

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

Thursday, March 21, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 229—The Sikh Heritage
(Creation of the Khalsa) Month Act**

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Moved by me and seconded by the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher), that Bill 229, The Sikh Heritage (Creation of the Khalsa) Month Act, be now read at a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Saran: The Sikh religion is not only a belief system or a faith; it is a universal philosophy. More importantly, it is a guideline for a social movement.

The Sikh religion evolved not only by standing against all forms of segmentation of people by colour, caste, creed and appearance, but also as a movement to bring peace, unity, brotherhood, compassion and dignity of humans in any corner of the world.

I ask this House to support this bill. Thank you.

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

**Bill 24—The Minor Amendments
and Corrections Act, 2019**

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, Bill 24, the minor corrections and amendment act, is the annual bill that is introduced that corrects typographical, numbering and other drafting errors.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**Lake Winnipeg Community-Based
Monitoring Network**

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that our province of Manitoba is blessed in our lakes and waterways. Our wonderful prairie province not only claims a saltwater coastline bordering on Hudson Bay, but we also have more than 110,000 freshwater lakes, including Lake Winnipeg, the 10th largest freshwater lake in the world.

Lake Winnipeg's vast watershed encompasses four Canadian provinces, four American states and multiple First Nations. All human activities across this huge watershed have the potential to impact our water quality; however, the closer you are to Lake Winnipeg, the bigger your impact will likely be.

And while our Manitoba lakes and waterways are a great blessing, Madam Speaker, our citizens are truly our greatest blessing.

The community-based monitoring network of the Lake Winnipeg Foundation is a growing network of Manitobans who roll up their sleeves, get outside and get involved in hands-on opportunities that produce valuable information to improve water management in Manitoba. This growing network engages volunteers and students in collecting water samples across Manitoba using scientifically vetted protocols.

These volunteers and students are citizen scientists who translate science into action. The results of their sampling data focuses action on the root causes of harmful algae blooms in order to create a plan that is a road map towards a solution to restore the balance of the vital ecosystem of our own Lake Winnipeg. Funding is then targeted to give the greatest return on investment to improve the health of our waterways and to monitor the impact of various initiatives.

Water connects us all. It is essential to life on our shared planet; its health is our shared responsibility.

Madam Speaker, please stand with me in recognition of international water day and these citizen scientists that leverage the positive power of collaboration and are having a real impact

throughout the watershed of Manitoba's own Lake Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Infrastructure?

Mr. Schuler: And, Madam Speaker, I request leave to add the names to Hansard of those attending from the community-based monitoring network of the Lake Winnipeg Foundation.

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

Lake Winnipeg Community-Based Monitoring Network: Georges Beaudry, Ken Boese, Marlo Campbell, Ernest Cholakis, Chris Goodwin, Carla Keast, Chelsea Lobson, Sonya Michaleski, Janice O'Leary, Carlie Pauls, Danica Racicot, Barb Read, Brent Shabitts, Marissa Smirl, Mike Stainton, Peter Williams.

Apuckalypse Now

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): In Manitoba we love our hockey, and today I want to acknowledge some friends who are using their love of hockey to help the community.

For the past eight years, a one-day, co-ed, outdoor hockey tournament called Apuckalypse Now has taken place. It's for people of all skill levels, from former pros right down to the try-hards like myself.

While most of us play beer league, when Apuckalypse rolls around we set aside our regular rec team allegiances and join new teams in order to battle for the cup. Tournament's a day-long affair with games, activities, food, even a social inside the Bourkevale Community Centre, and entire families join in on the fun.

It's really cool to see moms and dads inside the centre playing with their kids before putting up—putting on the skates and then running out to the ODR to play a couple games of hockey outside.

Now, the goal of this tournament was to have 150 participants and raise \$2,500. This year they easily surpassed it, raising more than three grand to donate to the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba's learn-to-skate and hockey program. This initiative runs out of the Charlie Gardiner, a.k.a Pioneer Arena, every Friday afternoon from October to March, and offers skating lessons, hockey instruction and equipment to newcomer children.

Now, hockey can be expensive for a kid to play. Ice time, tournament fees, equipment, it can all add up, but the Apuckalypse organizers want to remove as many of those barriers for kids to play as possible.

In addition to raising money at the tournament, many of these organizers volunteer with the program for the rest of the year. In the end, it's all about welcoming these newcomer youth into our way of life here in Canada.

I want to thank the organizers of the Apuckalypse Now tournament for harnessing their passion for hockey in a way that will help all kids develop a love for the game. I wish them good luck with next year's tournament, and we'll see you at centre ice.

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition?

Mr. Kinew: Thank you kindly, Madam Speaker.

I just ask for leave to table a list of the organizers' names to include the names in Hansard.

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

Apuckalypse Now Organizers: Cory Bellhouse, Jen Glenwright, Tom Kroeker, Meghan Kynoch, Clay Lorraine, Eric Paas, Karl Thordarson, John Vogan.

Helen Hopko

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, I rise today to applaud the compassionate service of Rossmere resident, Helen Hopko. Thirty years ago, Helen joined an initiative called Share Christmas and started knitting handmade toques, mittens and scarves to give to those who needed them.

A former school teacher and vice principal, Helen, whose husband of over 60 years recently passed away, now knits daily in her Rossmere apartment.

Madam Speaker, this may be an odd time to talk about Christmas, but Helen along with her six friends are already knitting so that next winter they can give hats, toques and scarves in area schools, community clubs, social service agencies, friendship centres and resource centres, all free of charge and to anyone in need, and all—until today—anonously.

Some years they have produced 4,000 items and distributed them through 60 organizations throughout Winnipeg and across Manitoba. Last year, despite

recovering from a serious arm injury, Helen and her team had 800 pieces knitted by the end of the year.

By fall, the spare room in Helen's apartment will be filled with a host of handmade toques, scarves and mittens, sorted and ready for distribution when the agencies, schools and resource centres begin calling.

While we celebrate the warming temperature of spring emerging, I encourage us all to consider the work of Helen Hopko and her volunteers, who are diligently knitting every day of the year in order to show kindness next winter. As Helen has said, we need to care more for each other, and often it takes little effort to make a big difference.

I invite members of this Chamber to join me in thanking and congratulating Helen on the thousands of items she makes with diligence and to wish Helen and Share Christmas every success.

* (13:40)

Voluntary Fish Quota Buyback

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I read a chilling press release dated March the 11th, 2019. The government will offer the option of voluntary individual quota buyback. Fishers have until today at 4 p.m. to provide a notice of interest: only 10 days notice.

But here's the chilling part: the PCs love creating uneasiness and stress for everyone here. So we're wondering, will the government later on force the selling of individual quotas.

Many indigenous people always think of generations yet unborn. Selling the quotas now will impact future generations, and we know it. We know this government has tabled no plans to revitalize Lake Winnipeg, and so perhaps that is why they're coming up with a scheme to protect only themselves.

The PCs are telling fishers, come, sell me your quota, but I'm not going to tell you how much I'll pay you. This really demonstrates how little this government thinks of our hard-working fishers.

We are not ignorant people. What do you mean when you say you'll pay fair market value? We've shared with the—with you videos to the Indigenous Minister of what our fishers are pulling up in Lake Winnipeg: sludge and no fish. Is that how you will determine the buyback value?

The PCs don't even know how to count children in care. Our agencies say the number is well over 11,000, and they say it's barely over 10,000. How can we trust the PCs to be fair?

The lack of consultation is another big issue. I know they will try and slam me for saying that, so here's a letter I will table from Fisher River Cree Nation that states there was no consultation. Please read it in its entirety, as there are other issues that need to be addressed that I have run out of time for.

And don't flip my words. We indigenous fishers welcome conservation and sustainability. We kept our lake alive and thriving for centuries.

Loran Scholarship—Dauphin Recipients

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): The Loran scholarship is a prestigious national scholarship that is awarded annually to students from across Canada.

The Loran Scholars Foundation was founded in 1988, and selects up to 34 students each year for an undergraduate scholarship valued at \$100,000.

To be eligible, a student must have a cumulative average of 85 per cent, and then the selection committees rigorously evaluate and select finalists on the basis of a young person's character, commitment to service and leadership potential. The foundation believes that integrity, grit and personal autonomy are better indicators of overall potential than standard academic measures.

Madam Speaker, to receive this scholarship is an incredible personal achievement, but it also raises the issue and speaks volumes about the positive environment in which a student is raised.

In the last four years there have been two recipients in the Dauphin constituency that have been awarded this prestigious 'scholarship': Erin Knight of Gilbert Plains won it in 2015, and for 2019, Taron Topham from Grandview was awarded this very comprehensive scholarship.

Along with his academic achievements, Taron serves as the local 4-H Club treasurer and president of the student council. Taron is a member of the Dauphin Kings Junior A and Parkland Rangers hockey teams. He helps on the family farm, has been showing cattle at Roblin's 4-H Livestock Show and Sale for years and also volunteers for many community activities.

I want to congratulate Taron on this outstanding national achievement and extend congratulations to Taron's parents Kent and Leanne, his family, the community of Grandview and Mountain View School Division for the positive influences towards this achievement.

Thank you.

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 from HBNI-ITV out of Fairholme school we have 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Evelyn Maendel, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Portage La Prairie (Mr. Wishart).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

ACCESS Program and Bursary Request to Reinstate Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, we know that having access to a post-secondary education can change the lives of a young person and even for their families for years to come.

Since 1972, ACCESS programs have made sure students who had real barriers to getting an education could be able to enter post-secondary and then find success. ACCESS programs at Red River College, the universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg, and University College of the North help students to become engineers, to become nurses and to become doctors—at least they did until the Premier (Mr. Pallister) decided that he should cut these programs by some 10 per cent. I table the documents for the Premier today that illustrate this cut.

Why has the Premier cut over \$1 million dollars from ACCESS programs? Why is he making it harder for vulnerable students to get a post-secondary education in Manitoba?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, we certainly recognize that it is important that students have access to affordable education. That is why our government has brought in more support for students through the scholarship and bursary programs.

We have doubled it, what was ever available under the NDP. There are tens of millions of dollars more that's now available than there was ever available under the previous government.

We're continuing to ensure that education is 'infordable' in Manitoba. We have legislation that ensures that we are the lowest averaged tuition in

western Canada and providing support for those students who need it.

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

Mr. Kinew: Okay, so, Madam Speaker, the Premier has cut \$1 million from the program funding for ACCESS, which means fewer tutors and fewer course advisors for these students.

And I'm glad that the Minister of Education has raised the issue of bursaries as well, because they've entirely eliminated the ACCESS bursaries, Madam Speaker. So this is a—\$1.6 million that 200 students received in 2016-17. I'll table the documents which illustrate this cut for the Premier here today.

So not only have they cut the program funding to support the students, but they've also cut the bursaries that these students were using to pay for their educations at post-secondary university and colleges across Manitoba.

Will the Premier simply reverse his decision to cut the ACCESS programs and the bursaries today?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, there are more bursaries and scholarships available in Manitoba than there ever has been before. That is because we are working in partnership with the universities and colleges. In fact, we've expanded the colleges to which these bursaries are available, the matching program, Madam Speaker, so there are more students that have access to these scholarships and bursaries. In fact, it's even been more successful that we expected it to be. So we're ensuring that there is more funding available for those scholarships and bursaries.

We understand that an affordable education is important. That is why we have in legislation to ensure that Manitoba will have the lowest average tuition of any province in western Canada, and we are supplying bursaries and scholarships in partnership with those who want to donate to ensure that people can get a post-secondary education.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, it's no surprise that this government wants to stand up and somehow argue that cutting \$1.6 million in bursaries somehow amounts to giving more to students and, again, it's no surprise that this government has cut \$1 million from the ACCESS programs and is now trying to argue that they're increasing ACCESS when, in fact, they are reducing the supports for ACCESS programs.

These are programs which have helped students coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, vulnerable students, indigenous students, be able to become nurses, to be able to become engineers, to become teachers, to become social workers, in the process changing their lives, their communities and even their families for generations to come.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) stand up in this House today, will he stand up in his place right at this very moment and say I'm going to restore funding for the ACCESS program and restore the \$1.6 million for ACCESS bursaries?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, in 2017-2018, 13,000 students benefitted from scholarships and bursaries in Manitoba. In '18-19 we expect this to increase to almost 16,000 students. That's almost 3,000 more students than were eligible before and, certainly, way more than was ever eligible under the NDP government.

* (13:50)

So more and more students are being provided support if they need it; they're being provided bursaries, scholarships if they qualify for the scholarship, Madam Speaker. There are more students who are getting support. At the same time, we're ensuring that our tuition is not only competitive, but the lowest on average in western Canada. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Highways and Roads Maintenance Budget

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Bottom line, Madam Speaker, they've cut bursaries for ACCESS students and they've cut the tutoring and course advisor supports for these students, as well, by millions of dollars.

We know that it's officially springtime here in Manitoba today and, of course, I'm sure everyone can agree that that means it's pothole season once again. And there is no pothole bigger this year than the \$40-million pothole that this government has left in the City of Winnipeg's budget.

Now, we know that the Premier and his ministers love to argue the minutiae, but at the end of the day the effect for people in the city of Winnipeg is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—this: the bottom line is that under this government there will be zero dollars devoted to road repair in the city of Winnipeg. Outside the Perimeter, they're cutting a further \$11 million from the highway maintenance budget, Madam Speaker. It's cut, cut, cut when it comes to this government.

Will they simply reverse these cuts to roads in the side—the city of Winnipeg and across the province?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Let me see if I can educate the member opposite on maybe some math issues. Certainly we'll give it a shot, Madam Speaker.

In Budget 2019, Madam Speaker, the City of Winnipeg, in capital spending alone, is going to recognize an increase of 35 per cent additional funding over 2018. More is more, no matter how the math of the member opposite—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton:—tries to spin it. Madam Speaker, we know that 35 per cent more is a good thing for the City of Winnipeg.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm sure if you talk to any driver in the city of Winnipeg, they will tell you that the roads in the city need work. I know even the minister, when he drives to work using city infrastructure, recognizes that there are many streets that need to be repaired, and yet he still decides to sit at the Cabinet table that has handed down a \$40-million budget hole to the City of Winnipeg.

We know what the impact is going to be. The City's already announced that there will be no residential road repairs this year, and so when you drive around streets in your neighbourhood, whether it's in Fort Rouge, whether it's in Charleswood, I'm sure that we'll all see the impact of these cuts this year.

Will the Premier, will his minister, stop the political fights and instead bring forward real investments to city infrastructure so our roads can get fixed?

Mr. Wharton: Again, to be clear, Winnipeg, Madam Speaker, enjoys some of the most generous funding of any municipality in Canada.

And, Madam Speaker, quite frankly, again, I'll try to educate the member on math, and I'll—we'll just run through some numbers quickly, if I may: 2014-15, \$56 million to the City of Winnipeg; 2015-16, 83 million point six; 2016-17, \$53.3 million; 2017-18, \$83 million; and 2018-19, \$64 million for Winnipeg infrastructure.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, 2019-20 transfers from the Province to the City, down \$40 million. What's the amount of money being spent on residential road repair in the city of Winnipeg? Zero.

That's right, Madam Speaker, the minister is part of a government that is persistently, continuously and nefariously cutting infrastructure spending both in the city and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —across the province. Not only is it down \$40 million inside the Perimeter, it's also being cut by \$11 million outside the Perimeter.

So we know what the impact is going to be: more potholes on our city streets, more disrepair to highways right across the province of Manitoba.

It's clear that the minister doesn't have an answer.

Will the Premier please stand up in his place and announce that they will cancel these cuts to our roads and highways so that we can finally get our streets repaired?

Mr. Wharton: Again, I was very pleased to be joined by members of Manitoba municipalities, Madam Speaker, this week to announce a new, unconditional \$10-million investment for roads in rural Manitoba.

And, Madam Speaker, now let's bring it into the city of Winnipeg. Let's bring it inside the Perimeter. February 26th letter breakdown to—in 2019-20 for roads: \$64 million; and let me just break it down for the member: Disraeli bridge, Waverley underpass, BRT and accelerator regional roads will be repaired in 2019.

Health-Care Budget Funding Concerns

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, one cut, 10 cuts, 50 cuts; how many more cuts? That's what you're seeing from this government.

They spent \$150 million from their—underspent \$150 million from their 2017-18 budget, \$240 million from their 2018-19 budget, and now, after cutting \$120 million from this current budget—the largest cut to health care in a generation, Madam Speaker—and who knows how much more they're going underspend this year.

Manitobans deserve more. They deserve health care when they need it.

Why does this government continue to mislead Manitobans in their budgets and continue to cut health care?

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

There is one: the Manitoba labour has one less leader in its employment after her shocking departure yesterday when she resigned at a board meeting yesterday and—or earlier this week, and cited what she said was dysfunction in the labour movement, what she said was anti-woman sentiment that she experienced every day. And I noted that she said: I don't want to be part of this anymore. It's not what I signed up for and I complained and it got worse.

Madam Speaker, I think about the NDP party and members of their party who were subjected to the same attitudes. The more things change, the more they stay the same over there in the ND party.

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

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): You know what we think about? We think about Manitobans and what's important to Manitobans, and health care is important to Manitobans.

This government is closing emergency—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —rooms. They're closing clinics. They're cancelling surgeries. The nurse vacancy rates are on the rise, and even nurses are saying that they've never seen so much chaos in health care.

Manitoban families have been clear, Madam Speaker: health care is No. 1. Why is this government not listening?

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) today stop the closure of Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs?

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

I notice that this individual said about the labour movement in Manitoba, she described a local labour movement as fractured, essentially saying it is in chaos.

And Madam Speaker, I think about senior staffers in the NDP who came forward and complained about actions and attitudes among senior members of the government. And at that time when they complained, they were ignored. They were told to shut up. They were told to suck it up.

Madam Speaker, the reason I mention it is because we knew from the last election. Labour leaders said it's not that we represent the NDP; they said we are the NDP.

Madam Speaker, nothing has modernized, nothing has changed on that side of the aisle.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary. *[interjection]* Order.

Mrs. Smith: You know what, us on this side of the House, the NDP, think about? We think about the seniors in Manitoba who are being attacked by this government.

They have yet to build a single personal-care home since taking office. They cut funding from personal-care homes by \$2 million. They made cuts to the hospital home team. They increased fees to the adult day programs. Madam Speaker, this was the only social outings that these seniors would have.

* (14:00)

Will the minister listen to residents in north Winnipeg today and keep Seven Oaks and Concordia open?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it's inaccurate. Government spending on this side of the House is up \$400 million more than the NDP ever in health care.

But I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, I believe a lot of Manitobans today are thinking about why the former president of the Winnipeg Labour Council resigned. I think they're thinking about her 15-minute audio recording of the reasons she cited, and I think they're thinking about the NDP and how it is, on a daily basis, in this Chamber, they ascribe to this side of the aisle attitudes and behaviours that they espouse and are shown to be still espousing.

We will stand up for all Manitobans. We will deliver better health care. We will take no lessons in ethics from the NDP over there.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Curriculum Support Centre Elimination of Library Services

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Less than two weeks ago teachers were shocked by this minister's cut to the curriculum resource library that has served Manitoba for over 100 years. The library continues to be an essential—essential to the work that teachers do.

In fact, the library serves almost 10,000 clients a year, and that number has only increased in recent years. It's no wonder why. The resources it provides are curated specifically for the Manitoba curriculum and its physical and digital resources are essential to the work of teachers.

Yet, the minister cut the library with no consultation and in the middle of a school year, and then when confronted with an outcry from teachers, he sped up the closure and shuttered the library even sooner.

Why is this minister so dismissive of teachers and so willing to cut this important resource from them?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, we were the only province in Canada that was still delivering the service in this way. Every other province have gone to a heavy reliance on online services.

In fact, we will continue to have 2,000 electronic books that'll be available for teachers and, of course, their students, around the province. We will have close to 250 K-to-12 curriculum-circulated videos that can go directly into the classrooms. There are alternative formats online. We continue to have specialized services online.

We want to ensure that all teachers have these resources available to them by having more of a reliance to online resources. Those physical resources will continue to be in the education system and available for teachers, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the minister may be willing to dismiss the work of librarians as being

from the Dark Ages, but educators know that the resource library is as important now as it's ever been. That's why teachers gathered yesterday to protest the cut, with more sharing their frustration online. They know that the 20 people that managed the centralized collection and would respond to emails or phone calls and visits would ensure that resources got to the teachers that needed them and was circulated across the province.

Now it's being dismantled and on a week's notice. The resources of the library only go to the divisions and libraries with the current capacity to house them, a huge disadvantage to rural and northern schools. Minister's making it more expensive, not—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Speaking of being on time and getting with the times, Madam Speaker, we're going to continue to put more resources online. I would say to the seven individuals who came to express their concerns yesterday at the curriculum library, and any other individuals in Manitoba who would be concerned, they will continue to have significant access to information that they need. Two thousand electronic books and audio books will be made available online, and that number will continue to grow. Two hundred and fifty curriculum-correlated videos will continue to be available online, and that number will continue to grow.

We have all the alternative formats and other specialized services online, and that'll continue to grow as we ensure that teachers around the province have access to this material and other physical material will remain within the education system.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the curriculum library shared 100,000 resources with teachers and students across the province last year. And it currently shares 2,000 e-books, yet the minister now wants to take credit for having those online already in—available to teachers.

No matter how extensive the digital collection gets, it can't replace those physical books, the maps, the models and all the rest of the materials that the library houses. Staff at the library respond to the in-person visits, to the emails and to the phone calls. Schools that—are already able to use these online resources, we know, but kids need books.

Once again, I simply ask: Why is the minister so willing to cut such an important resource from teachers when they're telling him to stop the cuts?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, the teacher, a high-school teacher in southern Manitoba, 15 years of experience, wrote this in an editorial in the newspaper: In all the years I've been a classroom teacher, I don't recall the curriculum support library ever being featured during a professional development session. In fact, I doubt the majority of teachers in the province were even aware that it still existed.

Manitoba is the only province in the country that still has such a centre, all other provinces have already gone the route of putting resources online for teachers. There are more efficient ways to—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —support classroom teachers.

We're listening to teachers, Madam Speaker. I'm not sure who he's listening to.

Procurement Practices Untendered Contracts

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): This government has announced a so-called ethical procurement plan. We might ask why there wasn't already one in place.

And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) told this House on March 6th—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —that, quote, unlike Tiger Dams, unlike handing contracts to donors without even trying to shop around, which the previous government did, we are strengthening the integrity of the 'purching'—purchasing process in this province, end quote.

What this government has done is exactly like the NDP handing untendered contracts for Tiger Dams. This government handed out two untendered contracts. The minister of 'infrastructure' assured the public in committees of this House that the contracts were tendered. They weren't. They were sole-sourced. They didn't go through Treasury Board. And one of those contracts went to Sigfusson Northern, whose owners started donating the maximum to the PC Party in 2016. The Tiger Dam contract was \$5 million; this contract is \$7.7 million.

Can the Premier explain how this is any different than what the NDP did?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, it's—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

The heckling is starting to take on a level that I was hoping we wouldn't be seeing today. We do have a lot of guests in the gallery. There is heckling from both sides. One side might complain about it, but then participate; another side might complain about it and then participate. And I'm asking for everybody's co-operation, please. We have guests in the gallery. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

So I would ask everybody's co-operation and a demonstration of respect for this democratic process here that we have in Manitoba.

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and one thing Manitobans know, they're smart shoppers, and they expect our province to be smart shoppers as well; and that's why we've engaged in a modernization of our procurement practices.

We're following a model that the Liberals followed, actually, in Nova Scotia, where they were actually able to save upwards of \$25 million annually, Madam Speaker, by shopping smarter. We think that makes sense. We know the Liberals in Nova Scotia thought that makes sense too, and so that's why we're changing our practices, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamont: The Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) says he is to blame for handing an untendered \$7.7-million contract to a PC donor, but let's be charitable for a moment. I believe that very often it may be unfair to assume that someone is acting with the worst intentions, when it might just be incompetence. When the minister told this House that the contracts had been tendered, he may simply have jumped to a conclusion.

However, we also know that it's rare for any decisions in this government to go forward without the say-so of the Premier (Mr. Pallister), including in supposedly independent Crown corporation.

So did the Premier or any of his staff know of the decision to hand an untendered \$7.7-million contract to a PC donor?

Mr. Fielding: Well, Madam Speaker, we know there's divisions not only in the caucus in Ottawa, but, of course, across all Liberals across Canada in

terms of the procurement process that we've set up. We think the procure process that's in place is more open, it's more transparent than ever before in terms of what the Province of Manitoba has done.

We know some of the examples of what's going on, the messy business that's going on in Ottawa with all the things in the past, things like the Adscam sponsorship scandal, Madam Speaker, everything that's going on in Ottawa right now.

* (14:10)

It's ironic that the member comes in to talk about ethical natures in his premise when he first came into the House. But look at what's going on in Ottawa and other parts of the country in terms of Liberals.

Madam Speaker, that's not example for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Lamont: Our caucus welcomes ethical procurement policies. But as I said when the Premier announced this measure, for it to be effective it also required Manitoba to have effective ethics and conflict of interest laws, which we currently don't; we have the oldest and weakest laws in Canada.

And, again, if this Premier's good at anything, Madam Speaker, it is finding loopholes. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: Corporate malfeasance of all kinds is being enabled and encouraged by auditors, lawyers and accounting companies that have been 'volved in serious cases of fraud, money laundering and worse. If this government is serious about ethical procurement we need to be serious about barring such companies.

The problem, Madam Speaker, is that our ethical procurement strategy is being written by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which has been implicated in many scandals over the last 20 years, including \$100 billion in money laundering.

If this ethical procurement plan is adopted, will PwC itself be barred from future contracts, or is the Premier and the Minister of Finance making an exception?

Mr. Fielding: This government is copying some good procurement practices that happened in Nova Scotia under a Liberal government. So I'm not quite sure what the divisions are.

Of course, all Liberals are looking at themselves right now in the mirror, some of the unethical treatments, things that have happened in the past. If you look at some of—the two biggest political scandals, I would suggest, over the last 20 years in Canada, they came from a Liberal government.

So to be quite frank with you, taking advice in terms of ethical treatment in terms of the government from a Liberal, I think is a far stretch, Madam Speaker. It's a little rich even coming from the Liberals.

Methamphetamine Addiction Safe Consumption Site Request

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Bear Clan and Mama Bear Clan, those that are on the front line of the meth crisis, is on track to recover 60,000 discarded needles in 2019. Two point one needles were distributed by the WRHA in 2018. This speaks volumes to the present crisis that we are under—we are in right now in Manitoba. We have lost far too many Manitobans dealing with this meth crisis.

Research shows, Madam Speaker, that safe consumption sites can save lives.

Will the Minister of Justice get up today and commit to a safe consumption site?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Thank that member for her question on the subject of being safe.

I noticed that when it came to the revelations about the Canadian Labour Congress and about this labour leader in Winnipeg, what she said is that she didn't feel safe—*[interjection]*—she didn't feel safe.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: That member across the aisle knows that she hurls across this aisle on a regular basis criticisms and accusations of the very kinds of things that are now disclosed to Manitobans. Let them say that this is not an area of importance. Let them say today that this is not an area that should be explored. We know why they would say that.

Madam Speaker, this is a serious allegation. Will that member who has so accused others, now stand in her place and shed light on this report? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Random meth-fuelled attacks continue to target innocent Manitobans and recent homicides have been fuelled by the city's meth crisis. Winnipeg Police Service's chief, Danny Smyth, said last week, police suspect meth played a role in six of the then-seven homicides, not including the deaths this past weekend, Madam Speaker. Local residents has said that the drug is changing the neighbourhood for the worse. They fear for their children's safety, and I quote: We don't feel safe anymore, even in our homes.

Will the Minister of Justice get off his hands and do something about this meth crisis? Will he develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with the meth crisis in Manitoba today?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do appreciate the question on justice. It gives me an opportunity to remind Manitobans what kind of a mess we inherited when we came into office. We had a Justice budget out of control. We had people—more people in jail than ever before and excessively high crime rates.

Madam Speaker, we have taken—we brought forward our criminal justice modernization strategy. We have got very positive results of that. I look forward to sharing publicly how those results are being expressed across the province. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Very good news on that front, Madam Speaker. We are making strategic investments in dealing with the meth crisis in Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Despite the misinformation that the minister just put on the record, the Winnipeg Police Service has seen an 890 per cent increase in meth possession charges and Crime Stoppers increased the reward for meth-related crime tips because crime is increasing dramatically over the last couple of years in our province.

Something that started as a problem has grown into a full-blown meth crisis, placing front-line workers and innocent Manitobans at risk.

Will the Minister of Justice get up today and commit to a safe consumption site in partnership with a comprehensive provincial strategy to deal with the meth crisis and save innocent lives in Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to commend police forces across the province for the great work they're doing in this illicit drug issue around the province.

Madam Speaker, our government increased the policing budget across Manitoba by \$6.8 million last year. This year's budget we have \$2.3 million allocated specifically to fighting illicit drugs in Manitoba. We've also allocated \$1.4 million from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund to police forces in—across the province to combat illicit drugs.

Madam Speaker, the list goes on and on. We're also assisting Bear Clan, in terms of their efforts in Manitoba, to the tune of \$150,000.

Madam Speaker, we are investing to protect Manitobans.

Flin Flon General Hospital New Emergency Department

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Madam Speaker, earlier this week the Premier (Mr. Pallister), the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke) were in northern Manitoba to deliver good news for northerners.

I was pleased to join them in my hometown of Thompson for the announcement of six new dialysis spaces for—in our community before they travelled onward to Flin Flon to make even more good-news announcements.

Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living please update this House on the status of the new Flin Flon emergency department?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, earlier this week when the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) was involving himself with antics and the stunts in this Legislature designed to block the introduction of bills and to block question period, the Premier and I and Minister for Indigenous and Northern Relations were in Flin Flon, where we were able to officially open the \$27.1-million, 14,000-square-foot, new state-of-the-art emergency room, joined by the mayor, joined by community members, joined by participants, who said this will make a difference in the lives of northerners.

We are making good investments for northerners: better health care, sooner.

Lead Contamination in Soil Testing of Residents Gardens

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Janice Clarke lives near Weston School. She and others are concerned that the minister's report, tabled last week, shows that levels of lead in the surface soil at Weston School are still too high and are still above acceptable levels.

Her home is next door to one in which the garden and its soil were remediated a number of years ago. However, her home never had its garden remediated. She would very much like to grow and eat vegetables, but is uncertain about whether it is safe.

* (14:20)

Would the minister provide for the testing of gardens like Ms. Clarke's, who lives in an area with proven high lead levels where there is uncertainty as to their current status?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Our government takes the issue of lead in the natural environment very seriously, as do many other jurisdictions throughout North America that are challenged with this very task that we are facing today of increased exposure of lead in our natural environment.

That is why we felt—important to release a lot of information. We've released the 1988 report that was covered up by a former NDP Premier, Howard Pawley. We released the results that were covered up by the former NDP government in 2008 and 2009 that revealed higher incidence of lead in the constituencies of Point Douglas, Minto, Wolseley and Logan, and we will continue to report on this as we're moving forward and working to ensure safety for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, there's lots of evidence of high lead levels, but there's no advice in terms of what people should actually do.

For many years, the presence of high lead levels in the Weston and north Point Douglas has been dealt with in a way that's unsatisfactory in that residents have been uncertain about their status and continue to be concerned about their situation.

Is the minister going to handle the current situation so that residents will have greater clarity with respect to how to proceed? For example,

whether they can or should plant gardens? What criteria should residents use in making a decision about planting gardens and growing vegetables?

Ms. Squires: I do have to address some of the inaccuracies put forward by this Liberal member in his preamble.

We have taken strong action. In fact, last July our department knocked on the doors of people who lived in the constituency of St. Boniface to alert them to the exceedances of lead in their yards and gave them information on how to protect their gardens, what to do with the vegetables. We've been out no less than three public conferences that we have held in conjunction with public health to make sure that people have the right information they need to keep themselves safe if they are in a zone that is got exceedances of lead in the natural environment.

We are taking action. Where the former NDP government failed, we're getting it right.

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

Mental and Physical Health

Mr. Gerrard: The minister is not tabling the information today or distributing it. Ms. Clarke hasn't seen this.

Madam Speaker, lead is known to have adverse effects on the brain and mental health and on physical health. I table today information which indicates that Weston and north Point Douglas areas have a higher incidence of various mental health conditions than the rest of the city of Winnipeg.

Will the government commission an in-depth study to look at the relationship between the high lead levels found in Weston and north Point Douglas areas, and the mental and physical health status of people and their children living in these parts of Winnipeg?

Ms. Squires: Well, I think it's absolutely shameful that this member would come up and make false allegations and make very unsubstantiated health claims for people who are dealing with real mental illness, real issues, and try to purport that that is a result of lead in their soil. That is absolutely unsubstantiated. We've had absolutely no public health officers, no medical officers, no one is saying that but the member for River Heights, and he should get up and apologize for putting such-inaccurate information on the record just to fear monger and score political points. Shame on him.

Development in Gimli Marshland Destruction

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I have a document to table. It's quite concerning. The Minister for Municipal Relations is accused in a letter to the editor today, of providing a letter to a developer who is illegally destroying a classified marshland in his own constituency of Gimli to make room for a new development.

Does he have anything to say about that?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Certainly, it's great to live in a community like Gimli and Winnipeg Beach, and I am so proud and pleased to be serving the members—the constituents of the Gimli riding, Madam Speaker, and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —I can tell you that for 17 years, Madam Speaker, there was no returned phone calls, no returned emails by the member that sat there for 13 years. I can tell you we have a better relationship now than we've ever had with municipalities in Manitoba, including in Gimli.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, I dare say, Madam Speaker, that the constituents in Gimli of—Muriel and Jeff Smith would disagree with the minister's assertions and, indeed, they go on to write, quote: This past Friday, March 8th, 2019, two individuals from the provincial regional office for Sustainable Development did visit the site.

However, they advised that while our community's concerns were valid and the work performed did, apparently, violate existing Manitoba legislation, there was nothing they could do, as someone higher up the chain was prepared to let this development continue.

Is it the Minister for Municipal Relations who's the higher authority? The Minister for Sustainable Development? The Premier (Mr. Pallister) who's calling the shots here? And why do they think they're above Manitoba law?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Well, Madam Speaker, what this member ought to know and does know and—trying to ignore the facts is that we have a stringent environmental process here in this province that we follow—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: –to the letter, and, in fact, Madam Speaker, this member has misrepresented other people's concerns in this Legislature many times, and I would actually like to table a letter from Hollow Water First Nation that talks about—that sets out their reasons for supporting a project, something that this member came into this Chamber and said that Hollow Water First Nation was opposed to a certain project. He put false information on the record—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: –to suit his own political purposes. That's what this member is all about.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Daylight Saving Time

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The loss of sleep associated with the beginning of daylight savings time has serious consequences for physical and mental health and has been linked to increases in traffic accidents and workplace—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Graydon: –injuries.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to amend The Official Time Act to abolish daylight savings time in Manitoba effective November 4th, 2019,

resulting in Manitoba remaining on Central Standard Time throughout the year and into perpetuity.

And this petition has been signed by Marni Harrison, Gail Sutherland, Sean Olson, and many, many more Manitobans.

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

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The Premier has slashed budgets and cancelled projects for northern communities—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: –making it harder for families to get the primary health care they need.

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

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

* (14:30)

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

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

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

(8) There has been no commitment from this provincial government that mothers and their escorts

who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Dog Overpopulation in Northern Communities

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Many Manitobans are deeply concerned about the safety of northern, isolated communities in the province owing to an exploding overpopulation rate of dogs.

(2) The current overpopulation of dogs is increasingly alarming to front-line rescuers, for witness the severe, difficult and heartbreaking conditions experienced by northern dogs, including starvation, extreme weather conditions, attacks by wild animals and acts of animal cruelty.

(3) As a result of the non-existent veterinary services in most, if not all, northern communities, dogs are not adequately cared for, to no fault of communities or their members.

(4) Roaming dogs are often sick, injured and alone, with no one to advocate for their care, and Manitoba's animal welfare organizations are often the only ones sounding the alarm in this present crisis.

(5) Time and time again, front-line rescuers witness northern families who, with no access to veterinary care, watch their beloved dog perish from

injuries and diseases which would be easily preventable with better access to veterinary services.

(6) This present crisis poses a serious and immediate risk to citizens, in particular children, in northern communities, with the threat of pack maulings.

(7) Many Manitobans and front-line rescuers are currently lobbying for stronger animal welfare laws alongside provincial regulations for animal rescue organizations in partnership with adequate veterinarian services and education for northern communities.

(8) Currently, vaccination rates for owned dogs in Winnipeg is 70 per cent, while in northern isolated communities the rate is less than 5 per cent as a direct result of this current lack of access to veterinarian services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately commit to addressing the overpopulation of dogs in Manitoba, more specifically in northern communities, by humanely removing and re-homing unwanted dogs.

(2) To urge the provincial government, in partnership with animal welfare agencies, the Manitoba veterinarian medical association, MVMA, front-line rescues and the federal government to immediately develop a provincial strategy to spay and neuter dogs, while providing access to veterinarian services for owned dogs in northern communities, ensuring the safety of communities and their citizens.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on government business, I'd like to table the Estimates order for 2019, as agreed to with the government and opposition House leaders.

Madam Speaker: We thank the Government House Leader for tabling that sequence of Estimates.

Mr. Goertzen: For afternoon business, Madam Speaker, we are calling Interim Supply.

Can you please resolve the House into the committee—second reading of Interim Supply.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Interim Supply this afternoon.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019

Madam Speaker: I will now call second reading debate on Bill 28, the interim appropriation act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Logan, who has 16 minutes remaining.

The honourable member for Concordia first, though.

Point of Order

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a point of order.

Mr. Wiebe: I simply would like to request the Minister of Education to table the document he read during question period as per rule 40(5), wherein a debate the member directly quotes from private documents including digital representation or correspondence, any other member may require the member who is speaking to table a printed copy of the document quotes.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my question, it was an article that was written in a newspaper. He can pay the dollar and get it himself.

Madam Speaker: On that point of order I understand that if it is a public document, then it does not have to be tabled in the House.

And as the member has pointed out, it was a document in a newspaper, so it would be readily available to any member.

So the member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Logan, on her second reading debate.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I think I was talking about the Provincial Nominee Program yesterday, and I'd like to continue and put a few more words on that very productive, or very important program for immigration in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the people who come to Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program

form a vital part of our workforce. A new excessive fee only adds to that burden and makes it harder for newcomers to start a new life here in Manitoba. Of course, discouraging talented and innovative newcomers who bring a new perspective to our province is also bad for the economy and bad for the cultural diversity of Manitoba. Imagine how much less vibrant Folklorama, one of the most well-known and celebrated festivals, might be if we didn't have the Provincial Nominee Program.

Having been to many, many pavilions in—that we have from Folklorama, you could see the vibrancy and the dedicated efforts of many, many volunteers in various pavilions. And some of these volunteers were newcomers to the province, to Winnipeg. And we are grateful for their civic duties this early. They wanted to—they exerted efforts to be involved in pavilions of their home countries and it had made a lot of difference. This Folklorama pavilions will not exist, will not be what they are today if it were not for the volunteers.

Likewise, Madam Speaker, think of Winnipeg without the various ethnic restaurants, ethnic-owned restaurants that are in the city. One could explore culinary delights in, say, a week if they wish to, if they so desire one night Chinese restaurant, one night African, one night Caribbean.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And speaking of restaurants, there is a new Filipino-owned restaurant that is making waves right now, newly established Max's Restaurant on St. James, if my colleagues would want to be treated to a delightful, savoury Filipino dishes. Not too far from here, on St. James, the name is Max's Restaurant.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba governments of both political stripes have recognized the value of an immigration program that didn't deter talented and innovative individuals who wanted to come to Manitoba, but not so with this government.

* (14:40)

We know that, back in 2006, former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper had to apologize for the fee that was imposed on Chinese immigrants who paid a head tax to come to Canada from 1885 to 1923. It may well be that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the former Education minister have set up a future premier of Manitoba to have to apologize for the fee they have imposed on newcomers now.

The federal government was forced to recognize that the head tax represented stigma, exclusion and discrimination. This is equally true today because the Premier's Provincial Nominee Program will deter people.

Those who cannot afford to pay right off the bat the \$500 fee, they will have to take some time. They will have to put on hold, rather than pursue right away their application much faster, as they still have to save for that application fee, along with other fees that they have to pay.

The former minister of Immigration, along with the Premier, promised that fees collected from the Provincial Nominee Program would be used to fund language training and help new arrivals to find employment.

Since they introduced the fee to the Provincial Nominee Program, newcomers have seen neither of these services, and we haven't even seen an RFP to contract the delivery of these services. So having told this House that these funds collected from the Provincial Nominee Program would be used as such is misleading and it's—we in this House should only be making 'pronouncetets'—pronouncements that are honest and true and that will be accomplished.

To date, these fees for newcomers that are being collected for certain services such as language training and help to find employment has not happened.

Now, after immigration, there is this very important—very important to Manitobans is health care. What is happening in health care? Manitobans' No. 1 priority is health care, and Budget 2019 is cutting over \$120 million from the budget. As a result, three emergency rooms in Winnipeg will be closed.

Likewise, Budget 2019 is cutting capital funding for Health by \$7.2 million. Those are investments like new diagnostic machines, emergency room upgrades, personal-care-home beds, and new primary-care clinics.

Likewise, Budget 2019 is attacking our children's education, cutting supports for special needs kids in the classroom, and cutting funding for universities and colleges for the second year in a row.

Maybe we ought to ask ourselves: Why is it that south of the border, our brothers and sisters there voted for a President and for some senators and

congressmen who espouse hate and could be accused of fomenting racial tensions? Why is that?

In the past two decades in the United States, there were cuts made by successive governments to education. Funds for education were cut, and so programs that would have made students become well-rounded, like sports, music and the arts, were reduced. Instead, some of the classes were even—number of classes were even reduced.

As a result, children who graduated from schools—even universities—didn't experience a well-rounded kind of education. Even critical thinking had been—as a result, critical thinking had been compromised. And when these students—young students and later graduates—become voters, their outlook in life is not so open and rich and accommodating of changes to the world and also of—accommodating to differences in diversity of the population.

And so somebody told me, maybe that's why the choices they have made, the—during election—have gone this bad—because of those cuts in education. And what are we seeing here in Manitoba from this government? Also cuts in funding to education.

Budget 2019 is attacking our children's education. Budget 2019 is making life harder for families. This budget cuts \$1.5 million to daycare supports. These are the hard facts that the Premier is not telling Manitobans.

The Premier's only move in the budget will mean Manitobans save maybe two cents on a cup of coffee, but they'll lose three emergency rooms, pay \$100 more on their hydro bills, pay more to get an education, have less resources available to their children and lose critically needed child care. Are these cuts worth the pain and suffering to many struggling Manitobans who wish to be successful and productive members of their communities?

Well, they are trumpeting that Budget 2019 cuts back 1 per cent PST. Let's see who will benefit from the tax cut. Who are some of the people paying PST? We'll know that—those home-building contractors and renovators. When materials are used in the provision of a service or incorporated into real property, the provider of the 'materiaris'—materials—usually the contractor—is the consumer of the materials and is required to pay the tax on the purchase price of the materials.

Who else pays the PST? Those who require short-term accommodations of less than one month

in hotels, motels and similar commercial establishments; also, those farmers who purchase farm storage buildings or structures used to store crops grown for sale, or on materials used directly to construct the building or structure; those who do printing, binding, lithographing, multigraphing, duplicating, engraving, imprinting, typewriting, folding, addressing, collating and related functions, except where done in respect of tax-exempted books or in respect of newspapers and magazines that are provided to the public free of charge; also, those who do photography, microfilming, videography and film production services, including the development and printing of film and the recording of sound. These services are not taxable when used to produce film, tape-tapes or other recordings used for public exhibition or broadcast.

* (14:50)

Who else will benefit from the tax cut? Those who require accounting, architectural, legal, engineering, security and private investigation services, as well as architectural design services—likewise, those who require spa services, except massage therapy or reflexology, those who go for non-medical skin and esthetician services.

Who else pay PST? Those who go to hair salons for services such as haircuts, hair dye, et cetera, cost above \$50; those who go for body modification services, including tattoo, piercings, scarification and branding; and those who go for tanning services.

There you go. Those are some of the people who will benefit from the reduced 1 per cent sales tax.

However, Manitobans must make real investments. We believe Manitoba must make real investments in addiction services so Manitobans can get on the journey to recovery as soon as possible.

While on this, the VIRGO report on mental health and addictions was released in May with 100 recommendations for addressing mental health care in our province. Almost a year later, and this government has failed to release a plan on how they plan to implement those recommendations.

Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth said: I am disappointed to learn that six months after the VIRGO report was released, the government still does not have a concrete plan of action for youth mental health and addiction.

As we know, the report's recommendations are clear. More investments are needed to address the

massive challenges we face in mental health and addictions, but instead of listening to—

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

The honourable member for Radisson.

An Honourable Member: Sorry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the best speech that member's ever given. Mine won't be quite that short.

Madam Speaker—or, sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, welcome to Ingsoc.

Now, people will say, what? What's he talking about? Where's that? Why is he saying that?

It's the place in the book 1984, which is really—this government's whole outlook on the world is doublespeak, misdirection; up is down, down is up, left is right. They stand in the House continually, day in and day out and say, well, no; those facts you just presented, they're not facts. But this number I pulled out of the air, that's a fact.

We tabled documents that clearly show, by their own budget documents, that they're spending less money on things. They stand up and say, well, no, that's misinformation. We're spending more money; less is more.

Well, clearly, when we show factually that they underspent their budget on health care by a quarter of a billion dollars last year—a quarter of a billion dollars—that's a fact. That's a fact that's shown clearly in their own budget documents.

But, no, they say. No, no; we're spending more money. It says so in the budget.

But then when we look at the budget it shows, no; well, in fact, the budget is less than it was.

I talk to Manitobans all the time. I talk to people in Flin Flon all the time, and they're very concerned about the state of health care and the cuts that they've seen from this government.

And, yes, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and some of his ministers snuck into Flin Flon the other day, made an announcement that a new ER that was constructed in Flin Flon, started by the NDP government—they got to lick up the gravy that we'd left on the plate—but people in Flin Flon are somewhat concerned because while we have a shiny

new building, we don't have any doctors. There's a budget, supposedly, for four—or maybe it's three now—nurse practitioners. Last time I looked, there were none. There's a budget for four—or is it three—doctors. It's hard to tell. But you'd be lucky to find two. And while there are some doctors assigned there, it seems they're only working part time.

If you went to Flin Flon and allowed young mothers and mothers who are about to give birth to actually enter the building where the Premier was speaking, instead of forcing them to stand out in the street, you would've heard their concerns about the lack of obstetric services in Flin Flon.

If you were a schoolteacher in Flin Flon who wanted to take his class to show them the Premier and some of his ministers, you'd've been quite disappointed at the runaround that he got. Phoned someone in this building to find out if the rumour he'd heard about the Premier coming to town was true, well, they couldn't tell him for security reasons. They said he should phone the local RCMP. So he did. They said, news to us; let us know what you find out.

So he phoned back to someone in this building, and they said, oh, well, you better check with your local municipal politicians. So he phoned City Hall in Flin Flon. The nice lady he spoke to there said, first I've heard of it.

So he phoned back to someone in this building, only they wouldn't answer the phone anymore. So he phoned them on his cellphone, and they answered. Open and transparent, you say. They still wouldn't give him any information.

So, when he got to the new ER building, much like the protesters, he and his students were forced to stand outside and look in the window because they weren't allowed inside, which seems an odd way to make any kind of announcement.

Now, was there some advance notice? Well, clearly, the press showed up, so they must've known at least the day before maybe. It certainly was never announced in the local newspaper. But, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government really is opposed to announcements in local newspapers. Certainly wouldn't have expected them to take an ad out. And I see the member from Riding Mountain kind of getting a little embarrassed here because, you know, they probably don't put ads in his newspaper anymore either.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this really is a government that is so completely against openness and transparency. This is a government that people—people know—people aren't stupid, much to this government's chagrin—people realize that what they're telling people is basically not exactly right. They can see every day, particularly in the North, that this government isn't doing more; it's doing less, if they're doing anything at all.

The only plan we've ever seen from this government, and the only plan that they've ever talked about, and the only plan they continue to talk about is something for tourism.

* (15:00)

But, again, we see that they don't really back up that plan because they're not going to spend money on infrastructure; already know that because they've cut the Infrastructure spending budget. They've cut the budget for bridges, left it up to the municipalities.

And some municipalities have said, well, what we're getting, yes, it's less than we used to get and it's less than we expected, but it's good because we can spend it on what we want.

Now, the problem with that theory, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is they have a lot of things to spend money on, because, of course, the government—the provincial government—has off-loaded many of the things that a provincial government used to fund that they don't fund anymore.

So I suppose we can expect to see a deterioration in infrastructure that now the municipalities are responsible for, because of the underfunding by this government. So, once again, what they've said isn't exactly what's happening.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know and we've talked a little bit now about health spending and how it's dramatically less. We know from people in the North that they're having trouble accessing health care, because spending for things like the northern transportation program, which was an attempt to—not make access to health care equal, because none of us are that naive to think we're going to have the same exact access as someone in the city of Winnipeg, but it was an attempt to make it at least somewhat equitable, so that if somebody from the North needs to come to Winnipeg to see a specialist, that some of their costs would be covered.

Now, we know that those costs and what's being covered are becoming dramatically less every year

that this government is in charge. People in the North won't be fooled by this government. They—this government, this Pallister government, has lived up to one promise and one promise only, and that was to cut the PST.

People I've talked to in my constituency said, well, that's nice. It's too bad we don't have a doctor. Well, that's nice. It's too bad our road is falling apart. Well, that's nice, but I didn't really notice it. But where I did notice it was when I phoned a government office, there's nobody there anymore. Used to be that there were six people working in the Northern Affairs office. Now I'm told there's two.

So, when people is some of the outlying communities submit their time sheets, which they have to submit manually—in other words, they can't fax it, they can't email it, even though there's a thing that one of the ministers across the way said, apparently, it's called the Internet, so you should be able to email and fax and scan—they have to submit their pay sheets manually, but there's nobody left there to process them.

It takes weeks; some cases, months. One fellow I was made aware of quit going to work because apparently he hadn't been paid for a couple of months.

Now, I wrote some letters to the minister; never did really get a response back. Did the gentleman ever get paid? Don't know the answer to that. So do you think he's happy that he saved two cents on a cup of coffee? Doesn't have a job. Probably doesn't go out for coffee anymore.

So where did all those people go that used to work there? Some of them retired—good for them, not so good necessarily for the local economy because, I don't know, maybe Tory supporters that are retired still have gobs of money to spend on things, but hard-working Manitobans, when they shift from earning good wages to retirement income don't have as much money to spend, which then affects everything throughout the northern economy.

So, while this government lived up to one promise, bigger promises that they made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about protecting front-line services had been 'trophled' on, ripped up, thrown away, giant scissors taken to that promise—cut, cut, cut.

And their new ads that they have out showing giant scissors remind me very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of some ads we had out during the last

election, where we said, be careful because if this guy gets to be premier, he's going to run with scissors and he's going to cut things. Oh no, they said, we won't do that. And now their very own ads show the same giant scissors, but they only show them cutting one thing, not everything else that they're trying to hide that they've cut.

And that's really the egregious part of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is all the things—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —that they've cut behind the scenes, that people know it, people see it, people feel it every day of their lives. Maybe not the people that send the \$5,000 cheques to support this government, but the people who maybe send \$10 or the people who don't have money to donate but would still like to think they have a say in what goes on in the world, because that's kind of what democracy is supposed to be about, isn't it, making sure that all people have a chance to have their say. And the way they do that, of course, is with elections. But elections that only the rich can participate in are not democracy.

And, again, we get back to the 1984 theme that this government seems to have embedded in their psyche; limiting who can participate and how people can participate is not greater democracy, it's worse. But, as with things that this government says: less is more, worse is better. It's kind of a shame that they carry on that way.

But people are wising up to them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When people see these budgets which—a lot of people, you know, don't pay a lot of attention to a dry budget document because it's painful to read.

They listen to parts of speeches, they read parts of articles in paper—in the newspaper, and they start to scratch their head because, wait a minute, that's not what's happening in reality. If they were spending all this much more money on health care, I'd have a doctor.

And while we've heard about them shutting down ERs in Winnipeg, does anybody in this Chamber think it doesn't affect people in the North? If we're lucky enough to get a Lifelight because we have an emergency in the North that requires specialist treatment that we don't have, where do you suppose we go, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Well, we don't go to one of those ERs that isn't there any more. So we go and wait in a queue in one of the other ERs in Winnipeg. So it does have an

effect on us in the North even though we talk a lot about shutting down the ERs in Winnipeg.

*(15:10)

Let's talk for a minute about cardiac surgeries at St. Boniface Hospital. Is that just a Winnipeg issue? No, people from all parts of the province come to the city for cardiac surgery. I know I had a constituent earlier on in the year, or late last year maybe it was, got bumped from his cardiac surgery, I believe it was three times.

Now, that's not three times that he got ready to leave from home. That was after he was medevac'd from home to St. Boniface Hospital. That was after he hadn't eaten for however many hours it is you're not supposed to eat before major surgery. That was when he was about to get rolled from his room to the operating room that they said, oh, sorry, not today. And that carried on for at least three times. It's unfortunate.

I don't know whether my intervention in his case helped him. All I know is that after I started making calls he did finally get his surgery. And he's alive and well today, thank God.

Of course, his trials and tribulations didn't end at that point, did they, because somebody told him, okay, you're good to go. Well, he says, how am I getting home? Don't know. Don't care. There's a guy in hospital gown just had surgery, heart surgery in Winnipeg, nobody bothered to figure out how he's getting home again until he contacted his MLA to step in and try and get things straightened out, which I thank the Minister of Health that once I made him aware of some of those issues that he did step in and made sure the gentleman got home.

So, you know, this government has continued to talk about all the good things they've done, but we know that women's health issues have suffered under this government.

I could read through the big long list that others have read through that list already of the services that aren't available, but I want to talk just very briefly again about the obstetric services in Flin Flon.

Again, we have a shiny new building. Can't get an obstetrician. Won't get an obstetrician. You decide. I know you can't get one if you don't advertise for one.

And, while we get told now when we ask, well, we've done everything we can, yes, I guess we're done. And yet there's still ads on the northern

regional health site, at least I should clarify, there was the last time I looked, there was still ads for obstetrician in Thompson, but there isn't any for an obstetrician in Flin Flon.

Now what, the We Want Birth Committee, a committee of young mothers, mothers-to-be, grandmothers, fathers, grandfathers, concerned citizens, what they've been told is, well, you got to wait until we go through this review process. And they've been told, in fact, we were told at a Chamber of Commerce meeting that whatever services the government—no, whatever services the review says should happen in Flin Flon, the government agrees to fund them.

Well, that sounds nice, 'til you think about it. Well, I guess if you just don't agree to have those services, then you don't have to fund them. And that's what concerns people. And that's what they can't get an answer from this government because all they've seen is cuts. People are rightfully concerned.

So let's talk a little bit about the Mining Community Reserve Fund. The last time we looked and we presented some documents here the other day, it showed that the fund had in excess of \$10 million, and yet we were sort of informed here the other day in the House that, well, there's no money in the fund.

What? Where did it go? So we know that Thompson tried to access it when they were going through tough times, when they announced they were shutting down their smelter and refinery and laying off hundreds of people.

We know, at that point in time, there was in excess of \$10 million in the fund, and this government said, well, no; you can't have that money because we have to maintain it at \$10 million.

Well, that's not what the act says, and if any of them had bothered to read it, and I suppose they figured nobody else would bother to read it—what it says is any money in excess of \$10 million can be used to help fund exploration, which, when we were in government, that's exactly what it was done, and we, again, produced documents of all the different individual people out looking for the next mine, as well as a lot of the junior mining companies and some of the senior mining companies that were doing exploration in the province accessing those funds.

Well, now the government says no. So are they not giving any money to the mineral exploration

fund to help find the next mine? Well, we don't know because that particular fund is a separate part of a budget document that it's not just listed in black and white, so once we get to the Estimates process we'll try and find an answer to that because if that excess \$10 million-plus isn't there anymore, people of northern Manitoba want to know where it is, and if it is still there, then they're going to want to know why the government won't use it for that which it's intended for.

Are they taking that money and using it to help fund PST reduction? Don't know the answer to that, but we'll be asking that question for sure as part of the Estimates process. And people in the North want an answer to that and they want to hear the right answer, not some bafflegab doublespeak that we normally get in this House.

So, let's talk about mental health and addictions for a minute, and I, unfortunately, only have a few more minutes. I could probably go on all day.

We know how bad it is in the city, but let's talk about in the North. If, for example, I lived in Lynn Lake, Manitoba, where would I get my mental health services from? Well, the answer is, if you were lucky to get any, they'd come from Thompson. You'd get some drive-by counselling, because it takes four hours to drive from Thompson to Lynn Lake on a good day. I'd say on a good road, but there isn't one. And of course that person is only there for the day so they have to drive back, so it doesn't leave a lot of time for mental health and addictions counselling.

Now, of course, they do have a health centre there that is staffed by some very good people, but it's not the kind of help that people need every day. It's not the kind of help that isn't available outside the city of Winnipeg. And I shouldn't say everywhere outside, because I'm not sure what some of the farm communities have. I can talk about what the northern communities have and don't have.

Education—well, let's look at what they're doing there. I talk to teachers in the North. I talk to school boards in the North. I talk to division management, and all of them are concerned with where this government's going and what cuts are coming next.

* (15:20)

We've already seen this minister cut the education resource centre, because he said, well, only 14 people a day, that's all that walk into it. Well, here's a newsflash for the minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister): people access it in other means. They

access it by telephone; they access it by email. Now, that doesn't mean that everything that they request can be given to them by email because there are physical things that can go out of that centre that a teacher uses and then they send back to the centre so that another teacher can use it: maps, models, old books—because sometimes teachers use those books for historical context.

And, if the minister had bothered coming to meet with the teachers, as the member from Concordia and the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) and I did yesterday, he'd have actually learned something, because apparently, that's what teachers are good at is teaching people.

But this government isn't interested in learning anything from people. They're interested in learning things about dollars and cents only. They probably listen to financial advisers. They listen to hired guns—I mean, paid consultants that tell them, here's a place you could cut, here's some more you could cut.

And for us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we need to be concerned about is let's look to whatever Nova Scotia has cut because, for whatever reason, this Premier follows in lockstep with Nova Scotia. They cut it; we're cutting it. They're cutting it; we're cutting it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*interjection*]

No, we can't afford lobster.

This budget document is a farce in the fact that it doesn't speak the truth about what the government actually does in reality. So, when the government actually gives us the real facts, then people might start to believe what they've been told.

But for now, all the doublespeak and bafflegab has fooled absolutely no one in the province. People know that it's been cut, cut, cut. People know that this Premier doesn't care about people. People know that this government doesn't care about people. It only cares about the bottom line. They don't care about people, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I think it's important for me to start out on a high note, so I do want to wish you a very happy first day of spring, and to the Speaker as well, and to the fine folks in the Speaker's office. I want to pay tribute to the fine clerks we have here in the building, the Sergeant-at-Arms and our amazing staff that works here, our

remarkable pages, our good friends at Hansard, our friends at translation, all the public servants in the building and all across Manitoba. I want to thank them for the extraordinary work they do, day in, day out on behalf of Manitobans.

Now, as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I started out on a high note there, because I'm not really sure where this is going. But in the spirit of trying to provide, you know, good tidings to all, I want also compliment the government because they have achieved what I thought was never possible. I am surprised at it, because of the nature of the confederation that we went in, but it's—there's no doubt that this government has proven itself to be the lamest, the most anaemic, most useless government in Canada today.

And that's not easy in the current state of government here in Canada. You think about our province to the east in Ontario and our province to the west in Saskatchewan. So you've got your Curly, there you are in Ontario. You've got your Larry, here, in Manitoba. And you've got Premier Moe in Saskatchewan. So there's tough competition about being the most lamest, most anemic, most useless government in Canada, but by gosh, this government has achieved it. So kudos for that.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just because precision and accuracy are so important here in the House, I went online and I looked up in the dictionary the definition of each of the terms I've just used, and surprisingly, maybe not surprisingly, the term Pallister government is embedded in the very definition of these terms.

So take, for example, lame. It says unconvincingly feeble, and then it says, see also Pallister government.

And then it says, use it in a statement. The Pallister government is unconvincingly feeble. I don't know about members on that side of the House but that resonates; I think it certainly resonates with me.

How about anemic, defined online, and admittedly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can find this, anything online, of course. But the definition of anemic is tired, weak, lacking in vitality. See also Pallister government. Use it in a sentence. The Pallister government is tired, weak, and lacking in vitality. Now I don't know about members on that side of the House, but it resonates for me personally.

And then, useless, definition of that: not working or not achieving what is needed. Then it says, see

also Pallister government. And then use it in a statement, in a sentence. The Pallister government is not working and not achieving what is needed. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to say that speaks volumes to me about the nature of government that we get here in Manitoba today.

And the reason for that is quite simply, they don't do anything, not a thing. Everything that's been achieved by this government since they came into office in April 2016 could have been done with a pencil and an eraser, and that's it.

It started off with Cabinet offices. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) got out his pencil; he erased a whole bunch of Cabinet positions, including the Department of Labour, which is beyond belief, and then he used the pencil side to scheme out a whole series of new Cabinet portfolios. And then they went to Health, and they rubbed all the stuff out there, and then they came up with shared health, or whatever that is, and some other stuff. But got the pencil out again, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every single thing that's been accomplished by this government could have been done with a pencil and an eraser. And that's a really sad commentary. There's not one tangible, one real thing that they can point to, to say, well, we did it.

My friend from Flin Flon just pointed out that, you know, there they were doing somersaults and cartwheels about the new emergency ward in Flin Flon; well, you're welcome. A few weeks ago my friend from St. Norbert was in here, gave a great member's statement as I recall about the principal and some of the work down at South Pointe School; well, you're welcome.

I mean, that was really remarkable in the sense that he didn't even say, which he should have said, you know, the school would not have existed without the NDP but we want to thank the principal and staff for the great work that they do there each day. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they don't do that.

And it's disappointing that a government would turn a blind eye to the colossal needs in all of our communities, some communities even more than others. But even in a nice, progressive community like Fort Garry-Riverview really, really colossal needs that need to be addressed by investing in those very people. But they don't do that. Instead, the Premier gets up here every day in question period; he puts his hands in his pockets, he shrugs his

shoulders, and he says well, there's nothing we can do. And so, consequently, nothing actually happens.

Now I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one of the great omissions in the budget, in my estimation anyways, was the failure for the government and for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), not to acknowledge one little bit the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919. Not one word. You would think that such a seminal event in Winnipeg's history, in Manitoba's history, in Canada's history, and as I pointed out to someone this morning, internationally, such a seminal event, the 100th anniversary of that which sets the stage for labour reform and social reform in this country for decades after wouldn't be acknowledged by the government on budget day, probably the most important day in the life of every—any government.

And that's shameful, except to say that, in fact, these are the citizen committee of 1,000 across the floor from us in the House. I mean they're the citizens committee, not really; they're a committee of 37 now—are they 38? I lose count. I have so many of the former comrades over on my side, it's hard to keep up with who's in and who's out.

* (15:30)

But the really frightening thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the degree to which the conditions for 1919—yes, different—exist today in 2019. So what do we have? Well, one example is repressive labour legislation, and we've seen that from the moment the Premier walked in the door until the present. We see, in 1919, the desire for better wages for working people, and what do we see from this government? A desire to clamp down on wage growth in this province.

In 1919 was the desire that there should be real and genuine collective bargaining, and what have we seen from this government in 2019? Time after time after time, to clamp down on collective bargaining and, really, offend the constitution of this country in doing so. What were the conditions in 1919? Well, they were asking for better working conditions. And what have we seen from this government since they came into power but cuts to health and safety right along the line.

In 1919, with so many returning soldiers coming back from First World War and many others who had given their life for this country, what did they look for, but better social conditions in their communities and better supports for families, better medical attention to the outbreak of Spanish flu,

and yet what do we have today? A government that is completely inactive in addressing social conditions in our province, have not built a house, any child-care centres they've built are ones that we already had in the mix. They have not addressed opioid addictions. They have not addressed the meth crisis in our province.

So it's very discouraging for me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to get up today and have to say that the conditions of 1919 are almost existing—almost exactly the same in 2019 under this, the Pallister government, and it's why they are winning the award for the lamest, most anemic, most useless government in Canada today.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my friends have done a fantastic job about enumerating the many, many cuts that have been made to programs and services that Manitobans rely on, whether it's in health or whether it's in women's health. And by the way, I would like the Minister of Health, both past and present, to know that my wife was a lactation consultant at one point in her nursing career. She took great offence to the work and effort she put into that career. In fact, she was able to help a mom who was—had the child had been born through surrogacy—help that mom breastfeed all the same, a minor miracle, but it happened because of her experience and knowledge and effort she put into becoming a lactation consultant.

And so it was an insult to her and those who—other lactation consultants for the Minister of Health to just say, well, we'll get somebody else to do that; don't you worry about; we don't need your experience; we don't need your knowledge; we don't need your efforts you put into it. We'll get somebody else who hasn't done any of those things to do that job. And they can't, and that's the point.

We've seen the assault on women's health, as I said, the assault on mental health and addictions and the failure to address what is a crisis in our province. We've seen manifold cuts to education, which is just so discouraging for me, having had the great honour and privilege to serve as minister of Education and Advanced Learning, to listen to the nonsense that comes back across the other side about our education system.

I would invite you—many of the folks on the government side to actually understand what some of these international and national test scores are. And you need to remember that Canada ranks 18th in the world. So, you know, we do have an extraordinary

education system in our province. We have extraordinary teachers, extraordinary administrators, extraordinary resource officers.

And for the ministers of Education, both past and present, to get up every single day and do damage through their words for our education system and through their actions, through their cuts, is really, really discouraging and not, I repeat not, what a minister of Education is supposed to do. In the last Education budget that we had in 2015-2016, I guess, we not only funded schools at the rate of inflation after four elections and 16 other years of that increase to public education going up year after year after year. I don't know that the Minister of Education still has the same chart that I had in my office, but it just shows it going up after the Filmon government starved it in the 1990s.

So we did that, and then we also had the formula guarantee to make sure—make sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that no division would receive less the next year. And where's that? See eraser, see wipe it out; it's gone now, no formula guarantee.

We also continued to contribute to equalization per 'prupil', Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that wherever you lived in Manitoba, you got the opportunity to receive a great education. The government has not achieved anything on equalization in their three or four years in government.

So not only on those things—the funding of education, the formula guarantee, equalization—but in our last budget, we also had a number of things that are worth talking 'awhout'. We had the Active Schools Fund; does the current Education budget have that? Nope. How about the art, music and theatre fund; does the current Education minister have that? Nope. Child-care project's Family Choices Building Fund? Well, they talk about seven schools, but they don't exist. Three of those schools would have already been built if we were still in government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We had a record of 37 new or repurposed schools over our time in government. To date, after four years of Tory government, alls they can talk about are the architectural plans for new schools. We're never going to see them and no one should ever be deceived on that.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), who should have been the No. 1 advocate for when we announced that school, should have said, I want that school built

today. Three, four years later, he's still waiting on it. He should be ashamed of himself for this.

We had a green schools fund. Do you see that today? Nope. Play structures, green space and outdoor learning fund; do you see that today? Nope. School safety and access fund; do you see that today? Nope. How about new science labs; do you see that today? Nope? Skill build vocational fund; do you see that today? Nope. Special needs/life skills fund—extra pot of money; do you see that? Nope. Technology education fund in our last budget; do you see that in the Education budget today? No.

God sake's, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on every single count, the Minister of Education has failed to do the very job he's supposed to do, which is to go inside of government, advocate for a good education system to ensure there are no wrong doors, no dead ends and that every—every—student in our province has the opportunity to get a good education and a good job and live right here in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's also the matter of the deficit, and what we know for sure is that this government has cooked the books on the—cooked the books—I'll get to you in a second—cooked the books on deficit—cooked the books on the deficit from the get-go—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Allum: The former minister of Finance didn't have a clue what that number was. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: First—thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—first it was a billion, then it was 890, then it was this, then it was that. It got so bad that last year the Auditor General of this province had to call him out for cooking the books on the deficit—had to call them out.

And you know what happened at committee that day? The minister of Finance had the audacity to challenge the Auditor General in public. There was steam coming out of the Auditor General's report—out of his ears, I should say, as a result of the report and the very good opinion they gave. And what happened—did that minister of Finance do? He snubbed him in a public meeting. It was a shameful, shameful performance.

I'm running out of time, so I—there's a few other things that I just want to talk about. One of them, of course, is taxes.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Allum: If the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) wants to talk, he's welcome to have the floor, but right now I have it and he should listen, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

On the issue of taxes, I'm not staying around, not running again, so I just want to make a point to all members of the House about taxes 'becunse'—because we've come to a terrible—I'm not kidding, we've come to a terrible situation in Manitoba, quite possibly in Canada and quite possibly in the Western world when it comes to taxes, that those who, under circumstances—under certain circumstances support a tax increase, whether it's the income taxes, whether it's the corporate income taxes, whether it's to sales taxes—that those individuals are guilty of a venal sin, and those who lower taxes are somehow morally 'virtuous'—virtuous.

Where are we, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that's the nature of the debate that we have in our society today? We would have never had civilization if these guys were in power from the get-go because there never would have been a tax.

* (15:40)

Like the disciples of Stephen Harper that they are, he's—they believe that no tax is a good tax, and that's a terrible, terrible, terrible place for a society to be if you want to build a civilized community where everybody belongs and everybody has opportunity. We believe in that. I'm quite sure they don't.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to end on this. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: You'll recall that great scene in the dark knight rising where Batman addresses—as Bruce Wayne is on a dance floor and he's dancing with the woman who's Catwoman, and I can't remember her—what her name was, but as they're dancing around, they're trading jibes and having a good time on the dance floor, and suddenly she whispers over his shoulder: There's a storm coming, Mr. Wayne.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a storm coming in Manitoba, and quite frankly, I don't personally have the confidence in this group of people on the government side to address that storm.

In the first instance, a flood storm that's coming. We've seen nothing from the government or from the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) to give us any confidence that that flood will be properly

addressed when the time comes, and that's a bad place for Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The next one is an economic storm coming. Growth is projected to stall in this province within a year's time, and—*[interjection]*—well, I'll get to the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) in a second. And unless we're willing to invest in our neighbourhoods and our communities, unless we're willing to do that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —we're in really bad situation and we're putting Manitobans in a dire situation.

And then there's the climate change storm coming right around the corner, and this government really is not addressing climate change in a meaningful sense. And I don't know why they're talking to me—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —but I want to say to the Minister of Sustainable Development—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —and I want to say this in the best—*[interjection]*—well she—I'm going to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I just want more decorum in this House.

And the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, go ahead.

Mr. Allum: I mean this is all earnestness. And I don't know why they're hooting and hollering at me as I try to speak, but the Minister of Sustainable Development—which is a weird term, but forget about that for a moment—has the greatest opportunity of any minister in this government or of ministers across this country to actually take meaningful action on climate change, instead of ignoring the problem.

There is such—this is what my friend from Wolseley was trying to tell her last week: there is such great opportunity sitting there waiting not only to deal with mitigation and adaptation in climate change, but to create a whole new world for all of us. It's the greatest opportunity any minister could ever have. I urge her: don't blow it by continuing to see—speak the same idiotic speaking points that come out of the sausage factory of spin doctors in what they called Cabcom today.

So, let me end on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I don't mean this personally. I don't know the

Premier (Mr. Pallister) from a hole in the wall. We exchange hellos on the floor, in the corridor, as I do with most members in the most cordial way, but I don't know him.

So what I'm about to say is political, not personal in any way, but to me, Premier of this Province is a political con artist. I regard him as a political cheap—as a cheap sideshow carnie. I believe that each day he sells political snake oil to the people of Manitoba. And quite frankly, you cannot believe a word that's coming out of the Premier's mouth, and that's a terrible place for Manitoba, to me.

He is the ultimate class warrior in this province right now. Members of the government 'callow' under his authoritarian and paternalistic way of operating. *[interjection]* I'm not sure, Mr.—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But what the ultimate class warrior in the Premier needs to understand that the men and women of the—and women and men in the NDP are born out of a movement of resistance to power and to authority and to continue to fight for a fair, more just, more equitable, more inclusive society for all Manitobans. I know they're going to continue to do that. We're going to face up to the class warfare coming on to—from the other side, and we're going to return to government in the next election.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I guess I get to kind of bring it home, here, as we debate Interim Supply. I think it's really important to talk about what Interim Supply is because I know there's a bunch of backbenchers over on the other side—they really have no idea what we're doing this afternoon, or what we did yesterday, or maybe what's gone on in this House since they were elected in 2016.

Well, and there they are chirping away, already. Gary Doer used to call the budget process the dance of the seven veils and different—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Anyway, for the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), if he listens, he might learn something, and that would be a very positive thing. Of course, what happens in Interim Supply is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Well, the members may not know this, but I'll put this on the record, the purpose of Interim Supply is to make sure the government has money after April 1st in the new fiscal year. And, of course, not all of the elements of the budget will pass. That still doesn't happen for some time still, so, of course, the government needs money to keep things going.

And this government seems to think that, as the opposition, we should simply stand out of the way, and just allow that to pass without comment, without question, without asking what they actually intend to do, and to test whether what they say they're going to do with the money is actually what they're going to take on.

And there are a lot of reasons to be very suspicious of this government's intention to actually follow what they do in the budget, and that's because we've had the misfortune of watching what this government has done since they were elected in 2016.

In the limited time that I have, I'm going to talk about health care. We know that last year they passed a budget with a certain allocation for the health and for the mental wellness, and for addictions treatment and for seniors in the province of Manitoba, and the minister of Finance got up in this House and read a budget and they passed a budget through this House.

And then in the course of that year they actually withheld about \$250 million from the care of Manitobans. And they're proud of it. And, as my friend from Flin Flon pointed out and as we've talked about, there is an eerie, Orwellesque kind of approach to this government where they say that if you say something in the budget, then you dramatically underspend and then the money at—for the next budget, is somehow greater than the reduced amount, that that's somehow a benefit.

Well, nothing could be further from the truth, and, unfortunately, it's Manitoba patients, it's Manitoba families and it's people working in health care in Manitoba that are paying the price. What did that \$250 million in-year cut mean? Well, that meant restricting procedures across the board for Manitobans. And you know, of course, they'll do a press release when they open another facility that was built by the NDP. They don't do a press release when they say, by the way, here's how many surgeries we're having to cancel. Here's the expertise that we're now cancelling in this community or that community.

So we have to find out by bits and pieces, by people working in the system, coming to us, providing some information, under extreme threat, being effectively told by their employer that if they're found out to provide information to the public or to the opposition, they might get fired. That's the fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Or we find out from families, who ask us, as we work in our communities, and as we also get casework from communities represented by Conservative MLAs who can't be bothered to speak to people, or who can't be bothered to actually listen to their concerns and pass them on. We find these things out in bits and pieces. And it's not always smooth, it's not always easy, but Manitobans are certainly getting the picture from what happens when a government continues to cut from health care.

And we see examples—and again, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) talked a bit about the doublespeak—you'll hear the Minister of Health saying how overtime has been reduced in Manitoba's health-care system. Overtime has been reduced because they have forced hospitals and personal care homes to stop calling nurses in to fill vacancies. There's a lot of words in personal-care homes, in hospitals both in the city and outside of the city, where the first nursing vacancy does not get filled. So every other nurse working on that ward for that shift knows they're going to be understaffed, and they are going to have a tough day or a tough night.

And then what happens? When they do call a nurse, they already know they're already down at least one position, maybe more. So guess what? Nurses aren't answering their phones and nurses aren't coming in because they don't want to work under those kind of conditions.

* (15:50)

So what happens to those nurses that are there? Well, more and more, as we've seen over the past year and a half, they get mandated to work overtime. A nurse finishes her shift, which could be eight hours or 10 hours or 12 hours, and before her shift or his shift, for that matter, their supervisor comes to them and says: You can't go home. We don't have anybody else to replace you. You're going have to stay and care for these people for another two hours, four hours, six hours, whatever it is and, by the way, this is the way it is, don't complain.

So, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) can get up and they can crow about limiting overtime. There is a real cost to the

way this government is mismanaging our health-care system.

Of course, we know they have been slow to approve drugs, that different provinces now have been moving ahead of Manitoba in approving new, better drugs because they don't want to pay the cost. And even when a drug is approved, this government has become incredibly restrictive about making sure there's access to those drugs across the province.

And, of course, with some drugs like Mifegymiso the Minister of Health won't even answer the questions, even though that spending is in his department.

Second time in a row we have a Minister of Health that can't talk about women's reproductive choice, and that is embarrassing, frankly. That is embarrassing that we'd have ministers of Health that can't even stand up in this House, that won't answer questions in Estimates, that won't speak about women's reproductive health. I don't know—we talk about 1919; I'm not sure what year some of those Conservative Cabinet ministers are in; it is definitely not 2018.

We know in this year to come that the government still plans to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia. What I'm really interested in, as we now have this request for Interim Supply and we have another budget being brought forward without having any confidence in the numbers, what's going to happen to rural health care?

We'd been told, actually, that this government was going to roll out its plan, not just to close ERs in Winnipeg, but to close not just ERs, but close hospitals across rural Manitoba, and I think they're all holding their breath and hoping that nobody asks the question because their—the runway is—they're running out of runway if they're actually going to be going into the communities that they take for granted and start closing their health-care facilities, closing their ambulance stations, closing clinics, doing all the things to those communities that are now being done to communities in the city of Winnipeg.

And who knows, with this Interim Supply, what the money is actually going to be spent on. And we know just how nasty these cuts in year have been in the health-care system. I mean, things like supplies, like bandages, underwear, gauze, blankets—those are the kinds of things that this government has been cutting in year to try to make them look good.

Well, that doesn't look good at all for a province. That is an embarrassment for a provincial government to treat Manitobans in such a poor way. And, again, it's taking some time for Manitobans to realize this and, unfortunately, it's when Manitobans need their government the most they find out how they're being ignored and left behind.

And that's our job, obviously, as the opposition. It's the role of media, it's the role of others to step up and raise those voices.

But I can tell the members opposite that their spin is not working, that their rosy restatement or misstatement of the facts is not working, and every day more and more Manitobans are discovering the truth, what's behind this government's rush to try to cut costs.

So, we'll be voting on Interim Supply later on this afternoon. Obviously, even if the government doesn't, we certainly respect civil servants and want them to be paid properly.

We'll be moving that ahead, but we have serious doubts about this government's good faith in presenting a budget and yet going out and doing the exact opposite and leaving Manitobans in peril.

So, that's all I have to say this afternoon, but we'll have lots more to say in April for sure.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is that the Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, be now read a second time and be referred to the Committee of the Whole.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Recorded Vote

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

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

Madam Speaker in the Chair

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is that Bill 28, The Appropriation Act, 2019, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 32, Nays 15.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly adopted.

Madam Speaker: The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order.

We are now considering the Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019.

Does the honourable Minister of Finance have an opening statement?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): No.

Mr. Chairperson: No.

Does the official opposition financial critic have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the second opposition financial critic have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No.

We shall proceed to consider the bill clause by clause. Okay. The title and the acting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes business—agreed that the bill be reported? [*Agreed*]

That concludes business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): The Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, and reports the same without amendments.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin), that the report be of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, second by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: I'm hearing a no from the honourable member for Assiniboia?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I actually didn't say anything. But if there's—but if—but on a point of order, then—

Madam Speaker: Is the member for Assiniboia wishing to speak on this? On the bill?

Mr. Fletcher: Yes. Of—sure. If the opportunity's there, yes. I will.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia.

Mr. Fletcher: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this very important piece of legislation, and I look forward to discussing it for at least 29 minutes. I wish I had more time, but—I'm just kidding.

Madam Speaker, I'll just make a few quick observations. One is: the budget is reliant on borrowed money—over \$5 billion. There are debts of \$23 billion, both for Hydro and, it appears, for the government as a whole. So combined, it's about \$51 billion throughout the budget. And I look forward to this debate so that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and his colleagues can break down these numbers and explain why the issue of the debt has not been properly addressed.

* (16:40)

I also ask the member in regard to the very specific budget measures dealing with the Winnipeg stadium, the \$86 million that has gone to bail out, apparently. The stadium is a issue, I think, is important because the member was a member of the city council—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —at the time that this boondoggle occurred, and I wonder if there's some accountability measures in the budget to ensure that there's accountability both for the taxpayer and also political accountability when mistakes are made at another level of government and then the next level of government covers up those mistakes through just out and out money there's an issue there that is of interest to the public.

Madam Speaker, there's also the issue of maximizing government resources. I am very interested, as this debate goes on, to hear how the government plans to deal with government-held assets, many of which are worth many millions of dollars, perhaps tens of millions of dollars.

We have the old Children's Hospital, the Shriners hospital in River Heights, beautiful piece of land, but—on the river—it's empty and it's been empty for decades now. It's zoned as a hospital, and it would be helpful if the government would explain its plans for the facility, as it is owned by the

government. And this is important for the taxpayers, relevant to the budget, because every underutilized asset the government has means that there's an increase in the tax rates for the average person, Madam Speaker, and we can go through where the government has made other questionable transactions.

Since we're on the issue, I simply note that in the middle of St. James there is a piece of land worth millions that the government intends to transfer to a third party that—for \$1 a year. This is land worth millions of dollars, it's—the community is very concerned. Those concerns haven't been addressed for over a year. I was—have been tabling petitions every day the Legislature sits, mostly signed by members of the community.

But the issue that everyone should be aware of, the issue that everyone should be—the issue that people need to be aware of is that if the government just is lackadaisical about government assets, even no matter if it was an orphanage that they were leasing for \$1, that has consequences to the community.

Madam Speaker, there's also consequences in regard to addictions. The government has failed to fully fund the addictions centre and, as a result, they have allowed for investments made by a previous government, at the Magnus site to not proceed in a manner that one would expect, or, apparently, nearly—there's about 149 units in the facility. Only 18 are funded, therefore all the capital investment has been for naught due to lack of funding.

Yet, the government has no problem transferring assets for a dollar, or refusing to ensure that the people of Manitoba can have confidence in the continuum of care, from prevention to treatment for addiction to detox to recovery. Madam Speaker, I do note that there seems to be some activity going on that I may—that I'm unaware of. I think it would've been really helpful if the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) or somebody would have proactively shared whatever is going on there, but they didn't. So why not seize the opportunity to speak on the budget, which is in the billions of dollars?

I have no idea why there seems to be unusual activity. I do know—okay well, if it's—if someone's indicating it's simply Interim Supply and that's fine. Right, I would like to seize the opportunity for speaking here, and I hope that other members seize the opportunity to speak when they have the opportunity.

In regard to the budget, we have a situation where, just last year, the government made a commitment to bring forward a carbon tax worth about \$300 million, and for 18 months the government was very clear that they were going to pursue it because they felt it was in the best interest of Manitobans. I obviously disagree with that and was one of the three reasons cited by the government for allowing me to freely represent the people of my constituency with my colleague here in the freedom caucus, and as an independent, it has allowed the opportunity to raise a number of issues that are important to Manitobans.

Now, let's go through some more of those. Madam Speaker, the government talks a lot about sole source contracting in the budget—that they are opposed to it, as am I. However, in practice, we find that the government does, in fact, sole source contracts.

* (16:50)

And even when provided the opportunity at Estimates, which is in this House, to just admit that it didn't go through the proper process—excuse me, Madam Speaker, I'm just going to get some water. Thank you. Didn't go through the proper process.

The problem with that is that also costs the taxpayer a lot of money, but it also violates the internal trade agreement provinces in Canada, and the western partnership agreement which this government signed. The government signed this agreement and they immediately, it appears, contravened it. The minister of the day, who still is the minister, was provided many opportunities just to admit it was a mistake, didn't go through the proper process. In Hansard, you can see this word for word.

And in doing so, when one needs to recognize that the sole-source contracting costs the taxpayer money. The government was caught. The minister admitted in the media that they had violated this requirement.

And, Madam Speaker, I understand that there's a lot of activity in the government bench.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I apologize to the member for Assiniboia for interrupting him during his speech.

As this bill needs to pass to ensure that civil servants get paid and other programs get funded, I wonder if there's will of the House to not see the clock until this bill has received a third reading and royal assent.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to not see the clock until this bill has received third reading and royal assent?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No, no, no.

Madam Speaker: Leave is denied.

* * *

Mr. Fletcher: Again, I appreciate the attempt by the House leader to arbitrarily change the time and rules of this place. But I hope that, and again I don't know what's going on here, but something suspicious is going—I really wish that if there is something that needs to be done legislatively or otherwise that I would be informed.

And the other members of this place, including my colleague in the freedom caucus and the MLA from Emerson, would have been informed about whatever is—the fact that—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I feel I have to address just some of the comments the member is just making.

There is nothing suspicious going on. This is very traditional procedure for Interim Supply. I would have hoped the member would have realized that we were in Interim Supply, it was indicated earlier today that we were moving into Interim Supply.

And the intent is, when we have Interim Supply, that this is the very typical procedure, and at 5 o'clock the intent is that it would pass and royal assent would be given because we have the Administrator, or sometimes the Lieutenant Governor, ready at this time so that civil servants and everybody can be paid. And, if the bill is delayed past today, we are in a bit of a problem. Because the member was very aware, yesterday and today it was acknowledged right after routine proceedings that this is what's happening.

So I don't think the member can legitimately say there's something suspicious going on, but—because, if he would have been listening, it was clear what was going to be happening.

So I would ask the member just to give some thought to this in what he's attempting to do, because everything that is happening here is procedurally accurate. There is nothing suspicious going on. So I do want to reassure him that none of that is happening. This is very typical procedure for Interim Supply. There is a deadline of 5 o'clock, or if there is leave to not see the clock, we could go past that and allow the member to conclude his statements, and then go into concurrence and third reading and royal assent. The intent of all of this is to ensure that civil servants get paid and that bills can get paid. So I just want the member to be clear about what's happening. There is absolutely nothing suspicious going on.

And I would turn it over to the member of Assiniboia to see if this explanation perhaps gives him an opportunity to understand and move things forward.

Mr. Fletcher: I did not mean, in any way, to suggest that the suspicious behaviour was being conducted by this place—just some individual members. Maybe a better term would have been unnecessary chatting amongst themselves.

But the fact remains that, procedurally, having a discussion that we're having is procedurally correct, and there's nothing wrong with it. Perhaps with better communication beforehand, it would have been better, but there wasn't, and here we are.

In regard to the payment of the civil servants and the other bills, the government has a zillion ways to cover these expenses, including a warrant. There's prerogatives. There is a \$200-million emergency—similar to the way people have an overdraft account.

So if this bill is so important, why did the government leave it to the very last moment? So, you can understand why one could be quite skeptical that a government with a supermajority could leave itself vulnerable to the clock. Like, they have every lever and they have all the power they need to cover the expenses that need to be covered.

And, Madam Speaker, these sort of pressure tactics that the government continues to use I think just works against them. They blew the budget debate last Thursday. They add their legislative agenda—

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable opposition House leader.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order.

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Ms. Fontaine: I apologize for interrupting my esteemed colleague's speech here.

I'm just wondering if there's leave of the House to not see the clock and allow us to finish the business of the day.

Madam Speaker: Can we revisit this, please? Is there leave to not see the clock so that we can finish this order of business?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

* * *

Mr. Fletcher: Again, Madam Speaker, the issue is the budget. The government has a supermajority. They can do whatever they want within their mandate, and even some things that are beyond.

Efficiency Manitoba is a newly created Crown corporation—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 12 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on April 1st.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 21, 2019

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