

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Crown Services—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Operation Red Nose

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): I'm honoured to present a ministerial statement today on behalf of the government of Manitoba congratulating the launch of another rosy season of Operation Red Nose.

This program has become a holiday tradition over the past 23 years and it is a program that offers a safe and efficient way to get home after consuming too much holiday cheer. Simply put, this is a program that prevents collisions and saves lives by keeping impaired drivers off the street, keeping our roads and highways safe for everyone. With recreational cannabis now legal, Operation Red Nose has never been more essential to keeping our roadways safe.

This is all made possible because of Manitobans who care about their communities. Last year, approximately 2,500 passionate volunteers donated their time to make sure others got home safely.

Manitoba Public Insurance as well as other important program sponsors, including Bell MTS, City Press, Great-West Life, Intact Insurance and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, assist Operation Red Nose from a financial perspective.

No different than in politics, money and volunteers are the lifeblood to sustaining these types of programs. And, of course, my special thanks to Safety Services Manitoba for the guidance and the assistance they provide to volunteer groups in overseeing this entire program every year.

Finally, I can't fail to mention our partners in law enforcement. Thank you for your support of this program and for your dedication every day for keeping Manitobans safe.

While we have all made great strides in awareness around impaired driving over time, Madam Speaker, sadly, it remains a major factor in many motor vehicle collisions and fatalities every year. Related to this, I would like to state some concerning facts for the record to prove why programs like Operation Red Nose are so vital.

Over the last five years, 115 Manitobans have been killed and another 483 injured in impaired driving collisions on our public roadways. In 2017 specifically, nearly one third of all motor for-vehicle fatalities on public roadways involved impaired driving as a contributing factor.

This translates to 23 lives lost and another 81 Manitobans injured, 27 of whom were seriously injured, Madam Speaker. And based on preliminary data provided by MPI, so far in 2018, we are tracking 69 deaths on public roadways, 40 per cent of which involved impaired driving as a contributing factor.

Despite extensive efforts by MPI and others to educate Manitobans about the risks and consequences of impaired driving, and despite loss-law enforcement efforts to identified impaired drivers and take them off our roadways, impaired driving remains a major contribution factor in collision fatalities and serious injuries, second only to distracted driving. And with the federal government's decision to legalize recreational cannabis last month, there is real potential for impaired-related collisions and fatality counts to rise.

I cannot stress this enough. Many collisions and fatalities are entirely preventable.

I urge all Manitobans to take personal responsibility for their actions this coming holiday season and every day of the year. If you're too impaired to drive, whether by alcohol or drugs, then make the right decision and—the safe and legal decision—not to get behind the wheel. It is a decision that may save your life and others, Madam Speaker.

In closing, I want to offer my sincere appreciation again to Safety Services Manitoba, MPI and all other provincial sponsors and to everyone who volunteers for Operation Red Nose. The importance of your commitment to keeping our community and roadways safe in Manitoba cannot be overstated.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Since 1984, Operation Red Nose has been providing safe rides home for Canadians too impaired to drive during the holiday season.

Operation Red Nose was first established in Quebec City by Jean-Marie De Koninck, who saw a need to address the high rate of fatal car collisions caused by motorists who had been drinking. The first operation Red Nose ran from December 13 to 23, 1984, in Quebec City and has now grown to more than 100 communities across Canada.

Operation Red Nose has been operating in Manitoba since 1995. Eleven communities in the province now participate.

Last year, 4,500 Manitobans made the choice to call Operation Red Nose instead of driving while impaired.

There is no doubt that injuries and deaths have been prevented thanks to the thousands of volunteers who give their time to make sure Manitobans arrive home safe during the holidays while at the same time raising money for worthwhile organizations. Last year alone, in Manitoba 2,489 volunteers gave their time to the service.

Operation Red Nose will operate from November 30th to December 31st, with service running from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. Friday and Saturday nights, as well as Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. I encourage all Manitobans take advantage of Operation Red Nose during this holiday season. Impaired driving, quite simply, is never the right

option. People can call the hotline the night of the event to receive a ride home or pre-book one in advance for holiday festivities.

They offer the very convenient option of driving you home in your own car so that both you and your vehicle arrive home safely.

I would also encourage all of my colleagues in this House to volunteer or donate to Operation Red Nose. It is an invaluable service that helps to keep our streets safe.

On behalf of our NDP caucus, thanks to everyone involved with Operation Red Nose in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I'm pleased to speak of Operation Red Nose, here in Manitoba, as a long-time believer in MADD Canada.

It is especially important during the holiday season to plan for a designated driver with the many celebrations and events that take place.

Operation Red Nose is a free designated-driver program that picks you up and drops you off in your own vehicle. Last year, an impressive 4,400 rides were provided to Manitobans. This year's campaign launches on Friday.

*(13:40)

What is so impressive is that the service is entirely run by a team of volunteers, and what an amazing team of Manitobans.

Please note, although the service is free, donations are graciously accepted and all proceeds go towards supporting sport programs for our youth here in Manitoba. What a steal of a deal. Not only are you saving lives by utilizing this program, but you may also be giving back to Manitobans.

Save the 100. We need to get to that place where we know that driving under the influence should never be an option, but it should become more socially unacceptable, similar to how smoking is today.

Please remember that your vehicle is taken home with you by trusted individuals. Most importantly, everyone gets home safe, especially the others who are utilizing the roads. As a mother, I can tell you it takes a lot to carry a child for those nine months.

Operation Red Nose is an excellent example of a community-led initiative that is for the people and

run by the people. Programs like this show the care Manitobans have for one another and our commitment to each other's safety.

Madam Speaker, starting this Friday, Manitobans can call 204-947-NOSE between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. for a safe ride home.

Megwetch.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lech and Grazyna Galezowski

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): I rise today to recognize two outstanding constituents of the Kildonan riding.

Lech and Grazyna Galezowski have spent over 15 years exploring our vast prairies in search of known and forgotten Polish settlements, collecting first-hand information about Polish churches and chapels scattered amongst the prairies. This work has culminated in the publication of a beautiful text.

In the Footsteps of Polish Pioneers on the Canadian Prairies is an important historical work which lends itself to the preservation of Polish history across prairie landscape. The book offers a rare glimpse into the achievements and legacy created by Polish pioneers in the Canadian Prairies.

What initially began as a hobby for Lech and Grazyna has since transformed into a mission to discover and document known and forgotten Polish settlements in western Canada.

Polish settlers played a significant role in Canadian history. Many of the first Polish churches and chapels were erected between 1899 and 1914, the vast majority of which have long succumbed to the elements and are slowly disappearing from our landscape. Preserving this remarkable history and memory, the pioneer era is what continues to drive and inspire Lech and Grazyna on their journey throughout Canada.

Manitoba saw its first Polish pioneers long before the modern state gained its independence in the aftermath of the First World War. The first arrivals in Manitoba were with Lord Selkirk's expedition in 1817 with a group of Polish soldier settlers from the des Meurons regiment.

Northwest Winnipeg is fortunate to have a strong connection to the Polish community in Manitoba and is home to Polish organizations which have existed for over 100 years, such as Holy Ghost parish and school, the Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid

Society, the Polish Gymnastics Association Sokol and St. John Cantius Fraternal Aid Society.

Those who visit Winnipeg's North End should take time to visit the Ogniwo Polish Museum to learn more about Polish history in Manitoba. The volunteer-run museum is the only Polish-Canadian museum in western Canada.

There you may find In the Footsteps of Polish Pioneers on the Canadian Prairies, alongside a unique library of archive collections and speak to the Polish history.

Madam Speaker, please may the Chamber welcome my guests, Lech and Grazyna Galezowski, for joining us in the gallery today.

Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft, who on October 12th was consecrated as bishop of the Diocese of Rupert's Land for the Anglican Church of Canada. Prior to his election, which he won on the fifth ballot no less, Geoff served as a parish priest at St. Paul's in Fort Garry, one of the very many progressive churches in my constituency.

Now my friendship with Geoff is a typical Manitoba story as there are almost no degrees of separation between us. We first crossed paths in high school more than forty years ago, except it wasn't in Winnipeg or even in Manitoba, but at Parkside High School in my hometown of Dundas, Ontario. That we should end up, more than four decades later, serving the same community in Fort Garry is something that I deeply value and cherish.

Geoff's ministry is as equally dedicated to the material well-being of his community as he is to the spiritual health of his congregation. For the past few years he has served as the co-leader of École Viscount Alexander's Breakfast Program and has been instrumental in organizing the Vinyl Revival coffee house, a music program that engages with youth on their own terms.

Madam Speaker, I know Geoff to be a person guided by faith. He is also, and at the same time, a free spirit and a free thinker, as much at home playing guitar as he is preaching from the pulpit. He is as humble as he is charismatic, and as generous and compassionate a person as one is likely to meet.

It is these qualities that set him apart and will prepare him for meeting the challenge of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, for promoting inclusion in his community and for continuing the fight for social justice for everyone.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Geoff for his monumental contribution to our community and to wish him the very best in his new responsibilities as bishop of Rupert's Land.

Sara Holmes and Paula Jordan

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'm honoured to inform this House about two exceptional Portage la Prairie athletes, Sara Holmes and Paula Jordan, who represented Manitoba at the national Special Olympics 2018 Summer Games in Nova Scotia.

Paula has been a Special Olympics athlete for approximately 10 years. She was involved in floor hockey in the past, but her focus is now basketball and track and field. Sara has become involved in Special Olympics since 2009 and enjoys participating in basketball, floor hockey and track and field.

In June 2017, Paula and Sara competed in the Special Olympics Provincial Summer Games in Brandon. Paula competed in four track-and-field events and Sara competed in basketball. Following the Provincial Summer Games, both athletes were selected to Team Manitoba.

In July 2018, the athletes travelled to compete at the national Special Olympics Summer Games in 'Antigonish', Nova Scotia. Their hard work and dedication for training paid off, with Paula coming home with a gold medal in standing long jump and a bronze medal in 4-by-100 relay and Sara bringing home a gold medal in basketball.

Cathy Holmes, head coach of Special Olympics in Portage la Prairie says: Paula and Sara were thrilled to be chosen to represent Manitoba at the National Summer Games, and were so proud of themselves for bringing home gold medals. It was a great experience for the girls, from the excitement of the opening ceremonies to standing on the podium to receive their medals. They also enjoyed meeting athletes from across Canada.

I ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating Sara Holmes and Paula Jordan for their dedication to the training and accomplishments they have achieved throughout the year.

Royal Riders Winnipeg

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, one of the things that I enjoy in life is riding my motorcycle, and over the last couple of years I've gotten to know the Royal Riders Winnipeg, a group of motorcycle enthusiasts that ride together on a regular basis. And today, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize them.

Now, the Royal Riders Winnipeg are not your ordinary group of bikers. Our operating model is everyone is equal. We have no hierarchy. Some of us ride daily, while others only a few times during the season.

Madam Speaker, we are a diverse group of people and our membership is demonstrated through respect and humanity. We're focused on the joy that riding brings to us and the community that it builds.

The Royal Riders Winnipeg are firm believers and strong advocates for safe riding, and we demonstrate this safety through events like Ride for Dad and the Sikh parade.

We advocate for choosing a bike that fits you properly, for riding in groups whenever possible, for using proper signaling, for driving defensively and for investing in quality gear.

It is important that we as legislators set an example in safety and in making diversity and inclusion our priority when we create laws. I am proud to be a part of this community and for the opportunity today to tell you a little bit about ourselves.

For those who ride—and that includes a couple of us here in the House; I know the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) rides—let's continue to ride safe and often.

Madam Speaker, before I close, I wanted to ask for leave to have the names of the members of the Royal Riders Winnipeg included in Hansard.

* (13:50)

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

Royal Riders Winnipeg: Duane Baker, Arshdeep Brar, Khalid Cheema, Banty Dhillon, Ranvir Gill, Amanveer Singh Jassal, Gurbaksh Kaonke, Amit Kapoor, Ray Kumar, Cindy Lamoureux, Ali Saeed, Simranjeet Sidhu, Gurminder Singh, Joginder Singh, Sukhjinder Singh, Preetinder Sivia, Iqbal Sohal, Gagandeep Tahim.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In closing, as members of the Royal Riders Winnipeg like to say, I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team; I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Recognizing the Riel Constituency

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I rise today to recognize and honour the generosity, inclusiveness and community spirit of my Riel constituency.

The Riel constituency is in many ways representative of our beautiful province. The Riel community is home to people from every corner of our world and our community is a tapestry of many languages, faiths and ethnic backgrounds.

This diversity enriches and strengthens our neighbourhoods.

I am always amazed and grateful for the generous support my Riel constituents give to the many community events and worthy causes. Whether it's collecting baby formula so no baby goes hungry in our community, gathering warm clothes for newcomers who are new to our community and our harsh climate, gathering items for shoe boxes for women living in shelter, my community always rises to the challenge.

Riel is a vibrant and inclusive community and there are many family events happening as we enter the holiday season. I am looking forward to attending a number of school concerts and plays, as well as the annual Santa breakfast at Dakota and Greendell community centres.

These breakfasts are among my favourite events to attend during the year, where hundreds of families gather at the community centres for great food, fun activities for the kids and, of course, the highlight of the event is for them to meet Santa.

I thoroughly enjoy meeting with the families of my community and getting in the kitchen to flip a few pancakes.

Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to represent the community of Riel in this Chamber.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the public gallery we have 12 grades 4 to 7 homeschool students under the direction of Bonnie Koop, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Goertzen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Road and Bridge Program Request to Reinstatement Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, municipal leaders from right across the province are seeing just how hard it is to work with this Premier. Yesterday, they got an earful about how there's no money in cannabis. Apparently, the great business people on the other side can't make money off of cannabis.

This Premier's also refused to allow the City of Thompson to be able to access the mining community reserve fund, which has been paid into for many years by communities like Thompson for periods like right now when they are experiencing a severe—experiencing a severe economic downturn.

We also know that the Premier let down the City of Selkirk in a major way when he cut the funding for the Municipal Road and Bridge Program. Madam Speaker, 102 municipalities have signed on to that resolution asking for this government to back off of that cut.

Will the Premier give a fair share to municipalities starting by reinstating fully the Municipal Road and Bridge Program?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I just wanted to add my congratulations to Paula and Sarah, and also to Cathy Holmes for their tremendous work. Like them, Madam Speaker, we're dedicated to becoming better and improving and working hard for the people of Manitoba, and that's what we'll continue to do.

We'll also do that in a spirit of co-operation with our municipal partners, something that was clearly in evidence over the last couple of days as we meet with and hear from those who serve at the municipal level in our province.

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

**Manitoba Municipalities
Share of the Cannabis Revenue**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the AMM's lobbying campaign is built around a simple message: Fair share; fair say. But, of course, the Premier doesn't listen. He only talks about a fair say, never talks about a fair share. That was on display yesterday when the Premier told municipal leaders from across the province that they wouldn't be getting a share of cannabis revenues.

Now, we know that a lot of the backbenchers and Cabinet ministers were shocked when they heard the Premier say that there's no money in cannabis. I know that the minister for Families—or former minister of Families drives by a busy cannabis store on the way to work every day.

But, again, it seems like an abdication of the responsibility to give a fair share—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to municipalities here, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier commit to improving the relationship with municipalities, starting by giving them a fair share of the cannabis revenues that are now coming in?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, there you go, Madam Speaker; apparently, the mistake that the new leader of the NDP is making is the same mistake as was made by previous NDP leaders, and that is that they assume that if you cut a cheque to somebody, they're your friend.

Madam Speaker, we have friends throughout the province that serve at the municipal level. We don't buy our friends. We don't have to. We earn our trust, the trust they give us and the trust we give them through stronger relationship building and being open and frank with one another.

Madam Speaker, the actual reality for most provinces is, right now, that the federal government has rushed them into a position where they have had to set up distribution systems for a substance which was distributed illegally for many, many years, without an adequate supply of the product. In other provinces across the country, stores are being shut down as we speak.

And, Madam Speaker, the member talks about profit sharing, but he doesn't seem to understand the difference between gross and net.

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

**Municipal Road and Bridge Program
Request to Reinstatement Funding**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, all those municipal leaders from across the province trying to build roads and bridges will tell you they can't build roads and bridges with trust, Madam Speaker.

The program that was providing resources for local infrastructure, the Municipal Road and Bridge Program, well, that's \$12 million less in net, real revenue that those municipalities would be able to use towards building roads and bridges, a very important form of infrastructure that serves Manitobans right across the province.

Now, it's certainly a resolution at AMM that has been a hot topic. It's got a lot of support on the floor, and I think the message should be received loud and clear to this government that this cut to the roads and bridges program was a mistake.

With that in mind, will the Premier reverse his decision and restore the funding for the Municipal Road and Bridge Program?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): So, we're working with the local municipalities very well and very effectively. It's a compliment to our members on this side of the House that they're dedicated to doing so.

And I would say, Madam Speaker, that trust is important; the member undervalues it when he says you can't build with it. You can only build with it. There's only one thing more important than love in this world and it's trust.

And so when the NDP went to the general meeting and said they were eliminating a third of municipal governments without any pre-consultation or discussion of any kind, they broke that trust. What they broke, Madam Speaker, we're rebuilding.

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

**Highway Safety Programs
Privatization Inquiry**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Excuse me, Madam Speaker.

So, snow clearing on the highways during winter is something that we shouldn't take for granted. It's super important for everybody right across the province. Now this Premier is putting it at risk.

Last week this government posted a request to hire yet another consultant. This time the consultant will be embedded in the Department of Infrastructure, and their mission will be to, quote, help rightsize public ownership, end quote, of the core strategic highway and water management assets network. Now, I'll table this request here for the benefit of the Premier. But if you just look at a glance at the size of this thing, it looks like the entire Department of Infrastructure is now being reviewed by this outside consultant, including snow clearing.

Why is the government looking to sell off some of our most important assets?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We're not.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, it's pretty clear what this government is up to: just like with Manitoba Hydro, they'll deny, deny, deny and then sell off public assets.

Now, we know that Ontario went down—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —a similar road when they privatized snow-clearing operations in that province. The Ontario Auditor General found that roads were significantly less safe—I'll table this media report which summarizes the issue, Madam Speaker—and, again, that there were even deaths on Ontario highways after the privatization of those snow-clearing services. This is the impact that privatizing some of the functions of the Department of Infrastructure could have in Manitoba if this Province continues with this review.

* (14:00)

Will this Premier commit to not privatizing snow clearing on highways in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, you know, Madam Speaker, I don't know when the member replaced a results orientation with ideology. I guess it's happened gradually over his time as leader, but I haven't seen any evidence yet that he has come into contact with the understanding that Manitobans don't care what

his ideology is about private or public. What they want is better outcomes, better results. That's what they want and that's what we're after.

That's why we're building schools. That's why we're replacing roofs on hospitals. That's why we're doing the things the previous government failed to do. That's why we're creating more space for daycares, more use of private and public assets to effectively work together to achieve better results.

While he's focused on old ideologies, Madam Speaker, we'll stay focused on better results for Manitoba families.

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

Mr. Kinew: Pretty remarkable difference between the two answers there provided by the Premier, Madam Speaker.

So, we know that the government is trying to sell off northern airports. They've already cut the snow clearing there. We know that they're trying to sell off the water bomber fleet. We know that they're, potentially, with this request, looking at selling off the safety and compliance checks for trucking companies here in Manitoba.

Manitobans, of course, Madam Speaker, want our highways to be safe. They want to know the government is inspecting trucks. They want to know that safety is not going to be sold off to the highest bidder.

Now, the Premier needs to stop selling off all of these core government assets. These are truly the function of government: to ensure that there is a reliable transportation and infrastructure network across the province which connects Manitobans.

Will the Premier abandon these plans to privatize our most important highway safety programs?

Mr. Pallister: Well, safety is our first concern, Madam Speaker. That's why we didn't agree with the NDP positions to have pot in our schools at the age of 18 and made the age 19. That's why we introduced greater penalties for distracted driving. The previous administration saw the problem but didn't see it necessary to take steps toward a solution.

So, you know, again, Madam Speaker, the member's preamble falls short when it comes to the actual actions that the NDP government ever took when it had the chance. In particular, his bias against

private services is interesting given the fact that the previous government moved towards private services more frequently in its use of air ambulance provision but didn't concern itself with establishing proper safety standards.

Now that, Madam Speaker, is what we're doing. We're going to move to, in every respect, a safer society for Manitobans to live in because we believe that's the first obligation of government.

B & L Foster Care Agency Number of Children in Care

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Every day we learn new and troubling facts about the B & L agency, but we aren't getting any answers. Families are waiting for answers because they want to know that their children are safe when they are in care.

We've learned today that the government placed a moratorium on new placements with B & L during their review of this agency, but what we don't know is how many kids are currently in their care.

So will this minister today stand up and tell us how many kids B & L is caring for today?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as mentioned yesterday our government is doing a review of B & L. We think it's important to make sure all children are safe. That's a part of this. Minister-Deputy Minister Jay Rodgers is a part of that. We have put a moratorium on putting more children with B & L while that review is taking place by Deputy Minister Rodgers.

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

Mrs. Smith: Families deserve to know that their kids in care are protected and they want to know exactly how many kids are in B & L's care.

And we've been asking for the second day now: Why won't this minister tell us exactly how many kids are in care and why they continue to pay them for services when they failed these children?

Mr. Fielding: One thing we know for sure: the fact that the amount of children in care under the NDP dramatically went up over 87 per cent and that number is highest in North America. It's a shameful performance in terms of the child-welfare system.

Our government is taking strong steps to reform the child-welfare system. We think it's important that we have early intervention and prevention to make sure children are protected. They're the most

vulnerable in our society and we need to make sure that they're protected well.

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

Mrs. Smith: What's shameful is this government continues to pay an agency that failed kids and allowed kids to be sexually abused in a home. They're continuing to pay them.

We want to know how many kids are actually being cared for-B & L. Why won't this minister answer this? Why does he keep shirking this responsibility? These families deserve to know that their kids while they're in care are safe, and, you know, it's this minister's job to ensure that.

So now that we know that they failed: Will this minister stop all contracts with B & L and tell us exactly how many kids are in their care?

Mr. Fielding: With this government we want to focus in on-is making kids have great homes instead of hotels.

We know what the previous government did in terms of their approach to the child and welfare system where you had an incredible amount of increased amount of kids in care.

We're taking action upon this. In terms of this one specific case there's a review that's going on. Let's-all the information be a part of that. Deputy Minister Rodgers is involved in that, and all the information be provided above and beyond that.

We want to ensure the most vulnerable children are protected and that's exactly what this government is doing.

Education System Review Prebudget Survey

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): The only real commitment this government made in their Throne Speech around education is to have another review, and we know reviews under this Pallister government mean only one thing and that is more cuts.

But school divisions are already under pressure. Funding isn't keeping up with enrolment let alone with inflation, and dozens of school divisions are seeing less money this year than last. It means hard choices for the supports in the classroom and it means that class sizes are getting bigger.

Will this minister listen to school divisions and not focus only on the cuts?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): This government is doing so many good things, if they'd all been contained in the Throne Speech we'd still be hearing from the Lieutenant Governor right now, Madam Speaker.

I suppose we could've included and talked about the new school that's going in Winkler in the Throne Speech. We could've talked about the new school in Niverville. We could've talked about the new school in Brandon, the ones that are going into Winnipeg in Pembina Trails.

We could've talked about all the repairs that we're doing that the NDP would never do. I guess we'll include it in the next Throne Speech, and it'll be four hours.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, if there was any doubt about this government's intention for education, all we have to do is look at its prebudget survey. Manitobans cannot provide feedback reflecting how they actually value education in that survey. Trustees from Turtle Mountain School Division, in fact, have noticed this and wrote to the minister. They wrote saying the government is, quote, seeking to lead responses in a manner which would be contradictory to a transparent and sincere process, leading to what they called skewed results.

Why is the minister misleading Manitobans with a tilted survey that doesn't reflect the priorities of Manitobans?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I can see why the member's struggling, Madam Speaker. He was a part of a government for many years that never asked Manitobans their opinion at all. They would implement a tax increase. They would do all sorts of things and never actually consult Manitobans.

Not only are we consulting with our—through our Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) through the prebudget survey, Madam Speaker, which has gotten—and certainly last year many more responses than ever happened under the NDP, but we're going to have the K-to-12 review next year.

We're going to have many opportunities led by the honourable member for Portage, Madam Speaker, for people to come together, bring their views, have their views heard.

We want to listen to Manitobans, unlike that member who just said he thought he knew it all and then tried to implement things. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wiebe: The fact is, Madam Speaker, this survey gives no opportunity for feedback from Manitobans on how they prioritize education. It includes only information about cuts that are presented out of context. Trustees in Turtle Mountain call it, quote, contradictory to a transparent and sincere process.

* (14:10)

In just a few weeks, this minister says, he's going to be doing an education review.

Can Manitobans expect more of the same from this Pallister government: education consultation that isn't transparent and isn't sincere, or is this minister only looking for more tilted results from the public?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, we can see the contrast, Madam Speaker. I mean, even now as the AMM is going on over at the convention centre, it was the government which that member sat in that decided to cut the municipalities. Didn't have any consultations, didn't talk to them, just went in and cut the municipalities.

Of course, they brought in the PST increase after saying they weren't going to do it. Didn't talk to anybody, apparently may not even have had talks amongst themselves, Madam Speaker, just did it.

We're going to have a K-to-12 review. It'll be for the majority of next year. We're going to have the member for Portage having many conversations with stakeholders. We're going to—having parents, teachers come forward in a public forum and an online forum. Even the member opposite, if he has anything constructive to say, can participate as well.

Lead Contamination in Soil Testing and Release of Report

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, this morning the CBC released the results of soil testing in north Point Douglas that showed home gardens had lead levels higher than national safety guidelines allow. The experts who reviewed the samples were alarmed because that—they showed lead levels five times higher than national guidelines and they said residents should not be growing vegetables in the

ground because, and I quote: Exposure to lead can cause a number of health issues and is especially dangerous for children or pregnant women, including impaired neurological development and developmental delays in children as well as—as well as learning difficulties.

How is it that the CBC can have soil tested and have results reviewed by experts who deliver advice and action items faster than this government can?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Last year at this time, the former NDP leader and MLA for St. Boniface came to my office, and he said to me: We haven't always gotten it right on the environment, but I am expecting you are. I'm hoping that you'll take action and get it right. And that's exactly what this government is doing.

Last year we ordered 20 soil samples to be analyzed; we shared that with the public. Last spring we ordered 120 soil samples to be analyzed; we shared them with the public. This fall we ordered another 116 samples to be analyzed. That result—the results of that information is imminent and it will be revealed publicly within days if not hours.

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

Air Quality Monitoring Equipment

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Sustainable—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —Development told a very different story about her meeting with the former MLA for St. Boniface to the Legislature earlier this May.

However, on November 4th, members of the South St. Boniface Residents Association wrote—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —the Minister of Sustainable Development asking why the air quality monitoring equipment had not been installed by October. We know that the lead contamination in other neighbourhoods is old. The whole question in St. Boniface is whether the lead and other metals are airborne and are—may be raining down on gardens and playgrounds. They asked whether surrounding neighbourhoods would get any information.

Has this air monitoring equipment been deployed in St. Boniface and has this government

collected or released any of that information to St. Boniface residents?

Ms. Squires: As I said previously, we are committed to doing full environmental assessments and releasing that information to the public, unlike members opposite, who sat on information for more than 10 years.

I'd like to table exceedances from Gordon Bell High School that is in the constituency of Wolseley where that member colluded with his government, with his minister, to keep this information from the public.

I'd like to table information from exceedances in the constituency of Minto where that member sat at the Cabinet table; he colluded with his government to keep that information from the public.

I wonder if the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) or if the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) would like to apologize to their constituents for keeping that information secret.

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

Testing and Release of Report

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, this government always wants credit for what they promise, even when they do nothing. This government did not inform St. Boniface residents of lead contamination during the by-election; scientists did. They unveiled a decade-old report into lead contamination in Point Douglas and Weston, and the only action they've taken is to blame the previous government.

This government promised more testing in September, with results expected on October, to be released weeks later in December or, perhaps, hours from now.

Clearly, the minister or her staff must have the report already.

Does it include actual steps to let neighbourhoods know and funds committed to remediation?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Trouble with the member's thesis is it falls apart in—onto itself, Madam Speaker.

He talks and he criticizes us for not releasing reports which were undertaken by this government, and never undertaken by the other. If they were undertaken by the other, we didn't know about it

because they were covered up. He criticizes us for releasing them. Then he criticizes us for not releasing them during a by-election, which he claims we didn't do because we're trying to win a by-election which was in a seat which we haven't held for almost a century, Madam Speaker. I mean, the member's black-helicopter attitude towards these issues is not strengthening his argument; it's weakening it.

And this minister went above and beyond. She listened to people who the previous government called troublemakers. She did tests. She undertook to do tests. She's undertaken to get the information out and she's acting on the research.

The member should be complimenting her and supporting his constituents rather than wrongly trying to score political points on the back of false evidence.

Northern Patient Transportation Program Patient Escorts for Elective Procedures

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Under the Northern Patient Transportation Program, a physician fills out a travel warrant request form so that a patient can be covered when they need to see a doctor. According to this government's own records, the Department of Health is thinking about eliminating travel warrants for anyone who travels inside the Northern Health Region for elective procedures, which includes dental surgery for children. That would mean that a child who has to travel to Thompson for dental surgery wouldn't be covered for an escort.

Will the minister promise today that it will not approve this cut?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the question.

The member knows, and we've had good discussions—we'll continue have them—about the fact that our government, of course, places tremendous value in the Northern Patient Transportation Program. But that minister knows as well that the costs steadily increased within that program by millions of dollars and there was some misuse of the program.

What we're doing, of course, is making sure that that program will last, will continue to be strong to provide for northern Manitobans but to make sure that it gets value for all those northern Manitobans as we go along. That's the work we're undertaking.

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

Northern Manitoba Health Services Travel Costs for Medical Treatment

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Under the Northern Patient Transportation Program, Madam Speaker, northern health provides—and region—covers for 35 communities. According to this government's own records this minister may cut the Northern Patient Transportation Program coverage for northern Manitobans who don't live in fly-in communities.

Only nine of those 35 communities are fly-in communities, Madam Speaker, which means that this government may cut northern patient transport coverage for 75 per cent of the communities covered by the northern health authority.

Will the minister promise today that he will not approve this cut?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, that member knows that the northern patient transportation system has been reviewed externally and internally. She also knows that, going back as far as 2009, program officials spoke about the need to look at it again and to make sure that its use was verifiable, it was being used by the right people at the right times for the right purposes. They declined to do that work, and we will do it.

But I think it's very regrettable that she stands here and tries to create fear in the minds and hearts of northerners by pretending that when a child will go for an appointment that they won't be accompanied by a parent. That's shameful behaviour.

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

Ms. Lathlin: As a northern Manitoba, I truly know what I'm talking about when it comes to this.

Madam Speaker, according to this government's own records, the rate of premature mortality in northern Manitoba is 5.31 compared to 3.38 in Manitoba. Simply put, that means that people in northern Manitoba die younger than the rest of the province. The exact same section of the record says that reducing coverage for travel means that patients may not seek care as often or as early. When they finally do seek care the costs of medical transport will be dramatically higher because they have to be medevac'd to Winnipeg.

Why is this government even thinking about cuts that they know will cost more and threaten the health of northern Manitobans?

* (14:20)

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, the member knows that that assertion is false.

What the NDP was—failed to get any value for the system. They were simply procuring flights at a full retail rate and not looking for any provision of service that would get Manitobans a better deal.

What does a better deal mean for this program? It means we can reinvest to keep that program strong. That member also knows that more and more, there are opportunities around eHealth and telehealth to be able to connect northerners meaningfully to medical service.

We need to explore all of these things, but it's important that we concentrate on solutions and work constructively and not just raise fear.

Provincial Budget and Deficit Reduction Dominion Bond Rating Service Findings

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Speaker, the NDP's 17 years of fiscal mismanagement led to a doubling of the provincial debt, three credit downgrades and put us on track for a \$1.7-billion deficit. The bond rating agencies said that the NDP's failure to hit their targets made their plan no longer credible.

Can the Minister of Finance please inform the House of what—of DBS's—DBRS's opinion on our government's fiscal plan?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I will—first of all, want to thank the member from Brandon West for all his hard work during the budget process, talking to thousands of Manitobans.

As the member talked about, the Dominion Bond Rating Service recently commented on our budget. What they said is, over the past few years, the direction of 'fiscal' policy has shifted under the PC-led government. The Province now appears to be credibly committed to deficit reduction.

DBRS has otherwise, as far as—looked at the budgetary results, and our new government has outperformed the fiscal targets since coming to power. What the Dominion Bond Rating Service knows, what our government knows, what Manitobans knows—that we're on the road to recovery here in Manitoba with this government.

Child and Family Services Resources for Children in Care

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): In 2016, I shared with this House the fact that my niece and nephew, while in CFS care, were confined to their room. They were not allowed to go play outside. Their foster parents couldn't be bothered to let them breathe in the fresh air or let them feel the grass between their toes.

With the recent news exposing the for-profit business, B & L, and their failure to keep our kids safe, what resources has this minister deployed to ensure we do no have—we do not have broken adults out of CFS-induced abused children?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): This government has invested close to \$300 million more in families for vulnerable Manitobans. We think that's an important investment, but money isn't everything with the CFS system.

We know, under the former NDP government, the results that they had in terms of the amount of children in care grew with the exponential amount of money that's there. This government is doing comprehensive reform to reform the child-welfare system to ensure vulnerable Manitobans are protected.

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

Vetting of Foster Parent Applications

Ms. Klassen: In 2016, I want—I shared with this House the fact that my niece and nephew, while in CFS care, were confined to their room. I want that to stick.

The mother wasn't made aware of her rights. My niece was not informed of her rights, and the children—she didn't know she could use the children's advocate until she was nine. So for far too long, she and her little brother had to endure needless suffering. They were not fed properly, and they could only watch from their window the other children playing outside.

Can the minister tell us if the department has become more diligent in where our children are placed? Will this ministry allow for the foster parents' applications to be vetted through the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs family advocate office?

Mr. Fielding: Thank you for sharing the story. In the CFS system we hear this far too often, and that is why—as our government is taking strong steps.

What I would suggest is that we need to have more children staying with their families. We need to do everything possible to ensure early intervention and prevention so we can ensure families are reunited.

We have made substantial gains in the CFS system for the first time in over 15 years. There's less children in care, and there's more families being reunited. We think that's a positive step, but by all means, there's much, much more work that needs to be done on the CFS system to ensure vulnerable Manitobans are supported.

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

Home Visitation Responsibility

Ms. Klassen: We see yet another heartbreaking story of a foster dad who was charged with sexual assault of two boys. Those little boys were in his care for over five years. From another article, and I quote, the Province says Winnipeg CFS staff who approve licences do not visit every home on an annual basis.

My question to the minister is: How many more cases have to be brought to light before the department realizes it is their job to visit every home so that we have better outcomes for our children?

Mr. Fielding: I did refer the matter—or talked about the matter that Deputy Minister Rodgers is reviewing. The case that was referred to under B & L, I can't speak of the specifics in terms of the case because it is before the courts and ANCR does currently still have an investigation that is ongoing. I can say, globally, we want to protect children. We want to make sure vulnerable children are supported as best we can, and that's why our government has really taken strong steps to reform the CFS system.

We know that there's far too many children in care, and we need to be supporting children whether it be early intervention and prevention to prevent them from coming into care to ensure families stay together, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Arts Sector Inclusion in Throne Speech

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Last week's Throne Speech didn't mention the Manitoba arts community once.

The arts generate over \$1 billion in economic spinoffs for the province and employs thousands of people. The arts sector outpaced the economy as a whole, creating about 22,000 jobs and generating new business opportunities across the province.

When the arts are so essential to our economy, why has this government provided no vision, not even a mention, for the grassroots arts community in Manitoba?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): It's almost humorous to hear that member from the other side ask a question like that, when for 17 years they ignored the cultural and arts sector in—here in Manitoba. You know, as a matter of fact, it was almost 30 years since the last cultural policy review, Madam Speaker.

We acknowledge the importance of art and culture here in Manitoba. We recognize it, and we will ensure that they continue to be a vibrant part of Manitoba.

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

Library Services Government Intention

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I would encourage the minister to speak with members of the arts community for first-hand information.

Madam Speaker, not a single mention of the arts in this Throne Speech. While the arts are essential to our economy, they represent so much more. They are the heart and spirit of our communities and the reason that many people stay in Manitoba.

Since this government came into power they've cut hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Manitoba Arts Council and the Public Library Service.

In the new mandate letter the minister was asked to realign services for our libraries.

Will the minister confirm she will not cut library services in Manitoba?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I would like to talk about how much we recognize and know the importance of art here—and culture here in Manitoba.

As a matter of fact, I'd like to give her a few figures here: \$15 million we have contributed towards the Diversity Gardens at the

Assiniboine Park; another \$15 million towards the Winnipeg Art Gallery for the Inuit Art Centre, which is going to be a world-class leader here in Manitoba; \$10 million for the Royal Aviation Museum; \$5 million to the Manitoba Museum.

And we can go on and on, but I'll answer those questions—or answer those answers in the next question, Madam Speaker.

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

Manitoba Arts Sector Government Review

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): The arts and culture industry contributes over—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —\$1 billion to Winnipeg's economy and employs thousands of people, yet this government couldn't spare the ink to even mention them in the Throne Speech.

* (14:30)

Almost a year ago the government imposed a value-for-money review on the arts sector. We know that every review this government conducts is just cover for cuts.

Will the minister stop reviewing, stop cutting and produce a real plan to invest and support the arts community today?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Again, I would just like to talk to the member opposite about our very thriving and booming film industry here in Manitoba. What started off with just half a million dollars just a few years ago is now up to \$173 million, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Cox: Yes. You know, everywhere you go here in Manitoba, whether in rural Manitoba, here in the city of Winnipeg, you see those trucks—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cox: —parked everywhere, along Broadway, Memorial Park, everywhere. And I have been to many, many of those sites and had the opportunity to actually see the filming that takes place here in Manitoba. Not only that, but we understand that there is a cartel that is arrived here from California because they understand that Manitoba is the place to

come and shoot films and to enjoy the opportunity to work with Manitobans here who are so, so professional in—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Candace House Grand Opening Investment in Victim Support Services

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): For families who have lost a loved one, having to navigate the criminal justice system can be overwhelming and emotionally exhausting.

Our government knows the importance of supporting victims and survivors of violent crime.

Madam Speaker, I would like the Minister of Justice to please update us—this House on our commitment to put victims and families first during this most difficult time in their lives.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yesterday morning I was honoured to attend the grand opening of Candace House, a safe refuge for families and victims to receive information, resources and support.

Madam Speaker, Candace House is the fulfilment of a dream by Wilma and Cliff Derksen, who have turned the tragic loss of their daughter Candace into real action to help others.

I'm proud to announce that our government is investing \$55,000 in Candace House and nearly \$550,000 in victim service organizations across Manitoba.

I appreciate the board members volunteering, the community support for Candace House and, Madam Speaker, I will say that our government will always put victims first in our criminal justice system.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Vimy Arena

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed

by the provincial government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government nor the City have considered—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher:—better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial sites such as the St. Boniface Industrial Park, the 20,000 acres at CentrePort, or existing properties such as the Shriners Hospital or old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

(3) The provincial government is exempt from any zoning requirements that would have existed if the land was owned by the City of Winnipeg. This exemption bypasses community input and due diligence and ignores better uses for the land which would be consistent with a residential area.

(4) There are no standards that one would expect for a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living have stated that the Department of Health had no role to play in the land acquisition for this Manitoba Housing project for use as a drug addiction facility.

(5) The Manitoba Housing project initiated by the provincial government changes the fundamental nature of the community. Including park and recreation uses, concerns of the residents of St. James and others regarding public safety, property values and their way of life are not being considered or properly addressed.

(6) The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obvious other locations in wealthier neighbourhoods, such as Tuxedo and River Heights, have not been considered for this Manitoba Housing project, even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

(7) The Manitoba Housing project and the operation of a drug treatment centre fall outside the statutory mandate of Manitoba Housing renewal corporation.

(8) The provincial government does not have a co-ordinated plan for addiction treatment in Manitoba as it currently underfunds treatment centres which are running far under capacity and potential.

(9) The community has been misled regarding the true intention of Manitoba Housing as land is being transferred for a 50-bed facility even though the project is clearly outside Manitoba Housing responsibility.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of parkland along Sturgeon Creek for the purpose of parkland and recreational activities for the use, including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and Sturgeon Creek ecosystem under the current designation of PR2 for the 255 Hamilton Ave. location at the Vimy Arena site, and to maintain and continue the land to be designated for parks and recreation activities neighbourhood and community.

Madam Speaker, this has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request that the provincial government consider establishing a cross-departmental team to provide leadership on a culturally appropriate, co-ordinated response to the growing addictions crisis in our province that includes an aggressive, widespread education campaign on the dangers of using methamphetamine and opiates, along with addictions education for front-line medical staff in health-care facilities.

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

* (14:40)

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

(4) To request that the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living consider providing supports for the families of people struggling with addiction, including counselling, patient navigation and advocacy, and direct access to free naloxone.

This petition is signed by Michelle Frechette, Laura Allen, Andrew Arksey and many other Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Preventative Health Services Plan

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Preventative health services are essential to creating a healthy community.

Preventive care to optimize health and decrease sickness is as important as treatment after a disease or sickness has been identified.

Increasing evidence now supports well-designed investments and prevention to improve health and decrease health-care costs, starting in the first year.

In the long term, effective preventive measures can continue to improve population health while reducing downstream costs.

The lack of a focused and comprehensive provincial approach to prevention under the previous NDP government and under the present provincial government has resulted in steadily increasing rates of diabetes, HIV and methamphetamine addictions province-wide.

The cutbacks by the present provincial government, including the underspending in primary care by 65 per cent in 2016-2017 and by 70 per cent in 2017-2018, the closure of Corydon Primary Care Clinic and the elimination of 50 per cent of the clinical staff at the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Compass youth program in Portage la Prairie have all reduced the capacity to deliver preventive health initiatives.

The lack of a provincial plan to address poverty, homelessness and the methamphetamine crisis in Manitoba is hampering efforts to keep people well.

When prevention services are only a small part of a clinical services plan, acute-care services invariably monopolize attention, money and other resources.

The need to dedicate and focus resources used in prevention requires a comprehensive standalone preventative health services plan.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately develop and release a preventative health services plan which would provide the necessary direction and resources to improve the health and well-being of Manitobans.

Signed by Scott Smith, Mary Smith, Rosamond De Smets [*phonetic*] and many others.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 33(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry). The title of the resolution is Celebrating Over 200 Years of Polish Culture in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that, pursuant to rule 33(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan. The title of the resolution is Celebrating Over 200 Years of Polish Culture in Manitoba.

THRONE SPEECH
(Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the motion of the honourable member for Southdale (Mr. Smith) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, who has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I had the opportunity to get up for half of my time yesterday, and I started off by saying that I wasn't all that happy about getting up, because it was a Throne Speech that had very little to commend, itself, and really is—really wasn't worth talking about.

And I put a lot of the responsibility for that on members of the government caucus who sit silently by and don't ever hold the—either the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or their Cabinet colleagues accountable. Instead, they just are quiet while the government undertakes one of the most severe austerity agendas not only Manitoba, but this country, has ever seen. *[interjection]* Yes, what's—my member—

An Honourable Member: Acute, protracted restraint.

Mr. Allum: Yes, the member from Elmwood reminds me it's—the terminology for that is acute, protracted restraint.

And I think that's—quite aptly summarizes the direction not only of this government, but of the

Filmon government before that and then the Sterling Lyon government before that. In fact, the only really credible government that was conservative in nature was the Duff Roblin government from many years ago. And what did Duff do? Well, he raised the sales tax because he knew that he needed to create revenues in order to build that floodway and protect the services that Manitobans rely on. And that's a lesson that's simply lost on this government and lost on this government caucus, lost on the Cabinet and certainly lost on the Premier of this province.

Now, not all of the responsibility for the government's misdirection and misadventures belongs just to the government caucus. I said the Cabinet certainly bears their share of responsibility for this as well and, of course, the reality is that many of them are largely irrelevant to the governing process here in Manitoba.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I see the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen); they announced in the Throne Speech that they're going to be repurposing his department. So the question that comes to mind for me is, what the heck has he been doing for the last couple of months? It apparently appears to be very, very little, and he's largely irrelevant to the process.

The Minister of Crown Services (Mrs. Mayer) issues a statement once in a blue moon, as yet to come out before the media or toward the public. She's largely irrelevant to the process.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), who has, I think, held, to this point in the mandate, four portfolios, possibly even five. He's like the Cabinet pinball, Madam Speaker. He can't stay anywhere in one place. He just goes boom-bah-boom-bah-boom, bumper-to-bumper-to-bumper. He's all over the place, on track, though, to create a new record for holding every possible Cabinet position within one short four term—four-year term.

And I know that—I know—I did speak about the Minister of Education yesterday. On our side of the House he's known as the axeman, and he takes that giant cleaver and he took it to the health-care system. And when he was done that, the Premier turned to him and said: Now that you're done cutting the smithereens out of the health-care system, head on over to Education. Take that huge cleaver and axe with you and chop it to smithereens as well.

And that's exactly the path that he's on, whether he wants to admit it or not, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is, of course, axe junior, and that's the new Minister of Health, who takes his lessons from the Minister of Education on how to destroy a health-care system by a death from a thousand cuts. He's the pruner, whereas the minister is the axeman.

Either way, there's a clear-cut forest right behind them of health care, and it's going to be the same with the education system when he's done—*[interjection]*

Well, the Minister of Education encourages me to drink something other than coffee and I couldn't agree more. I probably do drink too much of that, but I don't know what he's drinking over there, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker. I sure don't know what he's smoking, but if he wants to create an education system that creates positive pathways for every single Manitoban, he won't get that done by cutting the Education budget year after year after year.

Now, I can't do any—I have to say, though, that, really, even the chosen 12 Cabinet members—chosen 10—they're down to 10 now—I don't know how many they have over there, frankly, because yesterday they were all popping up. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) wasn't here. Dad was away and they were all looking at each other; who's going to answer the questions? What should we do?

Even the Minister of Education decided to get up on one question. He said, I'll take control, and he gave just as lousy an answer as every other member of Cabinet yesterday.

But, really, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the person who's really responsible for the deplorable state of affairs here in the province of Manitoba is none other than the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), the Premier of this province, who continues to set the bar very, very, very low on how you'd be a responsible, productive, positive premier for every Manitoban and, in fact, what we get is something quite dramatically different.

We know that he's given to exaggeration. We know that he's given toward hyperbole, but what's really disturbing about him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that he trades in untruths, mistruths, half-truths, every single day in this House. And every single day he steps out the doors of this province he trades in those same untruths and mistruths, and it's a sad, sad state of affairs that a Premier—a Premier as—of this province has to go to that level—down to that level in order to justify his own government, and that's because he has absolutely nothing to talk about it.

* (14:50)

He—this is the biggest do-nothing government that ever existed in the history of this great country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a crying shame when there is such colossal needs in our neighbourhoods, when there's such colossal needs in our communities, when there's such colossal need all across this province—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —they do the ostrich impersonation: put their head in the sand and don't accomplish a single thing except to impose an even greater burden on the people of Manitoba day in and day out.

Now, there could be no further, better, example of that than the government's response and the way in which it's addressing climate change today. And I'm going to let my friend from Wolseley speak more authoritatively about this than I can or than I will. But let it be simply said that this government has failed Manitobans, has failed Canada and has failed the international community by not properly responding to the issue of climate change right now, right today. Instead, they spend their time blaming others—*[interjection]*—blaming others for not taking the kind of action that needs to be taken.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't need to remind you, because I know you know, there won't be an economy without a planet. There won't be a health care, there won't be an education system. There won't be a civilization of anything to call civilization unless we begin to take the measures to mitigate the impact of climate change, to adapt to the impact of climate change. And as a result, in my view, anyway—in my view anyway—to create a better world for each and every one of us. But the government is missing that opportunity, and they are failing Manitobans today. They're failing Manitobans tomorrow, and they're failing generations of Manitobans yet to come; and that is a very, very sad state of affairs.

On health care, I spoke about diet yesterday. My friend from Elmwood is the critic for Infrastructure. We often talk about how the government has abandoned municipalities, and the Premier did it again yesterday. I don't know what he was doing before he went to that meeting, but he sent the wrong note to municipalities about how you actually do fair say and, as our leader said, fair share. And that's not happening. And that's what we've heard on any number of files, including the very important roads

and bridges program, but on any number of projects, and it's got so bad that even Chris Lorenc from the heavy construction industry, is calling for a referendum on government lowering taxes.

And I actually think that's not a bad idea. I don't think that's a bad idea at all. If you want to take services and programs away from the people of Manitoba, then why don't you have a referendum about it instead of doing it behind closed doors every single day and hiding the impacts on the people of Manitoba?

But let me end with this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a government that's so bad—so bad—they can't even run a cafeteria in the Legislative Building.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): We'll be able to share a little bit of light on this doom-and-gloom painting here put forth by the member opposite. But for—thank you for allowing me to speak and put a few words on the record on this fabulous Throne Speech.

An Honourable Member: Best ever.

Mr. Wowchuk: Best ever delivered last week by our Lieutenant Governor.

Our government are—committed to the important work of fixing our Province's finances, repairing services and rebuilding the economy. This ambitious plan was good news as we embarked on the commencement of the Forty-First sitting of the Manitoba Legislature as we journey to make Manitoba the most improved province.

Although we have made good progress, there's much work to be done. A brighter, more prosperous future awaits our beautiful province, and our hard-working team is up for the challenge. The province is committed to making communities safer, protecting vulnerable Manitobans, improving health care, education and social services, providing tax relief and returning to a balanced budget.

There's been many key highlights of our government priorities that was given in the Throne Speech, and I'll share a few.

We're going to be bringing forward a new referendum act to restore the rights of Manitobans to vote on major tax increases and provide a framework for calling and conducting a referendum. This will protect Manitobans for what the NDP did prior to the last election when they went knocking on the doors and, oh, no, we will not increase the taxes—that's ridiculous. What did they do? Went right ahead and

done that. And there—speaking of referendums, that should have been the opportunity to include one.

We're going to be implementing a plan to reduce wait times for procedures such as joint replacement, cataracts, diagnostic testing. We know that under, the present regime, that the—there was a—wait times and a lot of people were put into a lot of pain waiting for their surgeries to occur.

Developing Manitoba's first ever provincial clinical and preventive services plan: we're going to be implementing a comprehensive plan to address the VIRGO report key recommendations and guide improvements to mental health and addiction services across government; enhancing supports for victims of domestic violence with new pilot programs and introduce legislation—the pilot, a first-in-Canada resolution service.

Just adding a few more: releasing an action plan for economic growth and establish a lead entity to support economic growth and development in the North; develop a new Travel Manitoba tourism strategy, we know that Manitoba has a wealth of tourism opportunities, and our government is up to the challenge to untap a lot of what is there for potential and make Manitoba great; construct 1,200 additional personal-care-home beds by 2025; and keep children and families together.

We're going to suspend further 'expansioning'—we're going to suspend further expansion to gaming pending a review of the Province's gaming strategy and conduct first in-depth review of Manitoba's child education system in decades, as well as capitalize on global market opportunities in protein, and advance construction of a long-awaited Lake Manitoba outlet without delay. We knew that the previous government chose to ignore the people of Lake Manitoba, and they were subjected to a lot of uncertainty.

Just comparing a few things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I would like to, because the member opposite there painted a picture of doom and gloom.

And just to look at a few things, what has been done so far and what is yet to be done: we introduced amendments to The Crown Lands Act; and after years of steady decline we're supporting the extension of our beef industry through our targeted 10-year growth strategy.

The NDP took \$5.7 million from cattle producers through a mandatory two-dollar-head cattle tax to support a cattle processing plant, but

they never built it. Where did that money go? It evaporated just like so many more of Manitobans' taxpayer dollars under their rule.

Due to NDP mismanagement, under The Water Rights Act, our province has seen a backlog in processing of drainage licence applications, resulting in annual production and monetary losses for Manitoba farm families.

Our government committed to a commission—an inquiry that'll scrutinize Manitoba Hydro's decision making and implement plans related to bipole and Keeyask.

*(15:00)

Every single major Hydro capital project commissioned by the NDP was behind schedule and over budget: Wuskwatim, over budget by \$1.1 billion, 85 per cent higher than expected and over two years delayed; Bipole III, expected to cost over \$5 billion, more than \$1.5 billion over budget and nearly a year behind schedule; Keeyask skyrocketed by \$2.2 billion to \$8.7 billion and is nearly three years delayed.

So we talk about the track record of certain governments, well, there's just a couple examples, and I'll share more as we go on.

We're embarking to fix the finances. To further advance transformation, a new public service act will be developed to reflect principles, values and needs of modern Manitoba public service.

Our government is also modernizing its procurement practices. The old practice of different parts of government shopping for the same products and services without co-ordination will come to an end.

Our government is committed to fair and transparent tendering processes. And just using an example, infrastructure, we eliminated the wasteful and duplicative East Side Road Authority and now have Manitoba Infrastructure act as a source for delivery of Manitoba highways infrastructure.

The NDP had 17 years in government to complete Shoal Lake's Freedom Road, and they made no progress. Under the NDPs, \$9 million was given to the NDP-connected businesses for flood-fighting Tiger Dams without following proper tender processes. It's a lot of dollars.

Through this procurement, Nova Scotia has proven that this can be very beneficial. The current

savings there is seen as close to \$25 million per year. So this is well worth looking into.

The public sector project tendering, our government's reintroducing a bill to end the practice of forced-forcing bidders on public sector work to unionize. In order to broaden the labour pool for the public sector, our government's introducing a bill to end the practice of forced unionization and opening up tenders to all companies, regardless of union affiliation. It will increase competitive and result in better value for money.

I could go on, but there are just several great things that happened in this Throne Speech that is just going to be so great for our province. We remain committed to the important work of fixing our finances—our province finances, repairing our services and rebuilding the economy.

When taking government, we embarked on an ambitious plan: Make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada, and we're well on our way.

Though we've made good progress over the past two years, there remains much work to be done. But our government is not afraid of the hard work and of making decisions necessary to create a more efficient and well-run government.

We continue to make progress towards returning to balanced budgets while also providing tax relief for families and small businesses. We're committed to making communities safer, protecting the vulnerable Manitobans, as said, and continuing to improve health care and education. The Speech from the Throne highlighted many key government priorities that we have accomplished and will continue to work towards.

As our Premier (Mr. Pallister) said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba's road to recovery is a long one, requiring courage and care. We'll continue the work we've begun. We remain committed to improving Manitoba and the lives of all Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only thing better than today in Manitoba is going to be tomorrow in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): You know, it's—I'm happy to stand today and have the opportunity to respond to the recent Throne Speech.

Just before I jump into it, I want to take this as an opportunity to thank my constituents. You know,

the last two and a half years have been flying by. I can't believe how quickly time has been going by, but, you know, people say that when time flies by, it means you're enjoying what you're doing, and I truly am. I'm so blessed and honoured to continue to have this opportunity to serve my constituents in many different capacities.

You know, when I think about my constituents what comes to mind is—I know, sneaking up very quickly—is I Love to Read Month. I'm looking forward to going into all of the schools. And I think about all the events and receptions and cool Manitobans that I have the opportunity to get to know and really learn from. I know grads, they quickly sneak up. And, you know, this June will actually mark a decade from when I graduated and I'm looking forward to speaking about that at Sisler High School, my alma mater, which actually falls into my constituency as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what—we'll talk about the Throne Speech a little bit. And it was pretty predictable. We knew what was coming. But still, I suppose, important to go through.

So the first topic I wanted to expand on is immigration. You know, just a couple of weeks ago we celebrated 20 years of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. This program has been essential here in our province. It's been critical. Do you know without the program that our population here in Manitoba would have actually decreased and we wouldn't be anywhere near as advanced as we are as a province without the Provincial Nominee Program? And that's why, you know, I just don't understand why this government isn't taking immigration more seriously, why they're not doing more about the program, why it doesn't deserve its own department. It makes up so much of our province; it deserves its own department.

You know, it's—immigration is our province, it's our country and we take so much pride in our diversity. And this government needs to put more actions into immigration instead of, you know, implementing a head tax on new immigrants. We should be helping new immigrants settle and succeed, not be putting up more barriers for them to be facing in our province.

And, you know, I'm a little bit concerned. I've asked several questions about this during question period, but about the number of certificates being given out through the Provincial Nominee Program. You know, when the program first came in to

Manitoba there was a real emphasis and focus put on family reunification. And through this someone would be sponsored, and oftentimes, through this one certificate, maybe their spouse or their children would come with them into the province.

But now there's a strong focus on students, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, we just need to keep priorities. There needs to be also a stream for family reunification. And with this focus being put on students, oftentimes when they immigrate to Manitoba it's them immigrating on their own; they don't have family members. So, technically, even though the number of certificates remain the same here in the province, we're accepting less immigrants. And that was a decision that this government has decided to make.

You know, we talk about wait times too. I give the government a little bit of credit because—*[interjection]*—a little bit because they have done better than the previous NDP as far as the wait times go. I know when I first got elected people were waiting six—I even had a constituent who had waited seven years, which is under no circumstance acceptable to find out whether or not you will be immigrating to a new province, to a different country. You can't expect someone to put their life on hold for that long.

Now, I still have some constituents coming who have waited a few years—so two, three years. We need to continue 'waitening' and shortening those wait times. But it is improving and I'm going to continue to fight for that improvement, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, one other thing that I'd like to talk about is the acceptance into the program. I have constituents who are coming to see me and they're showing me—it's in front of my eyes—that they are meeting all the requirements, whether that's the language testing, for example. They're reaching the requirements and then they're being rejected still. We need a clearer set of guidelines. People are getting their hopes up. They're studying to certain levels and only to find out that, then, they are not accepted.

You know, we could also talk about education. It's one of my favourite critic portfolios, you know, and now we have a new minister responsible for it, as well. And one thing I can talk about is getting to know the students. I have a lot of schools in my constituency—and not that I have favourites, but I did talk about earlier my alma mater, Sisler High School, and they have a group called SPY and it stands for

Sisler's Political Youth. And, you know, how motivating is that. That youth here in our province want to get this involved in politics. You know, it warms my heart. I wish that when I was in school there was a political youth group like that.

*(15:10)

And one of my favourite things to do as a sitting member in these chambers is bring the high school students out to question period and ask their questions. It involves them, and they love it. They love being involved. They love being asked to come and participate. And we as legislators need to be doing more of that.

And, you know, another school in my riding who are quite worried are Maples MET students. So Maples MET is a school that really focuses on hands-on studies. They still follow provincial accreditation and have their exams, but they're more focused on getting out into the community, hands-on work experience.

And, with all this talk of school amalgamation and rumours going on, they're genuinely nervous that this government is going to be cutting their school funding. We need to make sure that this doesn't happen. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've seen strong evidence that students educate themselves in very different ways, and this is a—just one path that we should be allowing for Manitobans to have.

We could talk about university students—poor university students because of this government. They're raising tuition rates without any sort of comfort level. They're allowed to raise them at any point in time. Students don't know how to plan; they don't know how to prepare; they don't know how much to save up for.

They—this government also took away the student rebate. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, oftentimes, at least for this generation, when a student graduates from post-secondary, that's when they start looking into investing into homes of their own, perhaps bigger items such as vehicles, and this rebate really helps with that. That rebate could be a down payment on a house.

And then we have international students, who this government is taking advantage of. You know, their tuition rates are already much, much higher than other students, and now this government is willing to jeopardize their health care by charging them extra.

You know, we're equals here in this province, here in this country. You know, something I really admire about our Prime Minister is he has a line, and he goes: A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. And I believe that extends to here in Manitoba—to Manitoba. A Manitoban is a Manitoban is a Manitoban.

I don't care if you're an international student, if you've been born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, if you're from up north, you deserve equal rights.

It's like us women. We need to support each other. And I'm so proud of our province for the movements that are occurring. Between national roles, between Malala and Michelle Obama and provincial groups like #MeToo and Equal Voice student groups, you know, I'm feeling very optimistic.

But, with that said, we still have so much work to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Women still make lower wages than men. We're continuously discriminated against based on gender, and women, even with more education than their male peers, are likely to have lower positions in the workforce.

You know, I can talk about my own experience with males in the workforce. Even now, in 2018, almost 2019, some of my male colleagues have experienced this with me, where I've gone into meetings or events and I've been introduced as a politician just like my male colleagues.

And typically it is the males in the group—everyone shakes their hands, but they skip shaking my hand or the other women. Everyone asks them questions and addresses their questions and eye contact towards the male politicians, but they just skip over the female politicians.

You know, it's a good note for men here in these chambers to take. And I know that several of you I'm looking at, they've actually experienced this with me.

Suppose it—this is why I was very disappointed that there wasn't more mentioned in this Throne Speech about women's rights and continuing to be progressive on them.

So, let's talk about seniors. You know, this government campaigned in 2016 about implementing 1,200 personal-care-home beds. Then they misled Manitobans a little bit, because we were all under the opinion that this was going to happen when they first got elected, but now they're promising by 2025.

And don't get me wrong, personal-care-home beds are great, but we don't just need those. We need supportive-housing beds; we need retirement homes; we need hospices. Seniors aren't confined to personal-care homes. We're on different levels, different spectrums. We need to start thinking outside of the box.

And home care—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear horror stories of what is happening in the homes. You know, I have a constituent who told me that they had a home-care aide come in, rush in and out all under 10 minutes, leave the stove on—and my constituent, she's nearly blind. She said she was smelling smoke coming from the stove. She had to fiddle around—luckily, did not burn her forearms—to turn off the stove.

You know, we can think about ideas, again, outside the box perspective. In British Columbia they have something called a seniors' advocate, something I've asked for here in the Chamber, to at least start a discussion about it. We have children's advocate, a non-partisan place so people can go and express concerns and thoughts and be safe in doing so. Why not have a seniors' advocate? Let's learn from British Columbia. They have been very successful in this, and we should be doing everything we can to keep seniors in their homes, near their families, in their communities. This government needs to be practical, stop forcing seniors out of their homes and a simple—when you could be doing simple home repairs to keep them in their homes.

I think about, why not installing a rail just outside of the house, so rather than seniors having to go to a one-level home or not have to step out onto the ice, this could allow them to continue living in their homes for another two or three years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, it's really disappointing. I can recall, about a year ago, I had some seniors come and visit me at McDonald's, and they expressed to me how they all received these letters of eviction from the department of Housing. They all live in Gilbert Park, and they were nearly in tears, even with the time to process, and they were being forced out of their homes. Now, we tried to set up a couple meetings, but even I, as the MLA for the area, was shut down. I wasn't allowed to meet with the property manager. I tried to meet with the minister. The minister had no idea what was going on. And these letters—after we fought this, we got the Winnipeg Free Press involved—then the minister of Housing at the time

individually called my constituents and said: Sorry; it was an error. You should never have received that letter. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't care to what extent—you don't—that is not a simple error. They wanted to evict these seniors and this government knew that they were in the wrong, and so when these seniors had the courage to stand up for themselves, the government backed off because they knew they were wrong.

You know, last night—I go to McDonald's every Monday evening from 6 to 8 p.m.—and last night I had—again, it was one of these eight seniors, come and see me. Two weeks ago he received another eviction letter from the department of housing—has nothing to do with Gilbert Park—the eviction letter stating you have to be out, I believe it was January 1st, but I'd have to confirm that day. And then two days ago, or Friday, he received a letter asking to renew his contract from Gilbert Park Housing. It doesn't make sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The department of housing is so out of touch with the housing—with the property managers, especially at Gilbert Park, and I can only speak from my experience. I'm sure other members here in this House are having similar ones.

Talk about health care: what about a national Pharmacare plan? You know, I've spoken about this many times. I'm very discouraged that the House hasn't really picked up on it. Manitoba has this amazing opportunity to get it front of the game and work with the federal government to ensure that all Manitobans can afford their prescribed medications. You know, one in 10 Manitobans are currently not taking their prescribed medications due to a affordability. Why are we—it's hurting our health-care systems. If we would allow for people to take their prescribed medications, allow for these opportunities, there would be less ambulance fees, less recidivism rates in hospitals.

And we need to think about a mental health focus—and it's critical that every child, no matter where they live, have the opportunity to be assessed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you live up north, if you live in the city of Brandon, if you live here in Winnipeg, you should have the same assessments as every other child. We know how critical it is that children are assessed, especially before the age of three. We need to make it happen.

You know—and we also need to treat mental health the way that we treat physical health. I am—I want to say I'm optimistic that Manitoba and Canada,

as a country, are on the right path. But, if you walk into the hospital with a broken arm, you're treated right away. People don't question it; they get it. They put a cast on you; you don't have to take out your wallet; people don't ask questions; there's no stigma on it.

*(15:20)

But, if you start feeling depression, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, where do you access resources? People don't know. People aren't aware. And then when they finally do come—become aware, they reach out to a couple of people, they're passed around the system a little bit, they find out it costs \$120 to see a therapist for an hour. There's no coverage on that for many Manitobans. Why do we charge some but not others? We need to make it accessible. And maybe that's a conversation we should be having here in this House. We need to remove that stigma. People need to be able to talk about their mental illness the way that physical illness is talked about.

You know, let's talk about justice. My time is running out here, but we've said it before; at least the Liberals have. We need to be smart on crime, not hard on crime. This government, how many times do I need to say it? Smart, smart, smart, not hard on crime, smart on crime.

Yes, let's start thinking about the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry association. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is making cuts. These are our transitional housing. When people leave their prisons, when they're no longer incarcerated, they need to transition back into society. They don't always have money. They don't have resources. Oftentimes, their relationships are no longer there. They need stations like the John Howard Society and the Elizabeth Fry association. So rather than cutting funding, let's be putting more money into it. Smart on crime, remember.

You know, I also want to talk about how people are being incarcerated for the wrong reasons. We talked about mental health a little bit earlier—let—and addictions. People are being incarcerated because this government and police services don't have the resources to know what to do with them. When a person is addicted to crystal meth, putting them in prison is not going to help. When a person is drunk night after night, putting in the—putting them in the drunk tank overnight isn't going to help. Having them wait in hospital waiting rooms isn't going to help. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to be opening up

facilities, making people know and feel that they have a place to go when they are struggling.

You know, the last thing I want to talk about with justice is, in my constituency, we have the NorWest Co-op, and it's incredible how proactive they're being with this meth crisis. And they know that there is a crisis. Unlike this government, the NorWest Co-op is very, very aware that there is a true meth crisis here in our province affecting everyday Manitobans, now reaching out to children, pregnant women, and this government needs to take lead from the NorWest Co-op. I'm incredibly proud of them. They want to open up their own detox centre, and I'm hoping to have a meeting with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) to talk about this idea.

You know, I'm looking forward to this continued Fourth Session of the 41st Manitoba Legislature, and throughout the next few months and next two years and hopefully many elections to come, I'm excited to continue to serve my constituents, and I plan to continue serving them to the best of my ability, and I'm hoping together we can work towards bettering our province through legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): This is speak in support of the Throne Speech, but before we—before I get into the Throne Speech information, I—it's always important at the start of a new session to reflect back on the privilege of being in this House, the privilege of being elected by our constituents, so, a big thank you again to the people of Midland constituency, who have been very patient with me.

I—when I was in Thompson a couple of weeks ago, I told the people in Thompson I've been in Thompson five times in the last 15 months and I have communities in my own constituency that I haven't been to that many times. So at—I really appreciate the patience of the people of Midland constituency. Of course, the volunteers that helped me get elected and help carry the—our association, local association, on in—throughout the year is always greatly appreciated. And, of course, our family, my family, and with the holidays approaching, it—I certainly look forward to spending a little more time with the family and with our married spouses that we've got in our family and, of course, love to spoil the grandchildren, too. So it gives me that opportunity to be able to do that.

And so, in terms of the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've made significant gains in just the past two and a half years, and it has been a lot of work. We inherited a mess—probably a historic mess—in terms of the finances, in terms of the services that were being delivered by the previous administration, and we are working very hard to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild the economy, and we'll continue to do that.

Our work is certainly not done. We've made terrific gains, but there is a lot more to do yet. And it's—it is encouraging. I know many of us have been to the AMM convention, both last night and again today, to talk to delegates there, whether they're delegates from my own constituency, the 10 municipalities which are part of Midland constituency, or municipal councillors from across the province.

I even had a very good meeting this morning with the former minister of Agriculture, Ron Kostyshyn. He is now the mayor of the municipality of Mossey River. We had a very good—very productive discussion there, and we look forward to working with that municipality going forward. So we're—we are doing the work that needs to be done here in Manitoba.

And of course, in the past couple of weeks, I've been fortunate. I was in The Pas about, I think, three weeks ago. It was called the Linkages Conference. There was over 300 people at this conference, a packed house on OCN at the hotel there and just a really vibrant crowd.

Murad Al-Katib—the owner of AGT Foods out of just north of Regina, who is the principal behind Arctic Gateway railway that's got the Churchill line up and running again—he spoke Wednesday evening just before I actually got there, but the crowd was just buzzing from his very positive approach to where he wants to see that railway go.

Together with their indigenous partners on this, the communities that are partners of this railway, he's got some very lofty ambitions. And knowing the success of his business to date, he will turn those lofty ambitions into progress there. And so that will help the northern communities.

Couple weeks ago, I was in Thompson, went with the Chamber of Commerce on a business exchange with the City of Thompson. We met with the city council; we had very productive meeting with the chamber—or with the Chamber of Commerce

in Thompson and also city council. Congratulations to Mayor Colleen Smook, who is very positive about the future of Thompson.

And we met with various businesses there, had a presentation from Vale mines that—the potential of the nickel being produced in Thompson is really amazing, considering the projected growth in electric vehicles, because the nickel produced in Thompson is class 1 nickel, which is used in batteries. There's eight parts nickel and one part lithium in these batteries that are used in electric vehicles, and so there's great promise of future for Thompson there too.

In terms of our department, I should have mentioned, in thanking—Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was thanking people, I really want to thank the staff of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, from Deputy Minister Dave Dyson, to the Executive Management Committee, to all the people who work in Growth, Enterprise and Trade. They have done phenomenal work in the last two and a half years, and they continue to do that. And I'm—certainly appreciate all the efforts that they put into creating a better Manitoba.

In terms of the department, there are five—I call it, sort of, four and a half divisions, I guess, out of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. We have the labour; we have economic development; we have the resource division, tourism. And then there's the retail cannabis, which is up and running now, and hopefully it will be off on its own and off of GET's plate very—in the very near future.

*(15:30)

But, in terms of each division, we have just done tremendous work. The department and staff and our government has done tremendous work in these areas. In terms of labour, we've brought in a predictable and consistent increase schedule for the minimum wage. It indexes the wage rate to inflation. It takes the politics out of the process. This government is determined not to try and buy votes, as the previous NDP government was always trying to do.

So what we did is put predictability back in for employees and for employers and it is a much better system now, and you've seen the chaos that's been created in provinces like Ontario where the previous government wanted to increase—was going to increase the minimum wage, and then the current government has backed off. That's the uncertainty

that employees and employers don't need. Business and employees both like consistency and that's what they have with this government.

So, in—also in the Labour portfolio, we've harmonized our safety kits. Manitoba's leading the way in terms of harmonizing our safety kits. In—there is 10 provinces and three territories, and each province and territory had their own separate regulations for a safety kit, about how many pieces of gauze, how many pieces of bandage you needed in your safety kit. We've harmonized this now. Manitoba is leading the way; the other provinces and territories will follow our lead on this so that if a company comes in to work here, do work here in Manitoba, they don't need to create a different safety kit. We recognize the safety kits that are in other jurisdictions and that will work in this province, so it's much better for businesses coming to work in Manitoba.

Our economic development strategy will be released very soon. I would just suggest you stay tuned on this. It's new goals and priorities; it's a restructuring of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, with clear mandates. We will have regional or strategic partners who we'll work very closely with. We are leading the country in terms of private investment in Manitoba. We will continue to do that, and how you do it is continue to have focused economic development priorities, and that's what we will do in this province.

In terms of our resource division, and I know that this is a division that the NDP, the previous government, just totally ignored, walked away from in terms of our petroleum and our mining industries in Manitoba. I was very fortunate to have a tour of the petroleum industry with the—our Deputy Speaker, and I got a very up-close and knowledge of the industry and the importance of the industry and their environmental stewardship that they are doing.

And I know the NDP would never agree with anything like that, but when you get up close and really examine the industry, they are doing a very good job. And that's vitally important to the Manitoba economy and certainly it is a major player in the southwest of Manitoba.

Our mining industry had sort of a double whammy, I guess you'd call it. First thing that went against it was an NDP government, and then, secondly, when 2008, in the economic crash, the prices of resources fell tremendously, it cut off investment, and so the mines take a long time to develop and so there's been a lag since 2008,

combined between the previous government just discouraging any prospecting and exploration, but it is now coming back on—in importance, back to Manitoba.

We've—we are developing a mineral development protocol which will be also announced very soon, which will include a liaison committee on mining and exploration, and this, again, is vitally important.

This—in order to develop a mine, you first need the prospectors out there to, as I call it, bang on rocks and find some potential sites and then you have an exploration company in that does drilling and test holes to see whether there is actually that resource there.

All the while what we have, quite often, these resources are close to communities, remote communities, First Nation communities across the North, and there's been a real lack of communication between these First Nation communities and the mining industry and that's what our mineral development protocol will address. Section 35 is: consultations is of utmost importance, it must be done. And we have a constitutional obligation to do it. And there's also a communication obligation to do this. And so what we are doing is setting up timelines on consultation, making sure there's clear understanding.

One of the things that we have unveiled through this process is that there—many of our First Nation communities just lack the resources to understand the mining industry. And we have engaged the federal government on this, too, through their obligations to First Nation communities—is to create that sort of liaison person that—person or people who can work in a First Nation to explain what really is involved in terms of a mining—should a mining—should an exploration company and then a mining company want to develop a resource in the community. And it is—our First Nation communities are very excited about this. They are looking for economic development. This is—there's potential.

And we don't call it jobs; we call it careers in the mining industry. Whether that's operating camps that will be associated with this resource development or whether it be in the actual mining technology. The mining technology is just advancing very fast. And, like University College of the North and mining companies like Vale and HudBay in the North have been very instrumental in training new applicants into the mining industry.

So this is a real potential for Manitoba to get back in. We have lots of resources available. We've got gold, diamonds, nickel, lithium; there's even silica sand, which is—was in the news yesterday. These are all resources that can be developed. But it takes the proper protocol to do this. Environmental licences, the section 35 consultations, as we said—but there is tremendous potential in this sector for Manitoba.

Of course, another division within the department is tourism. If I had to pick favourites, this is my favourite because this—tourism is absolutely exploding in Manitoba. And it is—we have so much potential. Of course, Lonely Planet, the top travel agency across the world—we've made the top—list of top 10 in Lonely Planet, which just gives us—Manitoba tremendous exposure to tourists—tourism from around the world. And while many people think of tourism as, you know, whether it's here in Winnipeg, the human rights museum; Diversity Gardens, which are being built in Assiniboine Park; or Churchill itself. There are so many opportunities all across Manitoba.

Travel Manitoba has been working with communities. It's a branding process. Portage la Prairie is one of those communities that's gone through this branding process. In fact, they now use the branding that they have for their tourism as their branding for their economic development. So there is lots of potential here for all our communities across here.

We have brought into place the 96-4 funding for tourism, which means we take the net revenue out of tourism for the—from two years ago from Statistics Canada and you take 4 per cent of that and it goes into the budget of Travel Manitoba. So it really—they're on a commission basis; the more tourism they have, the larger their budget. And I give congratulations to all the staff at Travel Manitoba because they're doing a fantastic job all across the province and working with our travel agents, our—people involved in the tourism industry.

*(15:40)

Travel Manitoba also has a memorandum of understanding with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, which will help develop tourism all across the North. This is a tremendous opportunity for the North for the hunting, fishing, environmental tourism. All kinds of that. But it—but you have to run it like a business, and that's where the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada will

help indigenous people, help develop a business plan and help them get started in their tourism industry.

And there is just—we look forward to many more tourism operations getting started across the North, and across the south. We have opportunities—no matter where you go in Manitoba. We have—we just—sometimes Manitobans take it for granted, all the great sights and festivals and things that we have that—in terms of tourism across this province. And we will—Travel Manitoba will do a great job in making people aware of that.

And the tourism revenue has increased by \$100 million just in 2017. We expect that number to be even larger in 2018. And, of course, as we work towards our 150th birthday, the province's 150th birthday into 2020, you can expect to see even more promotion of the tourism industry. And let's take advantage of all the great things we've got happening in Manitoba in terms of tourism.

So the other division of it has been the retail cannabis. Again, I just want to thank the staff in Growth, Enterprise and Trade. They put a tremendous amount of work. The NDP just think this is an endless source of revenue. I can tell you, from the work that's gone into developing this, the federal government legalized cannabis, but then they left all the work to the provinces.

And our staff has—both in Growth, Enterprise and Trade, in Justice, in Health, in Education, there's been a lot of work been done on this file. I can tell you that Manitoba is the envy of the country in terms of the process that we're using, with the liquor and gaming authority licensing the retailers, with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries buying the—wholesaling the product.

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries actually went out and bought three months' worth of supply, where every other supplier across—wholesaler across the country only bought a month's supply. So we are in much better shape there. And other provinces started to go the government route, and then they saw that our system was better, Ontario being an example now. And so they only have online sales. They don't have any retail presence in place.

And so Manitoba is doing as good a job as we can, but there—this file is not done, by any means. We have to make sure that we keep safety and security in mind.

The black market is not going to go away any time soon, and we need to make that we keep our

children safe, keep—the Crown Services Minister in her member's—her minister's statement today spoke about the—driving under the influence of drugs. Please don't do that.

Let's keep everybody safe, and as we approach the holiday season, it's something to keep in mind, whether it's alcohol or whether it's drugs. Let's have a safe holiday for everybody.

And we just look forward to so much more great things happening in Manitoba. I can't even begin to describe all the things that are happened just in Growth, Enterprise and Trade, never mind all the other departments here, too. Manitoba's on the right track. We are going to be the most—

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It is my honour to rise in this House to speak to what is—what should be the government's most important document of the year, and that would be the Throne Speech.

The Throne Speech, of course, which should be the vision document, the document that all of us look to as we start to unpack what the government has in store this upcoming year and start getting some insight into what this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has in store for the next cuts to health and education that Manitobans can expect.

Now, I say it should be because we know that in past years, it actually has not been. And in fact, I think others have said it before me, but it is so much more about what this government does, rather than what it says. And there could be no better example of that than the closure of the Concordia Hospital emergency room in my community.

And that was a cut, a very major, a stark cut that this government came completely out of right field with, that members of the public had no idea it was coming.

Not one member opposite knocked on the door during the campaign and said, I am hoping to get your vote, I am hoping to become elected, I'm hoping that we can have a PC government in this province so that I can get to work cutting our hospital and cutting our ER.

It was completely out of right field, also because this government—the Throne Speech before the cut came, this government said nothing about it. Not one word. Not one peep. Nothing at all was said by this government in its Throne Speech.

So, while there's lots to say and lots to talk about about what's in there—and usually during a Throne Speech, you know, we—we've—you furiously scribble down, try to decipher, get our decoder rings out trying to decipher—break through the spin and try to figure out what this government is really about. What we also need to do is we also need to see what is not in this document, what was left out, what wasn't talked about. And that leaves us to speculate.

Now, we've done that before. We've been called fear mongers more times than I can count. And—in fact, we've been called fear mongers at the same time that this government is doing the exact thing that we warned the public that they might do. They said, oh, you're being a fear monger about CancerCare—while they're cutting CancerCare. So it's just completely mind-boggling that members opposite would, you know, stand in their place and try to defend those cuts.

But those are the priorities of this government. We see another Throne Speech that's missed the opportunity to invest, as this—as our caucus has said, in those services that every Manitoban is asking this government to invest in—things like health care, things like education, the environment, Mr. Speaker, and infrastructure. And the list goes on.

But this government is not putting on the brakes. They are not stepping back. They are not changing their position.

What I did want to do, Mr. Speaker, before I get into the rest of my speech this afternoon, is just to thank the members of my caucus—of the NDP caucus—of the opposition caucus who have been incredibly hard-working over the last few months, the last few years in bringing forward issues that Manitobans are saying are priorities for them, those issues that hard-working Manitobans are asking us to bring forward, issues that they're saying this government is ignoring.

And it really is, you know, being brought forward, I believe, in an honest way, in a way that brings forward those issues earnestly.

And, you know, at a time when we're dealing with so much disinformation in the world, there really is just a rampant ability for people to put false information on the record and yet go completely unchecked with that information.

I think it's important that, you know, the issues that are brought forward—it's not always politically advantageous to talk about issues in an earnest way,

but I think that members on this side of the House have done a great job in trying to bring those issues forward in an honest—in a way that honours the people whose lives are being impacted by them. And so I just wanted to say thank you, because I know it's a lot of work. I know it's a lot of hard work that is put forward by these members here on this side. And so a big thank you to them for doing that work and joining me in doing that work. It's really an honour to serve and to do that work on behalf of Manitobans.

One of the issues that hits closest to home for me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and so I was listening very intently in the Throne Speech for any kind of hint or word from this government on what was coming next was education, not only because I am the Education critic, but because I'm someone who has children who are just going through the K-to-12 education system now.

And, you know, and I get a chance—in my critic role, I certainly get an opportunity to talk to, you know, a lot of Manitobans, a lot of concerned Manitobans—whether it be stakeholders or groups that have been formed, educators, folks who are very knowledgeable about education in our province.

And I certainly appreciate and value those inputs. But I also get the other side of the story in the sense that—as the MLA, of course, I'm in schools all the time in my constituency, but I'm also a parent. And so it's often that parents will come to me in that capacity rather than as a politician or as the critic for Education, and just sort of express their concerns, express what they're seeing in their classrooms.

* (15:50)

And then they're telling me that, you know, the supports are cut from their classrooms. They see the resources within their schools—whether it be the library, whether it be supports for individual students, they see those slipping away, and we also see, as parents, bigger class sizes in the K-to-3 area across the board, Mr. Speaker.

And this is, you know, something that, you know, members opposite, again, went around door to door in the last campaign. They said, you know—in 2016 they said, quote, you know, the Progressive Conservative Party believes that class—small class sizes are one factor in improving educational opportunities, especially for young children. They had nothing but good things to say about that initiative to cap class sizes, especially K to 3, to ensure that our students had a better education.

And there's not one, you know, and I know the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), when he was the Education critic and now as the leader, has said it, has asked the question in question period, has said it many times in this House: Show me a parent, bring me a parent, any parent in this entire province, that would say that they want less one-on-one time between the teacher and their student in the classroom. And they have yet to produce anyone, of course, because that's a ridiculous notion. Every parent understands the impact of the one-on-one time and the support resources that are available to students within the classroom.

And yet what do we see from the Pallister government? We see cuts across the board, 23 school divisions on absolute reduction in their funding, a totalling of \$7 million. This is the first time in a generation, Mr. Speaker, that education funding is not keeping up with the growth in the economy, but, more importantly, it's not keeping up with even enrolment. So, if you were to take the education system and say, well, at the very least, we need to ensure that as students are added in particular schools or school divisions that we keep up the funding to ensure that those results that this government claims to want to achieve aren't impacted, yet the cuts continue to come.

So I listened very intently in the Throne Speech. I was looking for, you know, well, I was going to say I was looking for a whole page, maybe, of information on education, but, no, actually, I mean, I'd be happy with, you know, a few paragraphs that gives some insight into this government. And instead all we got—all we got—from this government was the re-announcement of their upcoming review for education.

Now, why is that concerning, Mr. Speaker, to us as an opposition, but, more importantly, why is that concerning to parents who are worried about their children's education, going forward? Well, it's simple. Every time this government announces a review, it means cuts. That is not something that we're just making up; that is absolutely how it's been with the education system, with every—sorry—with the health-care system, with every other review that this government has undertaken.

And every time they've been asked to do—they asked to do a review, they go out and they call on their best friends, whatever accountants that they can find, any kind of consulting firm that will put up their very best accountants to review something, they

are happy to do that, but will they call on those that are going to be impacted by these cuts? Well, you know, it remains to be seen; I keep an open mind. However, I'm not going to rely on the government to do that review and to do that work. Instead, what we're going to do is we're going to run a review of the education system in parallel to the government.

What we're going to do is we're going to go out and talk to those people that the government won't. We're going to honour their voice and bring their voice forward in the Legislature.

And, when this government comes back and says, oh, we talked to every—you know, the more—most Manitobans in the history of the province.

Well, we won't show you the data; we won't show you any of the information; we won't tell you who those people were; we won't give you any kind of indication of what they actually said. But don't worry, we talked to them and they said more cuts.

We're going to actually bring those voices forward in this place. We're going to bring them forward in a way that speaks to their challenges, but also to the opportunities. And, you know, this is really what has been brought forward by our leader in our alternative Throne Speech that I think really can be a model for this province. Not division and not cuts, but instead, actually bringing forward a plan that improves education in a way that protects local autonomy, that protects the ability of school divisions to influence the income—outcomes within their own jurisdictions and actually brings those voices forward in the Legislature in a way that people would expect us as legislators to do.

So I'm proud to do that work, and I hope to work alongside our partners to do that and to bring those voices forward. That is something that I'm looking very much forward to doing as we go forward.

The other element of education, again, was looking for, you know, a page, maybe a paragraph, maybe even a line or two about affordability when it comes to post-secondary education. Did I find it? No, Mr. Speaker. I didn't find it. I didn't find any new ideas, I didn't hear any new programs or progress that this government was going to make.

And, in fact, I didn't hear—which, you know, would have been just, I think, what all Manitobans are asking for right now, and that is to say whoa, look, we have made a mistake here. We see that tuition in our province is going through the roof and we're going to stop—we're going to slow down that

increase and we're going to invest in post-secondary education in a way that Manitobans expect us to do.

Because, you know, we have built in this province an education—a post-secondary education system that, you know, for a lot of Manitobans was something to be proud of. Certainly, members on this side of the House were proud to talk about not only having quality education in this province, which—you know, you can go across the country and you can compare our programs, whether it be in the community colleges, whether it be in the universities—you can compare the programs and the students that we're churning out to any student anywhere in Canada. And I would say even anywhere in the world. We produce some of the best students and had some of the best education programs in the country.

But, most importantly, we also had an education system that valued input and engagement and participation from everyone, Mr. Speaker. We wanted everyone who wanted a post-secondary education to be able to access that without barriers. And instead what we've been left with is a government that said, I gave a double whammy to the education system.

Started with cuts to universities. Well, no—you know, to be fair, I should back up, Mr. Speaker, because it wasn't cuts the first year. It said, whoa, whoa, 'whay', wait a minute, we'll just freeze. We'll just freeze the education—the post-secondary education system in our province. And, you know, and this is their classic line, well, we didn't cut it. We didn't cut it. You know, everything's going—may—becoming more expensive. There's inflation, of course, and enrollment's going up; but we didn't cut it, we didn't cut the actual number. Well, whatever. You know, this government wants to play with numbers, that's their prerogative to do so. But what the double whammy really 'whery'—really comes down to is, is that not only did they freeze that first year, then they cut those post-secondary education facilities by—and institutions by a real dollar amount. So, I guess, that line goes out the window. It's a cut, you know, there's no other way to describe it.

But, on top of that, Mr. Speaker, then this government went out and said, oh, by the way, if post-secondary education institutions want to raise tuition, they are free now to do so.

Now, I don't think any post-secondary education institution in our province wants to increase their tuition. They don't want to put up barriers for

students. They want more enrolment. They want more participation. They want a good education to build the workforce of tomorrow right here in this province.

That's what they want to do. But when they're faced with cuts from this government, they have been left with no choice. And they are cutting. They are cutting programming, they are cutting positions. They are making deep cuts as they need to because of the funding cuts, but they are also now putting their—those cuts onto the backs of students.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, this is the real shame because we're not going to be able to build a next—the next generation of a workforce in this province who's well educated, can compete anywhere else in the world with those kinds of cuts to our education—our post-secondary education system. That's a shame.

* (16:00)

And, you know, this government knows this. They see it. They hear it. They're hearing it over and over again. And yet they refuse to mention it, to talk about it and to address it in their Throne Speech.

Now, I see my time, Mr. Speaker, is getting short, but I did want to talk very briefly, if I could, about the—this government's plan for jobs and the economy. You know, this province is known, in a lot of ways, for its balanced approach to many things. And I think that's also true when it comes to the financial reality that this province faces. And I think Manitobans understand when a government brings forward a balanced plan. And, in fact, that's language that was certainly talked about before this government was elected. You know, the previous government said, hey, we're working on a balanced approach to government and a balanced approach to our finances, and stolen by this government in the 2016 campaign. Oh, yes, don't worry; we're going to be balanced too, whatever that means. Of course, we know that's not true. When they came in, they brought in one of the most austere budgets this province has seen in a generation.

But Manitobans understand, and, in fact, when this government said, you know what, I think it's going to have to be all hands on deck for a little while, Manitobans responded, in the same way that they responded back in 2009 when the former premier said the same thing. In 2011, when the former premier said the same thing, said, you know what, we're going to have to make some difficult

decisions, we're going to have to, you know, bring things into balance and we need all hands on deck, you know, people responded.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Manitobans responded. They understand how to balance their own budgets at home. They understand how to balance a budget in their workplace, in the businesses that they build and grow in our province. They understand that. But, at the same time, when this government talks about balance and then brings in a 20 per cent raise for themselves, not once, not twice, but three times, as a priority—in fact, in this last session, just a few short weeks ago, Madam Speaker, it was the No. 1 priority of this government to make sure that their raise not only went through now—they got their 20 per cent raise now—but, in fact, made sure that it would be available to them in perpetuity: 2026, the members opposite are looking for their big payday. Well, Manitobans said, that's not our priority. This Pallister government's approach to economic development has been beyond disappointed—disappointing. Nearly three years into their mandate and they still continue to talk about future action while focusing on their own raise. That's been their priority.

So, you know what? This Premier (Mr. Pallister) can continue to suggest, you know, processes and procedures. He'll hire consultants. I'm—you know, I'd love to know how many consultants this government has hired in its short time in office and the amount of money that's been spent, whether it is, you know, hiring accountants to look at CancerCare or, indeed, to pull apart the education system, only listening to outside firms.

You know, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House we will continue to do the kind of work that Manitobans have asked us to do, to represent the hard-working families in this province, who have asked us to continue to protect health care, education, to show them a path to good jobs and to protect the environment. These are things that Manitobans are asking for that are completely absent from this government's Throne Speech that are not talked about. And, again, it is not what this government says, but, in fact, what they do, and we have seen what they do, and it's cut, cut, cut.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): It truly is a pleasure and a privilege to be here to speak to the Throne Speech of the government from Manitoba.

It's—Throne Speeches are always a very important document. What Throne Speeches do, it lays out the agenda for the government for the year, which is really important. It sets the table and talks about themes of where the government will need to go. Of course, it's followed up by the budget, the budget speech, that will be—happen later on into the new year, which is important. But, having a plan and having a plan that's going to help Manitobans, we think is truly important.

And, as mentioned today, there is a number of challenges that this province faces, provinces always face, but exponential challenges as well as some storm 'clads' that are on the horizon. We know that over the last 17 years, under the NDP management, whether that be in the health-care system, whether that be in the education system or things like Child and Family Services or other items, we didn't get the results that we wanted, that Manitobans would expect. We had some of the highest rates of kids in care. We had some of the longest wait times, and there was a lot of inaction in terms of taking concrete plans to address some issues.

But not only just with 17 years of NDP mismanagement will take a long time to correct some of the problems that had in the past, but also things like higher interest rates. We know that the federal government—or not the federal government—rather, the federal reserve, not just in the United States, but in Canada, have increased interest rates, and I think it's probably about four times the last 18 to 24 months. That is something that will be happening, and they've highlighted the facts, both in the United States and Canada, that there'll be future interest rate increases. And what that means is, above and beyond the \$1 billion of interest that we're 'accruing'—that we have right now, that we're paying for, debt-servicing charges—the highest in this province's history—that will increase, and that could increase, which jeopardizes essential services.

We also know that there's unresolved trade disputes that happened, and we're happy that the US—the new USMCA was established, but there is still some challenges, Madam Speaker, with some of the areas—steel, aluminum, things like dairy, although dairy isn't as predominant in the agriculture sector as ours. They are specifically some challenges that we'll face.

And tax increases at the federal and local levels really threaten our prosperity in so many different ways, and that—whether that be the federal tax

changes that have happened, whether that compared to other jurisdictions. We know that we're not just in isolation here in the province of Manitoba, but we—you know, we are really in competition for businesses as well as individuals coming back and forth, but mainly businesses in terms of attracting people. And when you have uncompetitive tax rates and you have a place like the United States reducing their corporate taxes from 35 or 36 per cent to 21 per cent, it makes us less effective, less competitive.

Even if interest rates or the cost of the dollar is—our currency is lower—which has some advantages at a certain level—it is definitely some clouds that are on the horizon, and so we need to make sure that we're addressing this and we have an—a comprehensive plan to address Manitoban support.

It's now important than ever that we really fix our finances and really repair the services and rebuild the economy for Manitobans. If we can get the economy booming—and so far we've seen some pretty good results with the—leading the nation in terms of private sector capital investment, and sometimes these things become catchphrases. But what's really important behind things like leading the nation in private sector capital investment—I know the member from Portage is here. There's been some important investments in food processing, whether it be Simplot, whether it be things like Roquette, things—HyLife Foods that are a little bit to the northwest of that member and other members—are important, as well as a lot of residential development and industrial development that are happening in the city of Winnipeg. We're leading the nation.

And so that's an important step, but we need to not stand still. We must continue to make Manitoba Canada's most improved province with lower taxes, better outcomes and a strong economy. It makes—to make progress returning to balanced budgets while we're also providing tax relief for Manitobans and families.

And I can tell you in our budget process, our budget sessions that we've had, we've travelled all over the province and talked to thousands of Manitobans, got submissions from individuals. They've done budget surveys; they've actually got a new, interactive process to get people's opinions. And what's really important to us is make sure that we have Manitobans' priorities. That's, of course, what we ran on in the last election, and we got a historical mandate, but we also need to make sure

that we're still keeping up with the things that are important to Manitobans.

And so that's important, listening to Manitobans, to make sure we're getting it right. We can do this really by reducing wasteful spending on administrative layers so that we can invest more in front-line services and infrastructure, and that is important. We really committed to Manitobans that we need to protect those services and the services that people know and depend on and really have been neglected for a long period of time are focused in on. If we're able to focus our time, money and resources on these types of areas, the essential services, we're going to be stronger as a province, and we are going to hit that marker of being the most improved province in all these areas.

I'm very proud of the fact that the Civil Service Commission, as the minister for Civil Service Commission and Central Services, I'm working to transform the culture and the work of the public service. That is so important to make sure that you have our public servants who are—lunchtimes, we're working with them to implement some of the leadership priorities the government has by making sure we're implementing these things.

We've introduced things like balanced scorecards, which is developed with the assistance of international experts. We think that's important. Getting advice from international experts is important in terms of measurement, ensuring that we have innovation, ensuring that people know exactly how we're delivering these types of services.

* (16:10)

We've also made a focus, Madam Speaker, on transformational capital. And a lot of times, through the budget process, what happens is the bigger picture items take up a lot of the oxygen in terms of where you can spend your money, but there is a number of ideas that we wanted to harness from the public service in terms of how we can transform the systems. And so we put some money in our last budget as it relates to the Throne Speech, and also to ensure we can get some good ideas.

And what did you know, Madam Speaker? The first set of submissions resulted in more than 50 ideas to achieve better outcomes at a lower cost for taxpayers. And public servants from every department submitted proposals. In total, about 56 different proposals were approved for funding. These projects represented about \$21.2 million, but if

the payback on this, on the long term, will save taxpayers—Manitobans, about \$190 million over 10 years, delivering a return on investment of 899 per cent. So pretty good return on investments when you can make this.

The approved projects featured new—exciting new technologies that can help transform our public service.

I'll give you a couple examples, here, Madam Speaker. The first is modernization, Employment and Income Assistance, EIA, communications. This is a system where, before someone that may be on EIA would come and meet with a case co-ordinator; agreeable to have them provide some the stuff online, some of the information that's provided online, you can support four times as many people.

So that's an example—transformation. We've also done things like web-based portals—will also allow faster communications for EIA participants.

We're also measuring reforestation on successful management of aerial vehicles. And so this is, these are, you know, obviously the drones that can go up and down that allow us to really survey lands in a more effective way.

Also things, smaller things, like boardroom modernization; this is video conferencing. So boardrooms throughout the government will be modernized with new technology to decrease costs associated with travel and face-to-face meetings.

And that's important, Madam Speaker. If you can use technology to its best advantage, you're able to save taxpayers money. And, if you're able to save taxpayers money, we're able to invest things.

And that's why we've been able to invest things like over \$700 million for the health-care system, or close to \$400 million for the education system, or close to \$300 million for Child and Family Services, because these are important aspects that we really need to focus in on to make sure we're getting it right for Manitobans.

But just turning back, Madam Speaker, as it relates to kind of my area in the Throne Speech: the new service—civil service act. To really—to further advance transformation, I'll be working with the Civil Service Commissioner on a new public service act. And that's very exciting. I could tell you—exciting it is. It will develop to reflect the principles, values and needs of a modern Manitoba public service.

The act was created in the 19th century and it really has been a few updates since the 1940s, so you can imagine, if this is something for 50, 60, 70 years have not been updated, there's a real need to update that—the new—the civil service act.

The new act will ensure a safe and harassment-free work and ensure really fundamental values such as ethics, transparency, diversity, inclusion and consistently applied throughout the civil service. So that's important.

The new legislation will focus aligned—will foster alignment between core government departments and really across the whole public service, Madam Speaker. In addition to enhancing oversight, it will also 'incoi-perg'—incorporate greater flexibility to support innovation, renewal and engagement, and ensure our public service continues to attract diverse, skilled workforce. And, again, in terms of the Civil Service Commission, there's been few amendments, that's a part of it.

We think this is exciting, Madam Speaker. We think that there's so much talent in our public service. If we can work with the public service, make it more interactive, more—making it more engaged in so many different ways, modernize it, we think we're going to get the results. And I think this is going to be very much supported by public service in so many different ways.

We also know, Madam Speaker, that Manitobans are smart shoppers, and they expect that out of our government. And so that's why we've made a focus on procurement modernization. As we announced a few weeks ago, that we're really modernizing these practices of how we procure practices.

And what's really important about this is there's, you know—as we know, the deficit position we were left from the previous NDP government, there isn't all the money in the world to do this. If you can save money on things like procurement, things that will not impact services and support, if you can save on how you shop, whether you're bulk shopping, this is something that is important to the civil service. And what that means is the savings can be redirected on essential services, whether that be things like health care, whether that be things like education, social services, that are in—so important.

So we've engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers through a competitive tender process to assist over the next three years in modernizing our procurement

practices, which is protected—projected to bring in significant savings in the department. This'll free up more money to return to Manitobans and put towards front-line services. The old practice of different parts of government shopping for the same products and services without co-ordination will end. We think that's important.

Savings will be achieved from economics of scale, and evidence-based decision making will be applied really in order to shop smarter on behalf of Manitobans.

And I'll give you some examples, Madam Speaker. In other jurisdictions, the province of Nova Scotia, which is a little bit smaller than the province of Manitoba, has been able to engage the same process. And what they've actually been able to save on a yearly basis is upwards of 25 to 30 million dollars a year. That's a significant amount of money.

So, if you're able to shop smarter, you're able to work with other departments—you know, this could be things like, in all our departments—and I see a number of the ministers here that are involved in this, there's gravel, for instance, that a number of departments buy. If you can buy it in a bulk fashion for all the departments, you're going to save money. It's not something going to impact public service and we think it's important.

If you can have some examples like Nova Scotia did where we're able to save money and also partner in other areas—we've got a lot of interest from other municipalities, bigger buyers. Things like the City of Winnipeg are very much interested in the model we're looking at. So we think it's important.

We also know that things like the Crown land and management modernization is very key to transforming government. The current system for the management of Crown lands is ineffective and inefficient, and we're committed to modernizing the process to identify Crown lands and properties available for sale—for sale, strengthening public confidence in the administration and really improving the management of the public assets for the benefit—Manitoba.

The old system was far too costly; it was bureaucratic in so many different ways and really failed to get value for Manitobans, and that's what this is all about, Madam Speaker. We are simplifying the system, and we're making more efficient process for Manitobans. We're also ending the practice of forced bidding on public sector transformation.

But just turning back to the CLDS, what's important is that we know, on average, under the former NDP government, that when an asset was deemed as something—as a surplus where government would decide there wasn't a use for that land or that asset, it would take, on average, 2,200 days for this transaction to happen—2,200 days, Madam Speaker.

And what the costs—the costs of the transaction, when you have lawyers, when you've got assessors, you've got everyone that's involved in this process—you've got the TLC process, which is important with this as well—but it takes a long period of time to do this. And the costs under the previous NDP government were about 65 per cent of the money that you would actually gain from looking at the asset, if you're looking to sell it. So we need to be more efficient and effective. That's another area where we think we can be more efficient and effective in terms of how we're dealing with surplus lands.

In terms of referendums, Madam Speaker, we're bringing forward a new referendum act to restore the rights of Manitobans to vote on major tax increases and provide a framework for calling and conducting a referendum. Our fiscal responsible and taxpayer accountability act requires that a referendum must be held before the government introduces any bill to increase the rate of taxes under the Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax Levy, The Income Tax Act, the real—The Retail Sales Tax Act. We think that's important, that Manitobans have a say before their taxes are jacked up—that Manitobans will have a say, and that's important.

The NDP ignored the requirement to have a referendum when they raised the PST to 8 per cent and raised numerous and other taxes during the 17 years of fiscal mismanagement. Our government is committed to reducing the PST back to 7 per cent. We think it's important to be—we think that Manitobans are taxed to the max right now, and we need to address this. We need to be more competitive in terms of our tax environment and also give residents more money, more value, having more money in their pockets to invest in areas.

That's also things like indexing tax brackets. That's a move to ensure that people aren't losing ground as the economy gets better through—our economy grows or—also, through inflation that generally happens. Also things like the basic personal exemption, we know, are way far back from even places like Saskatchewan in terms of that

amount, the basic personal exemption before you're taxed. So it's important.

* (16:20)

We've also made important improvements in health. We're committed to delivering better health services sooner, and we're making substantial progress. The consolidation and strengthening of our—of emergency departments at the Grace, the Health Sciences Centre as well as St. Boniface Hospital is reducing wait times, and we've talked about this, Madam Speaker.

We know that on average we've reduced wait times upwards of 25 per cent. And that's an important stat: 25 per cent less wait times. The Minister of Health has chronicled what that means on a day-to-day basis with individuals. But the plan to reduce these wait times is important. And we've also seen some good results in terms of things like MRIs where the waits for MRIs has gone down by over 30 per cent. We're attracting more doctors in the province. There's over 75 more doctors in the province because of some of the changes we've made in the health-care system. We're also ensuring that interfacility transfers—there's about 1,000 more people that aren't transferred back and forth. You can imagine how traumatic that is if someone's in a health situation. Also, making important investments in terms of knee and hip and cataract types of operations. There'll be over 1,000 more procedures that are done. And so we think that that is important. And that is really part of our transformation as a government.

We know that mental health and addictions is something that we hear of, and through our budget consultations, I heard quite a bit about that, and we made substantial progress. We, of course, have commissioned the VIRGO report with important recommendations of how we're going to address mental health issues and addictions. We also know that we've created five new rapid access centres for addictions medicine clinics will provide services, and really connections for patients that are struggling with mental health issues. We think that's important.

A comprehensive implementation plan, of course, with the VIRGO report, and will be coming up over the next number of weeks, which is extremely important for Manitobans.

Our government is very much committed to things like personal-care homes. We know that there's very much a need to create more

personal-care homes. Sometimes that's the reason why there's longer wait times in hospitals, and we need to make sure we're supporting seniors. And our government is very much committed to creating 1,200 new personal-care-home beds. We're well on that way, Madam Speaker. I know the additional announcement's fairly soon on personal-care homes, which, we think, is important.

We also know that families and children in care is important area. We made substantial investments, close to \$300 million of investments, in the Child and Family Services. These are important areas. We've seen some positive trends where we've seen a reduction in amount of children in care over the last year, which is important trend in the right direction.

We also have things like looking at the child poverty rate. We know, under the NDP government, that we are the child poverty capital of Canada for far, far too long. And Stats Canada, which isn't affiliated with this government at all, has shown that we're actually no longer the child poverty capital of the country, which is another important trend.

Housing is important, and our government is very much committed to a bilateral agreement. We've signed on to the National Housing Strategy, and we're negotiating a bilateral agreement with the federal government that will invest important money in affordable housing here in the province of Manitoba. We've created or they're building over 700 new affordable and social housing units here in the province of Manitoba. We're supporting close to 3,000 more people on things like the Rent Assist program; that, of course, is affordable shelter benefit, which is important for Manitobans.

There just so much to talk about, Madam Speaker, I can't get it all in here. But I can tell you that we've also made some innovation in terms of things like child care. We created a child care—we created a new Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit, which we already see individuals taking advantage of this where we're going to create more spaces.

So I'd just like to conclude, Madam Speaker, to say that we think this is an important Throne Speech. It identifies our priorities as Manitobans, and we think this will lead to an improvement and become Manitobans' most improved province.

Thank you.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): There's not a whole lot to celebrate in this Throne Speech, not by a

long shot. When you look at the day-to-day realities of Manitobans, how their lives are getting more and more difficult, how this government is turning not just a blind eye, but a blind ear and a blind heart, to the hardship that people are facing, much of it the direct result of this government's decisions. There's just really not very much this government had to put into their Throne Speech, and their Throne Speech reflects the fact because it didn't say very much at all.

You look, for instance, Madam Speaker, at what's happening in our local communities, and I will talk about my own constituency first. And you look at what's happening more globally, the impacts of the enormous environmental crisis that our world is facing, this government's response has been absolutely pathetic and unacceptable on both fronts. If anyone from the Conservative caucus doubts anything that I'm going to say, I'd be more than welcome to tour them around the Wolseley constituency. And they don't have to listen to me; they can talk to local residents themselves.

And the most prominent issue, of course, that is going to be on people's minds in the constituency of Wolseley is, of course, the crystal meth crisis. It is manifesting itself on our streets in multiple new ways, none of them good.

I've lost track of the number of people who have contacted my office and my colleagues' offices in many instances, where they've come home from work or their kids have come home from school and there's someone under the influence of crystal meth who is sitting on their porch or who has broken into their car or who is trying to live in their garage or has decided to camp out in their front lawn or back yard when the weather was warmer. And this government's Throne Speech did not even address the crystal meth crisis at all. Completely out of touch, completely 'unacceptable' behaviour from this government.

And, of course, crystal meth in and of itself is bad enough, but it is a symptom of much larger and underlying systemic societal issues, such as the homelessness crisis. And the government had a perfect opportunity to witness this first-hand when tent city sprang up right across the street from the Legislature on the grounds of All Saints Church.

This is the same building where multiple Tory MLAs are very happy once or twice a year to head over to Agape Table and help out that fantastic organization when that was their location, to serve some food to vulnerable people. But, when it came

time to walk over and actually talk to homeless people—people who are struggling to find a place to live in a province that no longer is actively involved in building or maintaining or sustaining affordable or social housing—they were nowhere to be found.

On top of that, the member of the Chamber who just spoke in his capacity previously as Families minister raised the costs on our most vulnerable citizens who are living in subsidized housing, making it more expensive for them to live either in Manitoba Housing or in rent-geared-to-income housing provided by another—a non-profit organization.

That in itself is unconscionable, of course, for those of us who care about our fellow citizens. But, on top of that, this government has slammed the brakes on building any new affordable or social housing in Manitoba. And we have proven this over and over again, that the government has failed horribly in this category, in stark contrast to the hundreds of new units that our government was building every single year.

And, if the minister or any of his colleagues doubt that, again, I'm offering a free tour. I will show you the places that didn't exist, where there used to be an abandoned parking lot, and now there are dozens if not hundreds of affordable housing units in one location where before there was nothing.

And there are more affordable housing units, more new social housing units in my constituency alone, Madam Speaker, than this government has managed to build in the entire province in the two and a half years since they took office.

And it's got so embarrassing for them. They are so desperate to try and cover up the cold-hearted, mean nature of this government that they're now claiming that projects that were started before members of this government were even MLAs—projects that were started by our government—are actually ones they're trying to take credit for. That's how desperate they are to cover up what they're doing. That is how ridiculous their arguments get during question period.

Again: anyone wants a tour, I'm offering. Come on over to Wolseley, and I'll walk you through it, including the one at the university, where I was at the groundbreaking ceremony and the current Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) was still a city councillor.

That was on the list; that project was on the list of projects this government tabled claiming that they

had built them. You cannot be more bald-faced in the misrepresentation of the facts than that.

* (16:30)

So that's on housing. And that's just scratching the surface, never mind the fact that this government is also allowing multiple buildings—not just in my constituency, but across the province—when their federal funding agreement expires after the mortgage has been paid off, people are losing their subsidized units and they're having to move out and find another place to live in an already difficult market for affordable social and low-income housing.

You slam the brakes on building new, you make it more expensive for the people who are already in there. That equals classic Conservative government ideology: waging war on the poor and blaming them for the issues of the day.

Child care—very similar situation. The child-care policy of this government has been absolutely dismal. We have huge issues of people in the inner city, in rural Manitoba, in the suburbs, in the North; every single community you go to, there is a desperate need for good, publicly supported, publicly funded and operated child care.

There are, you know, so many studies and so much evidence, particularly coming out of Quebec, that a publicly financed child-care system actually pays for itself because you end up empowering so many people who are currently unable to enter the workforce.

Not many people know this, but a significant portion of the people currently receiving social assistance are actually folks who are single parents. Most of them women—there'd be some men, but most of them are women. They are unable to access training programs because they're doing their job as a mom at home.

They are unable to enter the workforce because they are doing their job at home as a mom, looking after their child, looking after their children. And, because this government is refusing, adamantly refusing to build more publicly funded child-care spaces, that problem is getting worse and worse and worse all the time.

Again, there are more new child-care spaces that were built in my constituency alone than this government has managed to build, taking the entire province together, in two and a half years—two and a half disastrous years since they formed office.

And let me remind you, Madam Speaker, and let me remind every government member and every single Manitoban: this government did not run on a platform of cuts. They promised Manitobans the exact opposite. Television ad after television ad after television ad: there will be no layoffs; there will be no cuts; there will be no job losses.

And what do they do the second they get into office? They reverse that and start hacking and slashing because they do not believe in government making a positive difference in people's lives. They believe the 1 per cent is well-off, but 1 per cent at the top needs even more support, and everyone else is just going to have suck it up and make sure that they do better at the expense of everyone and everything else.

And in no other category can you see this more starkly than in this government's incompetent, incoherent and, quite frankly, outdated—put it diplomatically—opinions about the environment.

We have report after report after report coming out, most recent one from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change making it perfectly clear that the world has 12 years to cut its emissions in half, or we run the risk of triggering runaway climate change worldwide.

That means every single person who plans to be alive 12 years from now is going to be facing a very different future on this planet if we do not take action today. And, beyond 2030, we have to become carbon-neutral 20 years after that, in 2050.

So, in Manitoba, this means every building on natural gas right now has to be using a green source of heat. Every single emission coming out of agriculture, whether it is from growing of crops, or the raising of animals, that needs to change to net zero by 2050.

Doesn't mean you don't have livestock anymore, doesn't mean you don't have buildings anymore, it means we have to radically change how we do those things. Same thing for transportation. All of our vehicles, all of our trucks, all of our planes, all of our trains, everything has to be operating in a different way.

And what do we get from this government? Well, they say no to climate science. They're ignoring that evidence completely. They say no to climate action. They've said no to carbon-pricing. They want pollution to continue to be free.

They've said no to the tens of thousands of green jobs that the young people of today desperately need and deserve so they can go out and fix the mistakes of boneheaded decisions like this. This government has said no to existing programs that were making a difference. They have actively made it worse. They froze the Power Smart program.

The only thing about climate change this Throne Speech even mentioned that even remotely relates to climate change in the Throne Speech was they promised, for the fourth Throne Speech in a row, Madam Speaker, that something called Efficiency Manitoba might eventually start operating at some point in time in the future. It's a pathetic response to a global crisis.

This government has cancelled what used to be the very best subsidy and incentive for solar power in the entire country. No other jurisdiction in the world has ended a subsidy for solar photovoltaic power—no one else has ended it cold turkey, gone from a hundred per cent to zero.

Welcome the Pallister government—first ones in the world to do that. Everyone else, if they decide, for whatever reason, that solar power is less important than it used to be, well, they'll start phasing it down. They will let people know in advance we're going to gradually decrease the incentive until it reaches a lower level or drops to zero.

No one has ever allowed a subsidy like that to end all at once until the Pallister government shows up and overnight they kill hundreds and hundreds of new green jobs in this province, because no solar company has made a single sale since they made that decision. They're all moving to Saskatchewan, and this government has only itself to blame and its own mirror for that decision.

They've made it worse on the public transit front. The Filmon Conservatives, they hate public transit. They hate it; it was well documented. They ended the 50-50 funding agreement with all the municipalities in Manitoba.

When the NDP came to office, we believe in public transit. We believe, if you choose to lead a more sustainable life, if you don't have enough money to own your own car, you should still have the ability to move around.

So what do we do? We brought back the 50-50 funding agreement, and what does the Pallister government do right after they come to office? They

cut it again. Who on earth can look at that history and believe for a second that the provincial government, under this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and these ministers and these backbench MLAs, care at all about lower income people or addressing the enormous challenges of climate change. They have said no to all of these existing programs. They've said no to new ideas. They've said no to proper public reporting on the climate emissions that are going to come out under this government.

Now, let's be perfectly clear: this government does not have a green plan. They have a green scam. It is not true; it is not accurate; it will not work. Emissions are going to go up in Manitoba when it comes to climate, not down. They're not going to stay flat.

And they have said repeatedly no to idea after idea after idea that would actually employ Manitobans to fix up our buildings, make us more efficient, save people money and, yes, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

That's just one example. They've said no to electric buses. They actually took the electric buses that we built in partnership with Manitoba Hydro, Red River College, Mitsubishi industries and New Flyer Industries—they took those electric buses—what did they do with them? They shelved them. They killed the electric bus. Those buses are now sitting on New Flyer's parkade not being used by the City of Winnipeg anymore at all.

You want to try and tell me you know what you're talking about on climate change? Go take a look at those buses sitting there not operating anymore when an electric bus will save—according to a U of M professor, they will save Winnipeg Transit \$60,000 per year in reduced operating costs per bus.

But this government, which wants people to believe they know what they're doing, can't wrap their heads around those incredible savings, the local jobs that are supported here, when you buy local buses made by New Flyer that are electric and you put them on the road and help people move from place to place that they need to get to in an environmentally friendly way. That is how out of step this government is.

Former colleague of mine loved to say this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) policies on society come from the 1950s, and their economic policies come from the 1850s. Well, their environmental policies are even more ancient than that.

On the water front—that was just climate change, Madam Speaker. On water, this government has wiped out and ignored regulations that we put in place after the Walkerton crisis and after the Walkerton Inquiry took place. Remember, in Walkerton, Ontario, under the Harris government—under the Harris Conservative government—again, you see a theme here with all these problems, all right?

The Harris Conservative government privatized the maintenance of water infrastructure, and people died as a result. They'd cut corners; they did not have staff who were properly certified; they did not monitor water quality properly, and thousands of people got sick in Walkerton, Ontario, and people actually died.

*(16:40)

What has this government done? They have ignored the advice of the Walkerton inquiry and they've reduced the frequency with which water infrastructure must be checked and inspected in Manitoba. They have weakened water monitoring in other areas, just—monitoring of groundwater. They have weakened nutrient regulations that we brought in—regulations that are there to prevent excess nutrients from washing into our lakes, rivers and streams from farms, from golf courses, from all sorts of different sources.

They've weakened those regulations, they've eliminated democracy in rural Manitoba. If you are a person concerned about a new proposed industrial agricultural development and the local council sides with you and agrees that the concerns that you have raised are proper, well, the proponent for the expansion can now appeal and have that quashed.

But if the council sides with the developer, you as a rural citizen don't even have the right to do—to also seek an appeal. You cannot have a more blunt example of a government trying to tilt the see-saw in favour of one direction over another.

And, of course, I think perhaps the worst thing this government has done has been its behaviour in allowing North Dakota to proceed with the Northwest Area Water Supply and the Garrison project water diversions in North Dakota without any assurances from the Americans that proper water treatment is going to occur in advance and that we are not going to see dozens—potentially dozens of known foreign invasive species which are right now in the Missouri River Basin coming to Manitoba

after that river basin and our Hudson Bay drainage basin have not touched each other for thousands and thousands of years. They have a different makeup of species. But this government has dropped all legal action to try and stop North Dakota from doing it, whereas our government previously won repeated legal and diplomatic victories in the United States, in the United States court system, to protect the quality and the safety and the future of Manitoba's water.

On protected areas, we are seeing reports just recently—as recently as last week. Sixty per cent of the world's wildlife has disappeared for a variety of reasons—primarily habitat loss, but also can be overhunting and, in parts of the world, poaching. And our minister's response here? She again rejects the science. She says, well, the federal government can go and listen to what the scientists are saying has to happen.

If you want to protect 17 per cent of Canada, as the scientists are saying, that's fine. We're not going to do any more work here in Manitoba. She literally said that in this very room. She'll support the global goal; she'll support the national goal; she's not going to do anything in Manitoba. She's freeloading. She is expecting other provinces and other territories and other parts of the world to do the work she should be doing herself. And she's making it even worse because, or, have been park reserves that were ready to become protected areas that, instead, she signed over the territory to mining interests, contrary to the wishes of the local First Nations who had been involved in good faith in consultations heading towards a park development for many, many years under our government.

There's far more that I could say, but I see my time is winding up, so let me just conclude with this closing argument and observation, Madam Speaker.

As everyone knows, I'm not running again, but my message to Manitobans is very clear: if you want a future that you can be proud of, if you want your kids to have even a shot at a decent future or enjoy the type of lifestyle that you've had, you simply have to start getting rid of Conservative governments in this province and across the country.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's always a pleasure to rise to put a few words on the record in support of our party's Throne Speech. It's certainly a much different approach from a government to what we just heard from the member for Wolseley

(Mr. Altemeyer), whose doom and gloom on everything that you could possibly imagine, and blaming virtually every piece of development on some type of climate change process that he believes is—falls on our doorstep.

And yet he tends to want to blame certain sectors. He was very quick to blame the farmers in Manitoba who, in fact, I would argue are some of the greenest in terms of operation anywhere in Canada and have a great history in taking action in this whole area.

In fact, they helped develop a program called alternate land use services, an ALUS program, that we piloted in this province, despite the fact we could get no co-operation whatsoever from the government at that time, and they didn't carry it forward.

And now it's actually become a program that is running in seven provinces across Canada very successfully and getting great co-operation, not only from the landscape owners, which are mostly agriculture, but also from urban dwellers, who find it a very rewarding program to be part of. And the communications and the contributions from the urban dwellers are actually what help drive this program forward.

But it isn't something that this—the former government here found that suited their purposes. They would rather dictate to people.

And the member for Wolseley talked a little bit about nutrient management regulations. And the first set of nutrient management regulations that this previous government put forward would have shut down major sections of agriculture completely in this province, including the hog industry, including a big chunk of the cattle industry and cow-calf operations.

And, you know, they didn't know that they'd even done this. In fact, it had to be pointed out to them that, well, if we follow the—what you're writing up here in terms of rules, there'll be no more cows in this area. There'll be no more hogs in this area, and we'll lose all those industries, and all these people will be unemployed.

And they had not seen down the road. They had come up with a set of regulations that they thought, well, okay, it solves the problem, and we don't have to deal with it in the urban settings. We'll just make rural Manitoba deal with all of the nutrient management issues across the province, and we won't have to do anything.

There's got to be some fairness and equity, and everyone has a footprint when it comes to environmental impact. And just asking or forcing someone else to deal with your issue seems to be, sort of, a pattern with the previous NDP government. We'll make someone else deal with it, but we don't really want to deal with it.

So we're very pleased to move forward with our green plan moving forward. We know that it has great potential to deal with a lot of climate change. And the member opposite said, well, you know, we don't have targets, specific targets. We certainly would like to invite him to bring forward any data that he has to show that he actually had targets and that he actually achieved on any of the targets.

In fact, the only thing that I can actually say that he accomplished when he was the critic—or sorry, the member for Wolseley was actually driving the whole issue is he did get a free trip to Paris out of it, which I'm pretty sure had a major environmental impact, but it wasn't a positive one, I'm pretty sure—*[interjection]* We can go with that.

Now, Madam Speaker, I would like to touch on a few other issues in today's—a few minutes to talk about the impact of our Throne Speech. And one of which I'm looking forward to working with is the whole issue of education and of the K-to-12 review, which I'm going to have a role in.

And it's really interesting to actually be over at the AMM conference today and everybody I run into is stopping and saying, well, you know, we're looking forward to this. It's been 20 years-plus since there's been a review of the education system.

We know that during that period of time, that the results, in terms of education outcomes in Manitoba, have gone in the wrong direction. They've gone from fourth and fifth in Canada, depending on what you looked at, to ninth and 10th. Those are not movements in the right direction. Everybody knows that.

And it's—we need to look at ways to improve our education system, and we also want to talk about the funding and structure and the governance of the education system, because, of course, as everyone knows, we are the last province doing it the way that we are doing it, attaching it to property and to a major degree, in particular.

And, when you actually look back as to how that developed here in Manitoba, it's a process that, actually, that goes back to the homestead days. It's

attached to The Homestead Act of 1893, and so that would tell you how modern that their approach to dealing with funding of education was. It's not even in the last century; it's in the previous century.

So we're looking for opportunities to have that discussion that is well overdue. And we know that Manitobans are very excited about that opportunity. We look forward to that opportunity. And I know that many teachers are looking forward to the opportunity to put on record some of the improvements they would like to see.

* (16:50)

One of the things that's been coming forward every time I run into teachers' groups at various meetings that I've been attending to is they really want to talk about the human resources side of teachers in education and employment. They have—they feel very frustrated that there hasn't been a very strong system in place for some time and that—they feel that they're not getting heard through the system.

They also feel that they don't have—we don't necessarily have—we know that we have really great teachers, but they don't necessarily feel that we have the right teachers in the right places doing the right things, and so that's kind of the part of the process that I think we're looking forward to.

And I, frankly, believe that is one of the areas where we can achieve the greatest improvement and outcomes, working with the high-quality educators that we have in the system and making sure that they have their opportunity to be heard and to change the system so that we can make sure that they have the opportunity to get better outcomes.

We've heard from teachers all the way through the process that there is certainly frustration and there's a desire to change the system, moving forward. So we look forward to that opportunity. And as part of that process, we'll be listening to parents as well. And I can tell you that many, many parents have approached me and—saying, you know, we feel like we're not part of the system anymore.

We don't feel like we're being heard when we go to the school to meet with the teachers or the administrators. We don't feel like we're being heard about our concerns in classrooms. We don't feel like we're even being heard about the need to make improvements in the mathematics side of things, was one that's been brought forward. And I know that when you look across other jurisdictions in Canada, you hear some of the same thing.

Now, I don't want to paint gloom and doom like my—the colleague from Wolseley did, because I know that even though we have moved down in Canada, Canada as a whole still stacks up pretty well in terms of educational outcomes under international measures. And so we are still viewed as a well-developed country with good education capacity.

And I see the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) nodding his head in the right direction; it's absolutely right that we do, as a country, have great, well-recognized processes that are in place. And we need to take the opportunity to emphasize that and to move forward and improve our system.

Now, member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) took a moment to talk a little bit about consultations and bringing in some outside expertise and bringing in groups to look at outcomes—consultants, in some places, I think he called them. And I am reminded that one of the things we did through Education and Training is we actually had a review of the colleges system. It was actually legislated that we would do colleges reviews every five years.

However, when we came into government, it had been 12 years. So we did one—started one in the process right away. We've got outcomes for that, and their recommendations are very strong, suggesting that we need to increase the capacity.

And when we look at our future as Manitobans, and we need a well-educated workforce, it is one of the things that businesses actually identify when they want to tum to a jurisdiction and say, well, you know, you need to have certain physical features in terms of sewer and water, but we also need a well-educated workforce. And so that is an important thing, moving forward, in the future.

And I can tell you, when we came into government, not only had we not done the colleges review so that we weren't modifying the process and making sure that we had training that matched up with the needs growing, but we had actually let the apprenticeship system fall into disarray, which was an embarrassment for any province to admit to that.

And we've worked very hard to put that system back in place, modernize it by working with other provinces in a co-operative manner to make sure that we are cost-effective in terms of our recording system and expand it to deal with some of the issues in terms of—deal with some of the issues that need to

be addressed in terms of making sure that we have people coming up.

One of the problems that we deal with all the time in the apprenticeship system is that many of the people that are in the system now are actually baby boomers. And so they're going to age out of the system fairly quickly, and we have not done a good job of recruiting people to fill that particular gap.

Now, I know that my time to speak is fairly limited today, and I would like to take a—
[interjection]

Well, I am certainly encouraged by their agreement with everything I've had to say. But I will like to take a moment to thank my constituents—and the great constituents of Portage la Prairie. It's been a good couple of years for them.

We've had some success in terms of attracting international attention, to bring businesses into the community. I'd like to say that the rest of the world has finally discovered the great assets that we have in that community, not the least of which is the well-trained personnel, the wonderful human resources, the great natural resources that we have to work with in that community.

And I'm very proud and pleased to have had the— to have an opportunity to represent them. I certainly plan on working as we move forward to expand further the opportunities that are there in the community.

We're not done yet, folks. I see greater opportunity, and I know that many people in our community are excited for the very first time in a long time about the upbeat feeling in the community. It is actually really great to walk down the street in Portage la Prairie. Everybody's feeling pretty good about some of the things that are going forward.

I know that we have many challenges to deal with. We have some challenges in the crystal meth area and we are working very co-operatively with various departments to make sure that we have some solutions in place to help deal with that. It isn't something that you can fix overnight. We know that it'll take time and it has a lot of extenuating factors as part of the process.

So thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech today. I look forward to hearing even more.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the residents of

River Heights for their continuing support and to talk a little bit about some of the things that I've been doing in River Heights that relate to the Throne Speech.

Specifically, I've held three—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Specifically, I've held three forums this fall. The first of these was a forum on learning disabilities. And this forum focused on a major gap which currently exists in the support of children and adults with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are common; about 8 per cent of our population have learning disabilities. And learning disabilities, when not identified and helped, can result in delays in learning, delays in reading, problems in school.

These difficulties, when not addressed adequately, can result in students becoming frustrated, dropping out of school and not graduating from grade 12, having trouble as adolescents with juvenile delinquency, having trouble getting a job and sometimes with difficulties which lead to interaction with the criminal justice system. Indeed, individuals with learning disabilities are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

And for many reasons, then, addressing 'learn' disabilities should be a focus of our efforts in order to help children and adults with these conditions and to improve our society for everyone. I think everyone would agree that we want to reduce criminal activity, that we want to increase safety. Well, one of the

things that we can do is to address learning disabilities.

I think all would agree that we want to prevent mental illness and that we want to prevent addictions. And one of the things that we can do constructively is to address individuals with learning disabilities and help them, because it is the frustration and the lack of help which sometimes leads these individuals to have problems with mental illness, to have problems with addictions, to have problems with the criminal justice system.

The Throne Speech contains one item, improved therapy for preschool children, which might help some children with learning disabilities, but it's not nearly enough.

Most children with learning disabilities are not identified until they reach school, and assessments for such children are often delayed. And help for such children is often not provided adequately. We need to be doing much better, Madam Speaker.

Clearly, in this and other areas there is lots to be done. There are challenges, but there are opportunities. Sadly, this government has been much about talk and—

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. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

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