the member for Thompson is—again, he's concerned. We'll have a chat after, I'm sure. And I'll—maybe I'll fill him in on some other government bills because, obviously, that doesn't happen in their caucus.

Now, last year, again, the report under the province's truth and reconciliation progress report was, of course, legislated to be released in June. And yet, by August it still hadn't been released, so at least two months late. And Ry Moran, the director of the Winnipeg-based National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, was asked about that by the media. And he said, and this is a very important quote, I think, for the government backbenchers to hear: leadership has to lead in this regard and it has to set a tone. This is not easy work, and the fact that there are delays in this may suggest that it's not being taken as seriously as it could be.

Well, so here's the very well-respected individual who is the director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, which we're proud is headquartered in Winnipeg, who has put it on the line pretty clearly and said, look, if you can't even follow a simple obligation in this legislation to provide this report, as has been legislated, that's not a very good sign.

And what's this government's response? Well, when the going gets tough, this government gets going to Costa Rica; they get going to wherever it is they go; or they change legislation to weaken their obligation to provide a report within a timely basis.

And, you know, if the legislation is passed and the annual progress report no longer has a hard deadline to release this report, you know, we really have to wonder how can we be assured they're ever going to do so in a timely manner. And there need to be external pressures for the Province to release this report.

But, instead, what do we have? Do we have a government saying, I'm very sorry that we didn't manage to get this report in on time? This very government—[interjection]—well, now the member

for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) wants to chirp away. Maybe the member for Radisson can stand up and ask the leadership in his party why they did away with the Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet, which used to operate, which used to bring together Cabinet ministers, and which used to bring together deputy ministers from a wide range of portfolios, including backbenchers, and talk about issues that have particular relevance to indigenous people—and, frankly, non-indigenous people in the province of Manitoba.

Well, just like the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, which is also required to sit, that committee doesn't sit either, which is another very, very unhappy signpost on the way that this government is rolling along.

So, you know, softening this report deadline—and, again, I—if the member wants to stand up and apologize and say, you know, I'm sorry when I said this was all typos and spelling mistakes. I'm sorry I misled the House. It's actually more than that. *[interjection]*

Well, and there's the member for Radisson again chirping away. He didn't listen when I gave him the opportunity to stand up for the Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet. I don't think he's going to do that, so maybe he can just hold off until he gets the chance to speak. It's in keeping with his government's entire trend of not just neglecting indigenous people, but actually actively seeking out ways to pick fights with indigenous people, to create conflict within Manitoba between indigenous and other Manitobans. And, you know, it's very, very disappointing to see in Bill 24 we have another concrete example of how this is going on.

And why don't we talk a little bit about some of the other choices this government has made which has shown that, other than being on a path to reconciliation, they are on a path which is very, very different.

And what did the new biggest donor to the Liberal Party, Sandy Riley, have to say about this government's commitment to indigenous people? You know, it was Sandy Riley, of course, who was the former chair of Manitoba Hydro.

And he was very concerned about the government's decision to ignore First Nations communities. And that contributed to the unprecedented Hydro board resignation; unprecedented to have an entire board—well, except for the one MLA who's now a

member of the freedom caucus, of course, who I guess was running Hydro for some period of time, you know.

And what did Sandy Riley have to say? *[interjection]* And I hope the Minister for Sustainable Development listens. I know she's chattering from her chair. I hope she listens because her portfolio is actually one of tremendous importance to indigenous people, so I think she should listen to what Mr. Riley had to say.

He said: For over a year, we have attempted to meet with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to resolve a number of critical issues, including matters related to Hydro's efforts to further develop its relationships with indigenous peoples. And that was Mr. Riley's comments. That was just over a year ago. That was reported in the CBC on March 21st, 2018.

And, of course, just three days later—because, of course, the Premier was not happy with a leading Winnipeg business person who has generated wealth and created wealth in his life, who came out and criticized the Premier—the Premier then decided to double down, as our Premier does.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And he called the Manitoba Metis Federation, a quote, special interest group, end quote. And he dismissed a compensation agreement between the MMF and Manitoba Hydro as, and I quote the Premier, persuasion money. And that, of course, was picked up by the CBC on March 24, 2018.

And, despite efforts after that time by indigenous people, by the Metis Federation, by different tribal councils and different organizations to get this Premier to change the way that he speaks, to change the way that he refuses to meet with people he doesn't agree with, to change the way that he treats people in this province, it only got worse and worse.

And David Chartrand, the president of the MMF, summed up this government's approach by saying—and this is quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press on August 20, 2018, and I quote: There is not reconciliation with this government.

There is not reconciliation with this government. That is really, three years into this government's mandate, the most complete summation of what this government is, all around.

So, on this point alone, this is enough reason to send this bill back to the drawing board. Of course, the handy part is that because this government is so

poorly managed and so poorly organized, this bill won't pass.

This bill will not pass. It's not one of the bills this government was able to introduce before the deadline. There's no explanation. There's no reason for that. There's, frankly, no reason why we have three bills, three omnibus bills, that all purport to do the same thing. We'll have lots of time to debate this in future.

But let me say, on this bill, with respect to this provision of Bill 24, it is absolutely critical and crucial that there be a specific deadline for Manitoba's truth and conciliation report in order to ensure transparency and allow for the public to hold the government to account.

And in case my comments on reconciliation have not been clear enough, this government has been worse than just passive. This government has actually taken steps to shut down that path, to make the path more difficult, to put obstacles in the path or put signposts leading people in a very different direction.

You know, the truth and conciliation–reconciliation commission of Canada released its 94 calls to action. It specifically called on provinces to reduce the number of indigenous children in care.

And in what is, frankly, a very sad exercise in spin, in public relations, this government, the Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson), has been running around the province claiming there's been a reduction in the number of children in care when, in actuality, the number of children in care–the number of indigenous children in care–has continued to grow.

The only thing that has changed is the way this government counts children in care. And just to make this more clear, the government changed the way it defined children in care in 2017 by removing a category called non-paid care in its final tally. And by doing that, the minister was able to reduce her number by 638.

*(15:20)

However, the four child-welfare agencies, which work with the Province, continue to provide their numbers and they showed that the number of children in care is not the 10,328 kids in care that the minister talked about, but is actually 11,150 kids in care.

And, you know, that might be the kind of thing that this report should talk about. As a matter of fact, I can't think of anything more important for this report to talk about than the number of indigenous children in care.

Let me be very, very clear on this. Having a set release deadline for the report gives the public a clear timeline for when they can expect and demand changes to be implemented.

This government, through this bill, is trying to change that, trying to slip that under the door to reduce the requirement to report and take away the rights of Manitobans to know what their government is up to, and that's a shame.

Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): This morning I was right after the member for Riverview, and that was a tough act to follow, and now I'm following the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), so it's been a tough day so far.

You know, this is Bill 24, and I guess a bit of an explanation's required as to how we got to this bill so far in this session. I mean, we were happily discussing Estimates only two days ago and the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) asked a very simple question about the date of the closure of the Concordia ER, which has been on the website, I think, for a year saying it was going to be June 6th, but we've heard it's going to be June 22nd, and I think she had to ask eight times, and with all his staff there and he couldn't answer these questions.

So then, the very next day, we get called Bill 24. So here we are, and we're very flexible people on this side of the House, so we started digging out our files on Bill 24 here and we see that it's the minor amendments and corrections act. And, matter of fact, we went through, like, a whole day of debate on Bill 24 until somebody looked around and found that we haven't had a bill briefing yet; I wonder when that's going to happen.

So, Madam Speaker, guess what. Today we had a bill briefing on a bill that we've been debating now all day yesterday, you know.

Now, I can tell you, back in the day, in the Filmon government, I mean, we have ministers there who–some ministers, and I'm not just going to say it's Conservative governments that may be able to find examples of the, you know, 17 glorious years that we were in government. They might be able to

find some minister didn't, you know, perform up to their—the opposition's expectations, but, in general, I can tell you that as the consumer critic for a number of years in the Filmon years, 11 years, I did have occasion to actually go through a lot of ministers, and I can tell you that we had one minister here, Michael Radcliffe, who actually set the—I thought, anyway—the gold standard for how ministers in any government should conduct themselves. He was a lawyer and he represented River Heights for a term or two, and then he ran into the current member of River Heights and that was the end of his political career, and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) is still here after, I don't know how many elections now, but it's a few.

But, anyway, Mr. Radford [*phonetic*], when he was the minister, he would go out of his way to have proper bill briefings. And a matter of fact, if you wanted, as a critic, if you wanted to stand up and leave, he would lock the door and keep you in there. You wouldn't—you couldn't leave on him.

Now, when you asked the man a question, when you asked the minister a question, you didn't get this gibberish response that you get from the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) and, in fact, most of the ministers over there. You know, like, honestly, he would give—and you—all you have to do to, you know, prove that what I'm saying is true, is go into Hansard and pull up any questions that were asked of Minister Radford [*phonetic*] while he—Radcliffe, sorry—while he was the Consumer Affairs minister, and you would see that he would not only ask your question—answer your question, but he would give extra—extra—context, and, you know, we really appreciated that because he—it was an educational response.

And, you know, he never once, that I'm aware, got the government into trouble—not at all. By trying to do it right, by give out—giving out the right information, giving more information than, you know, necessarily was even required at times, he had cemented a reputation of being trusted—a trusted minister on that side of the government. Well, fortunately, you know, he—well, unfortunately for him, he didn't win the next election and he was out as a minister, and no one seems to have learned from his experience.

And so this government is pretty hot and cold, I think, in the ministerial briefings. And for this one—and this one, this is the one now, the government's called, like, two days in a row and they seem to be

promising, they're going to be calling it even more days after this until after we go through, I guess, our whole speaking schedule. They've yet come up with a reason as to why no bill briefing was given until day two, until a number of our speakers—matter of fact, a whole afternoon of debate had occurred on this bill.

The questions and answers were provided on this bill and nobody from the government has stood up and said, you know something? We made a bad mistake here—that we should have had this bill briefing. We should've had it earlier. Maybe we should reset the clock and do the briefing properly and maybe call something else. There's other bills they could be calling for today. There's Estimates, there's Estimates. There's that question out there about when is the Concordia Hospital ER going to close? And you know, I think what's going on here is the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) decided he's going to cut and run and reverse the decision, and he wants—he doesn't want the minister to undercut him, so the minister had to hide and that's why they're not calling Estimates.

So now, this bill, Bill 24, you know, is actually a bill that corrects topographical numbering and other draft errors, and it also makes a minor 'ademments' to various acts. The minister said yesterday that, of course, it's a bill that—typical bill that they bring in pretty much, I guess, every year, or every few years they do one of these. But interestingly enough, it's an omnibus bill. And you know, we've seen—we're seeing too many of these bills. You know, the BITSA bill is another example of an omnibus bill, but we see them increasingly. We see them in Ottawa; the Harper government was big on omnibus bills. You would see a bunch of things buried in, like an 800-page budget bill. Stuff that had absolutely nothing to do with the—you know, what you would expect in a budget bill.

And you know, I'm going to say that, I think probably the NDP has probably, at some point in time, maybe introduced some sort an omnibus bill too—as well. I don't know that I could pick one out just immediately now. But I certainly can remember the omnibus bills that have come up in Ottawa under the Harper government, and we see a lot of that here, too. As a matter of fact, you know something? If we go back to 1989, as last time we had—our party had 12 seats, we did see the conservatives of the day, Filmon government, bring in an omnibus bill at that time, too. And they threw in things like—oh, they were going to privatize Manitoba data service,

I think it was, out of Brandon—buried all this stuff into the bill.

Now, it's an accepted—it's accepted that this should not happen. You should not take bills like Bill 24 and throw a whole bunch of unrelated topics together, sort of making, like, a stew, here, you know? Alphabet soup—throwing stuff all together and creating an omnibus bill, that's just not good government, and something that shouldn't be allowed.

*(15:30)

Now, you know, I see, Madam Speaker, my time is moving along very quickly here and I have many, many pages of conversation yet on this bill. But, you know, Manitobans expect transparency and accountability from their government, and the PCs—they have a history of hiding major changes that will affect the lives and well-being of everyday Manitobans in this—several examples I've given of—in omnibus legislation.

Two years ago, their red tape bill made similar changes that could lead to serious consequences on Manitoba's water safety and the environment. Bill 24 weakened regulation on Manitoba's hog industry, jeopardizing our lakes and streams. And Bill 24 reduced the frequency of assessments of systems that treat and distribute Manitoba's drinking water from once every five years to once every 10 years. And I remember that clause being debated at the time in the caucus.

And a lot of times when you're dealing with omnibus bills, there's actually elements to the bill that you would like to support, but because there's other things that are contrary, you would not want to—we end up not supporting the bill. And to the extent that that's done accidentally, you know, that's—probably, you know, happens. But this is not—there's nothing accidental about BITSA, for example—the BITSA bill this year.

So last fall the government introduced Bill 12, the red tape reduction and government efficiency act, which was another bill to hide major changes. This bill took away renters' rights under the residential tenancy act and reduced oversight requirements on municipal spending, all without allowing enough time to provide proper oversight and review of these changes. Now this session they bring in Bill 14, Bill 16 and the bill we are debating today which, once again, Madam Speaker, is Bill 24—two more

omnibus pieces of legislation that they're trying to hide stuff in.

One of the many proposed changes in Bill 14 is trying to take away holidays from hard-working Manitobans. The government wants to make Canada Day a fixed statutory holiday, and that means that Manitobans won't get July 2nd off when Canada Day falls on a Sunday.

Why does this Premier (Mr. Pallister) continually—continuously make life harder for Manitobans? The government tried to hide major changes in our election financing laws in Bill 16, the BITSA bill. They would have taken away campaign reimbursements, which individuals rely on to finance their campaigns. And this has been around since, like, the 1980s—a long-time practice accepted by all parties—Conservative Party, Liberal Party, NDP—and all of a sudden now things have—are changing because we have a Premier that has some different ideas.

The removal of reimbursements that—would have priced many people out of the electoral system. Luckily, our NDP team was able to intervene on these changes and ensure that our elections remain fair and accessible to all Manitobans. And now Bill 24 again tried to hide the—some sneaky changes. They're amending the reporting requirements under the pathways to reconciliation act, an act proclaimed under our previous NDP government to ensure that Manitoba consistently moves forward on the path to reconciliation. Currently, the act requires a report to be completed within three months of a fiscal year, and Bill 24, Madam Speaker, strikes out this requirement and imposes no timeline on when the report should be completed.

This PC government has a very poor track record on their reconciliation efforts, and this—sadly, this does not appear that the government takes reconciliation efforts seriously. The PC government is trying to slip these changes past Manitobans while they're distracted by the chaos in our health-care system. There wasn't even a bill briefing, as I mentioned to—before the second reading of this bill, which is further evidence of the government's aversion to clarity and transparency.

The NDP are committed to holding the actions of this Premier and this party accountable. The reconciliation needs to be on this province's top priority. Manitobans want to reconcile and build just and equitable relationships with First Nations people. For each fiscal year, the minister responsible for

reconciliation must prepare a report about the measures taken by the government to advance reconciliation, including the measures taken to engage indigenous nations and indigenous peoples in the reconciliation process and the measures taken to implement the strategy.

Prior to the changes proposed in Bill 24, the law—The Path to Reconciliation Act states that within three months after the end of the fiscal year, the minister must table a copy of the report to the Assembly and make it available to the public.

The timing of the report—being released in the summer—is important because typically, there no other reports released at that same time, which means that the Truth and Reconciliation report receives a lot of needed attention.

Now, Bill 24 changes this to state that the minister must table a copy of the report to the Assembly on any of the first 15 days in which the Assembly is sitting after the minister receives it. There's no mandate as to when the report is to be completed.

This will allow the government to evade responsibility and avoid accountability to indigenous peoples. This will allow the government to time the release of the report in ways that are politically advantageous to them.

Perhaps the government is trying to relax the report timeline because last year, in 2018, the government's annual Truth and Reconciliation process report was late, and it was expected and legislated to be released in June, yet by August it had still not been released.

If this legislation is passed and the annual progress report no longer has a hard deadline to release the report, how can we be assured that they will do this in a timely manner? There needs to be external pressures, like a hard, unchanging deadline for the Province to release the report.

Softening the report deadline is indicative of this government's overall approach to reconciliation, and in keeping with this government's trend of neglecting indigenous peoples. Conversations regarding night hunting legislation did not give equal weight to indigenous perspectives and lived experiences.

According to Sandy Riley, the government's decision to ignore First Nations communities contributed to the unprecedented Hydro board resignation, and for over a year, we've attempted to

meet with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to resolve a number of critical issues—this is what Mr. Riley said—including matters related to Hydro's efforts to further develop its relationship with indigenous people. That was the CBC, March 21, 2018.

Now, of course, since then, Mr. Riley has gone on to bigger and better things, and he is now the one—No. 1 contributor to Liberal Party, and so for him, things are just going up—on an upward curve.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's critical that there be a specific deadline for Manitoba's Truth and Reconciliation report in order to ensure transparency and allow for the public to hold the government to account. When it comes to issues like—related to reconciliation, this government has not always been transparent.

For instance, when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its 94 calls to action, it specifically called on the provinces to reduce the number of indigenous children in care. In an exercise of public relations, this government has been claiming that there's been a reduction in the number of children in care from 10,700 to 10,328 in 2018, when in actuality they have just changed the way they count the number of children that are in care.

The government changed the way it defined children in care in 2017 by removing the category called non-paid care from its final tally, thereby reducing the number of kids in care by 638. And that is according to a CBC January 18, 2019 report—very recent report.

While the Province is reporting that there are 10,328 kids in care, Manitoba's four child-welfare agencies say that according to their annual reports, the actual number is closer to 11,150. And that, as well, is attributable to CBC report of January 18, 2019.

Now, having a set release deadline for the report gives the public a clear timeline for when they can expect and demand changes to be implemented. Reconciliation won't be achieved if the entire process is on the government's terms. Establishing respectful and equitable relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people is critical to reconciliation.

This government needs to show their commitment to reconciliation by maintaining and adhering to a set of—a report—a set report deadline.

* (15:40)

Now, Madam Speaker, incorporating indigenous language to our mainstream public affairs is important. Reports and legislation that specifically pertain to indigenous peoples should be accessible to them in their languages. The NDP is happy to see that this legislation would ensure that the annual Truth and Reconciliation report be translated into multiple indigenous languages.

Part of our reconciliation efforts have been—had to resolve around righting past wrongs, including trying to protect and promote indigenous languages that are usually excluded from public discourse. A consequence of colonization is that indigenous languages globally have become endangered. The state of indigenous languages is of such concern that UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, declared 2019 the Year of Indigenous Languages. Therefore, it's important that we do all we can to promote the languages that are still alive in Manitoba, and any efforts to preserve and revitalize indigenous languages are essential.

Now, Madam Speaker, Manitobans want their Premier (Mr. Pallister) to inspire trust and accountability. And the Premier's actions do exactly the opposite. He's consistently tried to take away public notice of major government changes. We talked about that extensively last year. Public access to information is not the same as public notice. Public notice is information alerting citizens of government-related activities, and providing public notice provides the opportunity for the public to influence governing bodies and allows the public to be active—be an active participant in a democratic society.

Now, publishing the information online does not serve to notify the public—that the public information exists. Under section 13 of Bill 24, a government will now be able to choose between online notification or publication in two issues of a newspaper when notifying the public. Removal of notices leaves Manitoba in the dark about changes that could affect their quality of life or their environment. The Manitoba Community Newspapers Association noted in the Winnipeg Free Press that by doing away with requirements to publish government notices in newspapers, the Progressive Conservative government of the Premier will make it even more difficult for Manitobans to monitor the government's activities and business.

The government has previously backed down on similar notification reductions in their Planning

Amendment Act, improved—improving efficiency in planning bill. And they need to do the same in this particular case.

Now, in terms, Madam Speaker, dealing with the Manitoba Gazette—which many of us are familiar with now for a long, long time, many decades—under section 13 of our bill here today, Bill 24, the government now will be able to publish notices in the Manitoba Gazette instead of public newspapers. The Manitoba Gazette is an obscure publication, used mainly by lawyers and government officials. Only 55 Manitobans hold a subscription to the Gazette.

When so few people even know about the publication, it is unreasonable to expect everyday Manitobans will remember to check this source for their news. Like, I could just imagine my constituents looking up the Manitoba Gazette, when almost none of them even know what it is or never heard of it. The Manitoba Gazette—and by the way, back in the 1970s and so on, and that is—Manitoba Gazette was actually more commonly, I think, used than today, and known by people, right? The Manitoba Gazette is only published once a week, meaning Manitobans will have less advanced notice of changes than if they were to read them in the daily newspapers.

The public will no longer receive updates as they happen in their daily paper. Instead, they will have to remember to check an obscure government website to stay informed. Once-a-week updates may be too late when it comes to time-sensitive information. It takes time to research and understand an issue and develop a response. If notifications happened once a week, the government is restricting the amount of time the public has to respond to the changes. By reducing notifications to once a week, the government is ensuring that there'll be less public oversight of their actions, allowing them to make changes that are against the public interest.

Navigating the Manitoba Gazette website is also very confusing, Madam Speaker. When someone accesses the website, they must read through acts and regulations written in term—in legal terminology, so sort of well set up for lawyers. Manitobans should not need a law degree to understand changes that impact their lives.

French-speaking Canadians will also be hindered in their ability to understand these changes; all future Manitoba Gazette publications will not be transcribed into French. The minister has gone on record

as saying it's not mandated; it's not part of the government's regulation that it all be translated into français—Hansard, December 5th, 2017—meaning the government is not going to bother making all notifications accessible to French-speaking Canadians. This violates the spirit of Manitoba's French language services, if not the letter of the law. Bill 24, Madam Speaker, provisions to allow government to exclusively advertise in the Gazette will disadvantage certain populations in Manitoba.

The weekly publication schedule and confusing or inaccessible language is another way for the Conservative government to avoid transparency and hide their actions from the public. And I know they had disagreements about this very point in their own caucus, Madam Speaker.

Now, another issue is reduced Internet access for rural and low-income Manitobans. Removing valuable notices from community newspapers keeps important information updates away from many Manitobans who do not have the Internet. A Totem research study determined that 21 per cent of Manitobans and Saskatchewan residents in non-urban settings have no access to the Internet. According to the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, 95 per cent of Canadians in the highest income bracket have access to the Internet, but only 62 per cent of those in the lowest bracket do.

Internet access is even more limited in northern areas. The Pas and Flin Flon regions have areas with Internet speeds below the national average. Many First Nation communities are without Internet access. And section 13 of this Bill 24 will mean that government could choose to exclusively advertise online, which would impact rural and remove Manitobans the most—the ones who do not have access to Internet—to receive these notices.

Now, in terms of lost advertising revenue for local businesses, section 13 of this bill: changes will affect the budgets and revenues of local newspapers. And, once again, there's—members opposite are divided on this whole issue. Advertising revenue often makes up a significant portion of a local newspaper budget. This government's decision to cut those advertising streams will only serve to hurt the families and communities that rely on them. These are small communities, Madam Speaker.

At a time when news media is under pressure because of the Internet and social media, the government is trying to destroy their financial stability—makes sense from a Premier (Mr. Pallister)

who's threatened to sue the Free Press. Well, once again, I don't know that he's doing that any more because he paid his Costa Rican taxes. So I guess everybody's happy. Everybody's happy now. He's happy; Free Press is happy. They can let their lawyers relax and rest for a while.

And so, you know, Madam Speaker, you can see that there's a lot—the minister stood up on this bill and he warbled away that, well, he talked about the bill can—corrects topographical and numbering and other draft errors and makes minor amendments. And that's it, you know. Go ahead; let's get this passed and move on. That's his approach. But, you know, nowhere was he standing there to, you know, explain the spreadsheet. You know, like, every bill has got a spreadsheet here. Well, he didn't do that. I have the spreadsheet here right now.

But he didn't say, well, you know, I'm calling this bill for second reading. None of you know anything about it because we haven't done any bill briefing on it. We haven't done that. You don't have a spreadsheet. You probably don't even have the bill. So, all of a sudden, we're going to discuss this bill and—with no preparation work. And the first couple of speakers get up and make their speeches and take their chances with relevancy issues and stuff like that when, in fact, there's all kinds of really good stuff in the bill itself dealing with all the different acts that the bill purports to make changes to.

* (15:50)

And that's what the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) dealt with yesterday when he actually started reading all of the—all about those bills.

The reality is, is second reading debate, traditionally, is supposed to be about the overall intent of the bill and is actually not supposed to be about quoting sections of a bill because that's, supposedly, dealing with, like, too much detail and too fine points. Second reading is supposed to be about just a general argument about why. Philosophically, that bill is—has important content that the Legislative Assembly should deal with, debate, and ultimately amend and pass some amended version. But the clause-by-clause stuff is supposed to be dealt with when we get to the committee stage and not—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): As always, the privilege of standing up and being able to put in a few words about a bill that's proposed in this

Chamber is a privilege that has to be appreciated a little bit more.

It is in the context of the atmosphere that we have since 2016—that's 1,113 days ago, when the Progressive Conservative Party took over government, took over power, and there is a certain sense that when they were starting out, they were still trying to find their way around it, meaning how to govern.

And government is a very complex concept of making society work, and part of that is that my comment would be, let's give them a chance.

During the first year the Progressive Conservative government that took over was still stumbling around. They promised at first, during the campaign season, of course, that they will reduce the PST right away. And then it became, oh, let's do it first term.

And now they changed their mind because somebody decided that he might call an early election, and then he says, well, July 1st; we'll do it July 1st, no matter what.

And then he changes his mind. He says July 1st—oh, it won't be a law; therefore, we need the BITSA, which is Bill 16, and there was a compromise. The compromise was that the democratic traditions of the Province of Manitoba is given a chance to flourish.

There was that 50 per cent—they call it vote tax—I say it's an investment in democracy. When they call it something else, as in to insult the minority party, which is the Liberal Party and the Green Party and the NDP, which happens to have only 12 members now, they forgot that before, for 17 years, they also were opposition.

And the way that I see this in relation to the current bill—which I think, Madam Speaker, you'll be amazed at how the connection might be—is that transparency was always an ideal that we need adhere to. Make it a goal that the government will be transparent, that it will be something reliably seen and heard.

And the impeccable nature of what is transparent cannot be compromised. It cannot be colourized. It has to be what it is; meaning: what is the truth. This bill—it's called minor amendments and corrections act, but it changes. It changes so many that I suspect the government was trying to slide it in, in some form or fashion, in much the same way that the BITSA bill was used as a subterfuge and as a cover

to do away—let me say that again: the BITSA bill was used as a cover, subterfuge; to hide the changes to the elections financing scheme that we have to promote democracy, to engage more people into the political process.

And at least we became aware of it and we fought hard—meaning, this side of the House—we fought hard to make it more transparent. As in, why attack the political system that we have, that's working, and make it seem like somebody is getting one up over the other? The transparency in those types of bills that are produced by the printing division of this government is also apparent here; the lack of it, the lack of transparency.

In this bill, Bill 24, it was not only to correct, but also to hide—to hide the fact that reconciliation was never a top priority for this Progressive Conservative gov. It was never No. 1 in their radar. In fact, I would say, that it might be even under the radar as far as they are concerned. They'd rather put the changes that are here in this bill and let it slide.

What they're trying to do is change the reporting requirements. Governments always use reporting requirements as part of a bigger system wherein governments have to tell the public how government is approaching, or how government—how the attitude of the government is changing. Meaning: there was that rule that there has to be a reporting of how the action of the government is conforming in affirming those Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and—

* (16:00)

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

I just want to give a little bit of information to people that might be having conversations next to an open mic. Conversations are—no, conversations—these mics are so sensitive that they pick up conversations that are going around the member.

So I just want to let people know that—not sure what the conversations might be, but for everybody—that when your mic is on, these mics are very powerful, and they do pick up surrounding comments that are being made next door. So just, you know, in case there's some very private things that are being said, I just want people to know that.

Mr. Marcelino: And I understand that there are some microphones that are not needed, specially

when voices from the Minister for Infrastructure is streaming in from the other side. And I like it when somebody's trying to put in their words interspersed with what I'm saying.

Now, when the government tries to relax the timelines of reporting, it shows a little bit of incompetence; a little bit of a misguided attempt to hide and create an illusion of transparency. As I said, the requirement of transparency is impeccable. It has to be true.

Now, we have to have leadership that leads and sets a tone. When the bill, presented as it is, works itself into the system and tries to weaken those reporting requirements, it says more about the attitude of the current leadership about how they govern.

And, when I say that they are trying to weaken, they're trying to weaken even the systems of inspections that we have regarding workplace safety. They also have started to weaken those that are connected to the tabling of reports.

And, when the law said that it has to be within a certain period of time that a report has to be submitted, they said, well, it doesn't have to be complied with. And it is an amazing way of saying that the reporting requirements of government is not really strict. There's no compulsion on the part of government to be compliant with the rules.

My job as a member of this Assembly is compromised in a little way when those reporting requirements are not met. When a minister does not want to even comply with those rules, then all of the members' privileges are also violated, meaning—not in a very serious way—but it really diminishes my ability, and yours, and everybody else's, to properly do our job.

And it is one of those where the reports that were required, even in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, when we do not comply with that, it seems like they don't take the report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission really seriously. Why? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report was meant to heal our society. And this particular bill, which deals with just the reporting requirements, has slowly but surely eroded that part of what we ought to do regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report.

It has, simply, tried to minimize the importance and the urgency of that report. It was—that report is

now how old? Three years old? During the time of the reconciliation—the truth and reconciliation in South Africa, right after Nelson Mandela was released from prison, it was part of how we have been dealing with this, this law as proposed—or this bill, as proposed, tries to lessen the importance and the timeliness of what we are supposed to do.

And, from my point of view, as a member of this Assembly, that's trying to cure the ills that have haunted our people in our society for so long, this—my personal take is: I want to be part of that history wherein we have done everything we can in order to heal the wounds in our society. I want to be part, before my Creator beckons and calls me in, I want to be part of that. I want to be part of the raising of the floors so that everybody will have a place at the table.

It is important for me, personally, to see that during my lifetime and while I'm a member of this Legislative Assembly. But, it seems like, even with this innocuous bill that was presented, it seems like this government couldn't care less, and it's appalling and it's shameful. It's embarrassing to be a member of this Assembly that we will allow that to happen—as in, the diminution of the importance and urgency of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. It is as if I become complicit with this government if I don't speak out against it, if I don't say anything against it.

It is only in one of this, Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act of 2019. It is not very pleasant for me to attack the way that the government, through the House leader—meaning, this is a very simple bill. But then I just want to make that of record that our attitude, as an Assembly, should be to promote and enjoy that we are at peace in our society and that we are not clamouring for the death of anyone—that we are trying to be as civil and decent about it, and that we are establishing a respectful and equitable relationship between the indigenous and the non-indigenous peoples in our society.

* (16:10)

And for me, personally, it is incumbent upon the government and everybody else in this Assembly to promote the exact words that are being asked of us, meaning we should attempt to reconcile; let the truth out as to what our society has done to the indigenous First Nations and let us heal our wounds, or else—I cannot say what I have in mind, but—or else our society is blank.

And, Madam Speaker, I understand that there have been so many things that need to be spoken about. And the way that this government has done with this minor corrections is that there is a section wherein there was that the government will now be able to publish notices in the Manitoba Gazette instead of in public newspapers.

I will ask those members who are here now, and thank God we all have the 56 members here: Who has read the Manitoba Gazette? Who has read the Manitoba Gazette? How does it look? Nobody could answer because nobody reads it. But then this government is trying to pretend and promote the illusion that people read the Manitoba Gazette and it is sufficient, that if anything is published in the Manitoba Gazette then it is good enough.

No, it's not. What is good is that if each and every one of our Manitobans here in Winnipeg or outside Winnipeg to know what's happening in our province. We ought to know what the Infrastructure Minister is trying to do. We need to know that and we need to know that he's got projects all over the place, right? And I am very thankful that he is also fixing up highways and byways and roads in Tyndall Park, but I don't know which one. I don't know which road and byways and highways in Tyndall Park are being fixed. There's none, and Manitoba Gazette would show that. Oh, there's nothing that's being done for Tyndall Park.

And I always am very aware that when the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) stands up in this House and says that he's doing so many things I want to be very thankful for him doing his job, but then sometimes I have to express some doubts, and this law, this bill will say that anything that's the weekly publication schedule and confusing or inaccessible language is another way for the Conservative government to avoid transparency and hide their actions from the public.

Why are they hiding their actions from the public? Because most of them are hurtful. Most of them will hurt the common people. Most of them will damage, irreparably, the morale and the atmosphere of cordiality in our society.

And, in some areas, I just read about two or three days ago that Bell MTS even reduced services in some areas wherein the fire department was worried—it was worried about being able to communicate because Bell MTS changed the system.

And the illusion is that, well, we are covering the entire province with Manitoba Gazette. But the emergencies that happen in some areas of the province cannot be communicated even among those who are first responders in those localities, cannot be—they cannot use their phones.

Why? Because technology has its own gaps. Technology has its own problems. Technology has its own issues. And this government pretends that technology will do everything, and it does not. There's no substitute for the basic communication skills that have happened from way back, and there's no substitute for that person-to-person reporting system that we had.

But we are now stuck. When I say stuck, as in, we are glued to another—maybe—another year of Conservative cuts and austerity. And it does not bode well for our province. It does not help that it might take at least a decade of hardship before we are able to recover from all the damage that the Conservative government, under this Premier (Mr. Pallister).

We are suffering from high crime rates. Just recently, I spoke about the inordinate amount of killings that we have within the city, and one outside. And I am appalled that there's nothing from the Justice Department, by way of programming, that might alleviate that.

And this bill is, although as innocuous as it might seem to be, is a betrayal of the attitude of this government in how they govern. They want to hide things.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It's an honour to stand here to put a few words to this bill as the MLA for The Pas.

First of all, I'll be—start by saying that Manitobans expect transparency and accountability from their government, but the PCs have a history of hiding major changes that will affect the lives and well-being of everyday 'manitome'—of Manitobans within this legislation.

Two years ago, the red tape bill made significant changes that could lead to serious consequences on Manitoba's water safety environment. Bill 24 weakened regulation on Manitoba's hog industry, jeopardizing our lakes and streams, and bill 24 reduced the frequency of assessments of systems that treat and distribute Manitoba's drinking water from once every five years to once every 10 years.

Last fall, they introduced bill 12, the red tape reduction and government efficiency act, another bill to—that hid major changes. This bill took away renters' rights under The Residential Tenancies Act, and reduced oversight requirements on municipal spending, all without enough time to provide proper oversight and review of these changes.

* (16:20)

Now, this session, they have bought in Bill 14, Bill 16 and the bill we are debating today, Bill 24—two more omnibus pieces of legislation that are trying to hide stuff in.

One of the main—one of the many proposed changes of Bill 14 is trying to take away holidays from hard-working Manitobans. This is done by—this government wants to make Canada Day a fixed statutory holiday. That means Manitobans won't get July 2nd off when 'canadada' day falls on a Sunday.

The bill tried to hide major changes in our election financing laws in Bill 16, BITSA. They would've taken away campaign reimbursements, which individuals rely on to finance their campaigns. The removal of reimbursements would have priced many people out of the electoral system. Luckily, our NDP team was able to intervene on these changes and ensure that our elections remain fair and accessible to all Manitobans.

And now Bill 24 tried to get—tried again to hide some pretty sneaky changes. They're amending the reporting requirement under the pathways to reconciliation act, an act proclaimed under our previous NDP government, to ensure that Manitoba consistently moves forward on their path to reconciliation. I believe that happened on my first year as MLA, and I had the honour to witness that act be passed.

Currently, the act requires a report to be completed within three months of a fiscal year. However, Bill 24 strikes out this requirement and imposes no timeline on when this report should be completed—very important report should be completed. This PC government has a very poor track record on their reconciliation efforts, as—while turning bike trips into campaign fundraisers and delaying previous reports—has to be said. Sadly, this does not appear to be a government that takes reconciliation efforts easily.

In regards to path to reconciliation as a province and as a government: reconciliation needs to be on a province's top priorities. Manitobans want to

reconcile and build just and equitable relationships with First Nations people. For each fiscal year, the minister responsible for reconciliation must prepare a report about the measures taken by the government to advance reconciliation, including the measures taken to engage indigenous nations and indigenous peoples in the reconciliation process, and the measures taken to implement the strategies.

As a gift, I would like to read you a truth and reconciliation—my little book, to the calls of reconciliation. It's really important that we have this on record to help guide this current government.

Now, I quote, a reconciliation framework is one of which Canada's political and legal systems and educational and religious institutions, corporate sector and civil society function in ways that are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which Canada has endorsed.

The commission believes that the following guiding principles of truth and reconciliation will assist Canadians moving forward.

Let me put on record: (1) the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.

Once again, on record; (2) First Nations, Inuit and Metis people, as the original peoples of this country, and as self-determining peoples, have treaty, constitutional and human rights that must be recognized and respected.

(3) Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth-sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress—readdress past harms.

(4) Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the on-going legacies of 'colonialism' that have led destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, administration of justice and economic opportunities and prosperity.

(5) Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

All Canadians, as treaties people—as treaty people, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.

(7) The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal elders and traditional knowledge keepers of the ethics, concepts and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.

(8) Supporting Aboriginal peoples cultural 'revitaliation' and 'intervading' indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.

(9) Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.

(10) Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, treaties and Aboriginal rights as well as the historical and the contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.

Together, Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation. We must learn how to practice reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families and our communities, governments, places of worship, schools and workplaces. To do so, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. For many survivors and their families, including mine, this commitment is foremost about healing themselves, their communities and their nations in ways that revitalize individuals as well as indigenous cultures, languages, spirituality, laws, governance systems.

And for governments, building a respectful relationship involves dismantling a centuries-old political and bureaucratic culture in which, all too often, policies and programs are still based on failed notions of assimilation.

For churches, demonstrating long-term commitment requires atoning for actions within the residential schools, respecting indigenous spirituality and supporting indigenous peoples struggle for justice and equity.

Schools must teach history in ways that foster mutual respect, empathy and engagement. All Canadian children and youth deserve to know Canada's honest history, including what happened in the residential schools, and to appreciate the rich history and knowledge of indigenous nation which continues to make such a strong contribution to

Canada, including our very name and collective identity as a country.

For Canadians from all walks of life, reconciliation offers a new way of living together.

Again, this is coming from a gift here that I hide—not hide, I store in my desk here in order to share the importance of the path to reconciliation with everyone here in the House.

Prior to the changes proposed in Bill 24, the law, The Path to Reconciliation Act, stated that within three months after the end of the fiscal year, the minister must table a copy of the report in the Assembly and make it available to the public. The timing of the report being released in the summer is important because typically there are no other reports released at the time, which means that the truth and reconciliation report receives a lot of much-needed attention. Bill 24 changes this to the state—changes this to state that the minister must table a copy of the report in the Assembly of any of the first 15 days on which the Assembly is sitting after the minister receives it. There's no mandate as to when this report has to be completed. This will allow for the government to evade responsibility and avoid accountability to indigenous peoples. This will allow the government to time the release of report in ways that are politically advantageous to them.

* (16:30)

Perhaps the government is trying to relax the report timeline because, last year, in 2018, the Province's annual truth and reconciliation progress report was late. It was expected and legislated to be released in June, yet by August, it still had not been released.

Ry Moran, director of the Winnipeg-based National Centre of—for Truth and Reconciliation, said at the time that, quote: Leadership has to lead in this regard and has—it has to set a tone. This is not easy work, and the fact that there are delays on this may suggest it's not being taken as seriously as it could be, end quote. This is from the Winnipeg Free Press article, dated August 20th, 2018.

Madam Speaker, if this legislation is passed and the annual progress report no longer has a hard deadline to release the report, how can we be assured that they will do so in a timely manner? There needs to be external pressures like hard, unchanging deadlines for the Province to release the report.

Now, while we're waiting for this report, meanwhile, in the province of Manitoba, particularly in my community of Opaskwayak Cree Nation in The Pas, on March 7 and 8th, I was lucky enough to attend the second day when the University College of the North held a very important event called the TRC Education and Reconciliation: Implementing the Calls to Action from Article 6 to 24.

The opening statement—the opening message should be—is as read: The TRC national events opened Canada's eyes to the truth of 150 years of Aboriginal education. It was a time of truth telling and learning the resilience of the children who were forced into those residential schools, including my mom, grandma and my great grandmother.

Education is a way of learning and appreciating Indian residential school history, especially when it has affected all of society. When our hearts are open, we learn to listen, to hear and to appreciate one another. In the next few days, we hope that we will learn from one another and begin to think about what reconciliation means to all of us. So with that, we have a lot of great keynote speakers.

Along with them—I believe I shared this, but, hey, I'll share it again—Phil Fontaine was one of our keynote speakers. He closed the conference with pretty powerful messages about the term reconciliation and what it means to us. Phil Fontaine, I like to say, is—I consider him an uncle of mine, very dear friend of my late father Oscar Lathlin, always a pleasure to see him.

I guess—I had the honour to put forward a private member's resolution in 2017 to recognize indigenous peoples, to be found as one of the founding nations of our country, which is pretty ironic, right? You know, indigenous, founding, and we're not included in that category.

So after the PMR was read, questions and debate, it was really disheartening that the PMR wasn't accepted, wasn't supported by this side of the House. As an indigenous woman, it was especially disheartening because being a member in this House and being a public servant and at—as an indigenous woman, I felt we were on our way, well on our way to reconciliation. So when I got up to ask Phil Fontaine a question during his keynote speech, I asked him: How do you penetrate a wall like that with something as important to you as an indigenous person, as a Canadian and Manitoban, respecting Aboriginal rights, how do you penetrate that and engage? And I guess the best advice, one of the best

pieces of advice, was is to just—to keep on trying, keep on trying, send your message out there and eventually some will come forward and listen and join you with this very important movement.

So I will continue to penetrate this wall by continuing to share my knowledge and lived experience that the truth and reconciliation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Lathlin: —and to continue, Madam Speaker, if this legislation—as I continue—softening the report deadline is 'indictive' of this government's overall approach to reconciliation and in keeping with this government's trend of neglecting indigenous peoples. This has to be said again. The conversations regarding night-hunting legislation did not give equal weight to indigenous perspectives and lived experiences. According to Sandy Riley, the government's decision to ignore First Nations communities contributed to the unprecedented Hydro board 'reginsation'.

For over a year, we have attempted to meet with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to resolve a number of critical issues, including matters related to Hydro's efforts to further develop its relationships with indigenous peoples—these relationships I see and lived first-hand in my constituency with our communities and that have been impacted by the impacts of these Hydro developments, right in the backyards of Norway House, Cross Lake, Moose Lake and even OCN.

During the time—again, Madam Speaker, this has to be said, this is something I cannot forget as being part of our government here—was the Premier's comments about indigenous men and regards to the night hunting.

I recall getting interviewed in my apartment and I had my two daughters. They were a few years younger and they were sitting beside me and here I was addressing comments that were made by the Premier of Manitoba about these comments, and it just saddened me and I felt truly sorry for my girls, because here I am trying to raise them to be strong, to have pride as to who they are as indigenous peoples, because I grew up in a world of racism and discrimination, and I am trying to change that cycle and embrace my daughters to be strong, independent, indigenous women.

So by having to explain why were those comments disturbing to me, to me it took us a few huge step backwards from our path working towards

reconciliation, and I had to apologize to my daughters and to explain what mom was talking about and who we are as indigenous people.

Now, it is crucial that there be a specific deadline for Manitoba's Truth and Reconciliation report in order to ensure transparency and allow for the public to hold the government to account. When it comes to issues relating to reconciliation, this government has not always been transparent.

For instance, when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its 24 calls to action, it specifically called on provinces to reduce the number of indigenous children in care. Once again, Madam Speaker, allow me to read and put forward the calls to action addressing the legacy in regards to child welfare.

Number 1—and one more thing—it is not surprising, it's not a coincidence that the first five of the 94 calls to action is in regards to child welfare: a true, direct impact from the residential school system.

(1) We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of children in care by 'monitoring' and assessing neglect investigations, providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments regardless of where they reside; ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools; ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing; require that all child-welfare decision-makers consider the impact of residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

*(16:40)

(2) We call upon the federal government in collaboration with the provinces and territories to prepare and publish annual reports on the number of Aboriginal children who are in care compared with non-Aboriginal children, as well as the reasons for apprehension. The total spending on preventative and child—and care services by child-welfare agencies and the effectiveness of various interventions.

(3) We call upon all levels of government to fully implement Jordan's Principle.

(4) We call upon the federal government to enact child—Aboriginal child welfare legislation that establishes national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases that includes principles that: (1) affirm the right of Aboriginal governments to establish and maintain their own child welfare agencies; (2) require all child-welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account in their decision making, establish and, as an important priority, a requirement that placements of Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate.

Finally (5) We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for all families.

In an exercise in public relations, this government has been claiming that there has been a reduction in the number of children in care—10,700 to 10,328 in 2018, when, in actuality, they just have changed the way that the—the way they count the number of children that are in care. While the Province is reporting that there are 10,328 kids in care, Manitoba's four welfare agencies say that, according to their annual reports, the number is actually closer to 11,150.

Having set—having a set release date for the report gives the public a clear timeline for which they can expect and demand changes to be implemented.

Reconciliation can be achieved if the entire process is on this government's terms. Establishing respectful and equitable relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people is critical to reconciliation.

This government needs to show their commitment to reconciliation by maintaining and adhering to a set report deadline.

I wanted to talk about languages. Incorporating indigenous language into mainstream public affairs is extremely important. Reports and legislation that specifically pertain to indigenous people should be accessible to them and their languages. The NDP is happy to see that this legislation would ensure that the annual Truth and Reconciliation report be translated into our languages of Cree, Dakota, Dene, Inuit, Michif, Ojibwe, and Ojibwe-Cree, with each

translation needing to be made available to the public.

Part of our reconciliation efforts have to revolve around righting past wrongs, including trying to protect and promote indigenous languages. They are usually excluded from public disclosure. A consequence of colonization is that many indigenous languages globally have become endangered, specifically be a product of a—I'd like to label myself as—well, not label, but borne as a intergenerational effect of residential schools. I cannot speak my language. In fact, three weeks ago we buried my grandpa, David Lathlin, and every time I seen him, he kept on saying: Nósisim, nósisim—which means granddaughter. Have you learnt Cree yet? Are you learning Cree yet? Mwác, mwác—which means no in Cree.

So that is why I started—starting my questions to you, Madam Speaker, by saying to you thank you in Cree, and with that my daughters and I have talked about it and it is our goal to start learning Cree. In fact, my niece, who is only eight years old, learned how to sing Jingle Bells in Cree. She sang it to us in the truck after we picked her up from daycare and she sang it to us so beautifully and so—the accent was so spot-on, her older sister started crying. She started crying because she said, Mom, she's the first one out of us to speak Cree, and we're a Cree family. So it is our goal to start learning our language. Thank you.

And again, once again—I'm not going to read here because I'm running out of time, Madam Speaker, here, but again, there's more sections here for the Truth and Reconciliation to protect and promote our language. In fact, OCN, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, we started a universal declaration of our Cree language, where it is promoted that we speak to each other in Cree, whether we understand it or at all.

So I just wanted to say that part of our reconciliation efforts have to revolve around righting past wrongs. Therefore, it is important that we all do so, that we all do what we can to promote languages that are still alive in Manitoba. Any efforts to preserve and revitalize indigenous languages are 'insstantial'.

And with that, Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House, the NDP, are committed to holding the actions of this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and government accountable.

With that, kinanâskomitin. Ekosi, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): My friend from Elmwood said, when he stood up this—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —this afternoon, that—sorry—that following my friend from Minto was a very hard act to follow, and now I find myself following my sister from the Pas, and I find that a very hard act to follow. She does a fantastic job. She represents a community that desperately needs our commitment and our attention. I know she does great things now, but I know that she's going to continue to do great things well into the future.

I suppose it's also true, Madam Speaker, that I'll be the last one to speak today before we all head off to constituency week, since I have a lot to talk about when it comes to Bill 24. But of course, I want to make sure that I wish you and our fantastic clerks, our wonderful pages, our friends in translation and Hansard and the Sergeant-at-Arms staff, wish them all a very happy week without us.

I think it was probably a pretty good thing for us to have a week, maybe, apart, maybe to cool things down a little bit. It's a place of great passion, as you know, and we should never forget that when we're in here, we're—and arguing among ourselves, we're doing so, nevertheless, in a non-violent way, and that we work each and every day to try to be sure that we're fighting for the people who elected us.

And—but passions do sometimes run over, and so I would say that maybe a week to get away from one another's not necessarily a bad thing. So I would encourage all members to go out and do good things next week during the break week. And in addition to that, I would hope that everyone, while doing those good things, does them as safely as possible.

Today, we've—and yesterday, we've been debating Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, and it's been a strange couple of days, in terms of the afternoon debates, not only this week, but I have to say, Madam Speaker, throughout our return to session.

In the first week of March, I'll say one thing for the government: you can never predict on what particular day you're going to be doing what. And I have to say to my friends across the way that, really, you've bamboozled me. I can't figure them out. I

don't understand the tactics at work, and I don't understand the overall strategy.

And I think much of that, frankly, if you'll forgive me for saying, a lot of that—the kind of sense of uncertainty about what's going on from day to day here comes as a result of both of the—as a result of a government with almost no agenda—or only one agenda, which is austerity, and then after that nothing else.

*(16:50)

And, when there's nothing else, that's why the—when on an April afternoon we're talking about the minor amendments and corrections act. And it mystifies me why we're not talking about the government's mental health and addictions strategy. Why aren't we spending time talking about that? Why aren't we spending time talking about the government's strategy for addressing both the mitigation and adaptation to climate change? We're not doing that. Why aren't we talking about the government's housing strategy? Why aren't we talking about their child-care strategy? Why aren't we talking about—more about whatever the Minister of Education has up his sleeve for our education system?

There are so many—I say this a lot—there are such colossal needs in all of our communities all across this province. I'm dumbfounded and mystified why we're not talking about government legislation designed to address those colossal needs instead of spending time on Bill 24, the minor amendments and corrections act.

And I want to say, there's lots that's egregious about Bill 24. And you've heard my colleagues talk about it, and I intend to do the same as we go forward during my time to take the floor of the Legislature. But I go back to saying we should be really engaged in much more productive debate around really meaningful issues that are of consequence to the very people that elected us. And, instead, so out of ideas, maybe out of a lack of interest, here we are today talking about the minor amendments and corrections act.

And maybe this is simply a reflection, and the responsibility for all of this lies—I said maybe; actually, I think it does—lies with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself who has now, since the beginning of January, has threatened almost weekly, if not daily, to call a snap election in contravention—in violation of Manitoba's election

law, which has a fixed election date—scheduled, I believe, for October 6th, 2020. And, instead, what we hear is the Premier of Manitoba saying he's going to—in conflict with Manitoba's election law—going to call a snap election some time in the next few weeks. If you listen to my friend from Elmwood, it should happen pretty much any day now. And I respect his judgment and his insight; he's been remarkably correct on all of these issues lately.

And so I lay responsibility for us discussing Bill 24, the minor amendments and corrections act, at the feet of the Premier because, in the absence of having had any other legislative agenda of consequence, we're forced over two days to deal with this particular bill. And there's no real substantive legislative agenda to follow. And that's a disservice to the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker. That's not why we were elected here. I'm all for having a passionate debate about things we disagree on, but let's hope that we're disagreeing on things that are actually substantive and meaningful when we're talking about the great issues of the day, and sit—not simply reducing ourselves to talking to things that, while consequential, hardly address the colossal needs in our community.

Now, I think part of the difficulty we've been having, too, is that, as we know, a proper bill briefing was not provided for this bill prior to its introduction, or, I think, prior to debate beginning yesterday. And my friend from Concordia heroically, I thought, yesterday in a magnificent speech, trying to deal with the substance of Bill 24. But he was having to do so in the absence of a proper briefing. And that's, as my friend from Elmwood pointed out—and you'd think he almost—that he's listening to me—that, you know, that bill briefings are an essential part of the democratic process here.

And I certainly can recall—and it was a lot of fun for me, I hope it was for him, to invite my friend from Lac du Bonnet into the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning's office where we would go through very thorough and meaningful bill briefings. I know my colleague, as minister—for Minto, as minister of Justice and the Attorney General, also minister for MPI, certainly brought his critic—probably the member for Steinbach, more often than not, but not always, maybe—brought him in for very significant and consequential and meaningful bill briefings.

My friend from Lac du Bonnet asked very incisive and good questions when we were in on bill

briefings. We listened to him, tried to make sure that he had a proper understanding of the contents of the bills that we were introducing. And I think he'll even remember that I often withdrew from those conversations so that he could have a direct conversation with public servants and experts in our department to ensure that he didn't leave without understanding every element of the bill; why apostrophes were where they were; why semi-colons were they were; why periods were where they were. I mean, it was very comprehensive. And I see him looking at me now and nodding in appreciation of the great fun that we had together.

And so that's a sign of how you do this kind of thing. And so, Madam Speaker, my point is that it's—it's not—well, it is, it is akin to amateur hour when bill briefings don't get done properly here, before a bill is introduced and certainly before debate on the bill happens.

And so, you know, we were pleased to understand that that briefing did take place earlier today. That's not even the 11th hour, that's, like, at the 26th or 27th hour. But, nevertheless, it did happen. And I think we came away from that bill briefing much more educated about many of the elements of Bill 24 that should cause Manitobans very, very grave concern.

Of course, Bill 24, like Bill 14 and like Bill 16, is one of those classic omnibus bills that is straight out of the Harper playbook. It's not that it hasn't been used historically—that's true. But it was never utilized as a tactic, as a political tactic, until Mr. Harper and his government came along. And the idea was to deflect and distract. You make it really a thick, thick document and then you strategically place poisoned pills throughout it and it takes a keen eye and a key insight, as well as a proper bill briefing, to get to the heart of the matter.

And so, Madam Speaker, you'll know that already, and having listened to the great speeches

given yesterday and today by my colleagues, that there are a number in Bill 24, as well as was in Bill 14, and Bill 16, which we want to spend time on. We want to make sure that Manitobans understand where we're coming from on these sorts of things. And I think, really, it's not a reflection of a government that's committed to accountability and transparency when they go and utilize straight out of the Harper playbook, this utilization of omnibus bills.

And minor amendments and corrections act should be pretty inconsequential. It's disturbing that there are consequential elements to it. And so Manitobans not only need to be concerned about the way in which the government operates in this fashion, without proper accountability, without proper transparency, without coming clean—that's one part that they should be concerned about.

But the second and most—more important part may well be the things that they are hiding within these omnibus bills that actually take away things that are actually meaningful. One of the weirder things that's been pointed out and that our crack team of researchers unveiled in Bill 14, is the idea to take away holidays from hard-working Manitobans. This government wants to make Canada Day a fixed statutory holiday, meaning that Manitobans won't get July 2nd off. And that—you, when it falls on a weekend, on a Sunday. That strikes me—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 17 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, May 6th.

If I could just say happy constituency week to everybody, and I'm sure everybody will be spending a lot of time catching up with constituents over the next week.

So, be safe.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 25, 2019

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