

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Man.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	Ind.
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to table the Indigenous and Northern Relations Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, for the 2019-2020 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to table, in accordance with the provisions of section 28 of The Auditor General's Act, the report of the Auditor General on the follow-up of previously issued recommendations, dated March 2019.

Any other tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I rise today to acknowledge the start of Sexual Assault Awareness Month in Manitoba.

I stand before you and amongst my colleagues, reflecting again on the extent to which sexual violence is prevalent in our society and the communities that we are all here to represent, serving to remind us all how far we have to go before we live in a world that respects and honours all individuals.

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to taking action against sexual violence. Last week

we released the revised Respectful Workplace Policy and launched a government-wide sexual harassment awareness campaign as a result of listening to Manitoba employees past and present.

These changes in our policy are in direct response to what we heard, and our government recognizes that we must lead by example.

Further, a few weeks ago, Madam Speaker, we tabled legislation to amend The Residential Tenancies Act. The amendment will allow tenants who have experienced sexual violence to end their leases early.

We have also passed legislation to ensure municipalities have policies and codes of conduct to address harassment, and further, we have launched public awareness materials aimed at reducing victim blaming and continuing to raise awareness of consent.

But, Madam Speaker, our work is not over. The issue of sexual violence is still deeply pervasive in all sectors of society. Global movements such as the #MeToo have deepened our understanding that sexually violent behaviour is not to be tolerated, whether it is in our workplaces, schools, on the street, online or in our homes.

This April, I encourage all of us to take time to reflect how society is changing and to ask ourselves what have we done so that we can be part of that change and to consider what else can we do to eradicate sexual violence.

We know that meaningful change requires all of us. Every individual can take action, such as supporting survivors who choose to disclose, educating ourselves and our loved ones about consent and modelling respectful behaviour.

Madam Speaker, it's a privilege and an honour to work with so many of my colleagues to address the issue of sexual violence. I am proud of our government's commitment to ending sexual violence and I will continue to use my voice to advocate for action on this front.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for your bill that brought about April being declared Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Merci.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): For women, girls and non-binary peoples in Canada and, really, across the globe, sexual violence and harassment remains a daily experience. Sexual Assault Awareness Month is a time to combat sexual violence and harassment in all of its forms, and to take time to honour both victims and survivors of said violence.

This year's campaign around sexual violence awareness is on consent, Madam Speaker. As society grapples with the #MeToo movement, the woman's march and Time's Up, conversations around consent are moving more in mainstream and we are actually seeing more and more men and boys become engaged in the conversation of consent. I know that, in my home, I talk with my two sons about consent all the time.

Consent is more than just no, Madam Speaker. It is about clear communication and agreement by both parties. Consent is also ongoing. It is important to check in with your partner and learn to listen for non-verbal clues. Consent is also about learning to respect the no, whenever and however it comes or presents itself.

Gaining consent in our online activities is equally as important as in our on-life-on-offline ones. We have seen how sexting and sharing photos victimize peoples, predominantly women and girls, Madam Speaker, when they are shared online, and we have seen, even here in Canada, the tragic consequences of that behaviour.

Sharing intimate photos with people they were not meant or sending unwanted texts is a violation of a partner's trust, Madam Speaker. Equally important, it is against the law, but in particular when it involves children, anyone under the age of 18.

We all deserve to live in a society where a culture of consent informs our relationships; in order to do that we need to be having conversations around consent and the prevalence of sexual violence year round.

And I say miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, Manitoba still has the highest rates of police-reported sexual assault in the country, almost double the national average. And while year after year we continue to rise and make these statements, the deep changes we need do not seem to be happening.

We often use the passive term, quote, violence against women, quote. But in Canada men are the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of violence against women and girls. The children's advocate has highlighted that there are hundreds of women and girls at risk of sexual predators in Winnipeg alone, and yet often women are told that they should be better at protecting themselves—not on focusing on getting perpetrators to recognize women and girls as full human beings.

Almost all Canadians, 96 per cent, believe that all sexual activities should be consensual, yet only 1 in 3 Canadians understand what it means to give consent.

So there is a massive gap in how we are teaching all Manitobans what consent means, and this government over many years has neglected the problem even within this building.

Women need to feel safe, not just at work, not just at home and not just on dark streets, but everywhere, Madam Speaker; and more than that, we need to move beyond a discourse where we talk about women being treated properly because they are someone's daughter or sister, but because women are full human beings who deserve respect, dignity and protection under the law.

It is up to all of us to make these horrific statistics and the daily fear a thing of the past. We need to educate Manitobans about consent, we need to educate Manitobans about sexual assault and we need to learn to treat each other better every day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Caregiver Recognition Day

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, today is Caregiver Recognition Day in Manitoba and I want to commend the great work done by caregivers, really, across the province.

In June of 2011 the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba passed The Caregiver Recognition Act, the first legislation in Canada recognizing caregivers.

A caregiver provides informal and unpaid personal care, support and assistance to another person in an age-related illness, disability or challenge. Caregivers help seniors to age in place and remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

In Budget 2019 we are reducing red tape for primary-care tax credit so that caregivers can claim the tax credit when they file their taxes on April 30th. Any Manitoba who provides ongoing volunteer care for a family member, friend or a neighbour in Manitoba can claim the credit. The primary tax credit provides recognition to those caring for a loved one.

Janet Jackmann, who is here today from our community, has found herself in the role of caregiver for her parents and most recently her husband, Wil. With the help of resources from the St. James 55-plus centre, Wil is able to engage socially and combat the isolation that affects many of our aging population.

* (13:40)

It is often long hours and days as a caregiver, and I want to recognize Janet and many caregivers like her who contribute to keeping their families together in their homes.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and Janet is here

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to ministers when delivering private member statements, the intent of private member statements is not to be able to— for ministers not to be able to speak about government programs.

So I would just urge caution when ministers are delivering private member statements that it needs to fully be respected and delivered according to something that is going on within the constituency.

Further member statements?

AAA Bantam 2 Warriors

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Last month, the 2019 AAA Bantam 2 Warriors became our city champions. In order to achieve this goal, it took many hours of hard work and dedication for both the players and coaching staff. The team exceeded all expectations; an incredible season that was topped off with the city championship.

The group embodied the ideal combination of passion, skill and work ethic. In hockey-speak, they'd be called grinders, the stuff champion teams are made of at all levels of the game. Their commitment and drive to improve is what earned them the success.

According to the head coach, Tyler Riel, it was an absolute pleasure to coach them, and as he is—his staff can hardly wait to get back with the boys this coming fall.

The AAA Bantam 2 Warriors are made up of the top of all children born in 2005, come—from both St. Vital, St. Boniface and Southdale. Their incredible record during the regular season, which—includes 26 wins and only three losses and one tie.

In January, Madam Speaker, they went down to Minneapolis to compete in an international tournament, where they went on to win with a perfect 6-0 record. They also played a perfect eight wins and zero losses during the playoffs for a total record of 40-3-1, which ranks them as a top AAA records of all time.

An extraordinary team made up of extraordinary individuals; you have so much to be proud of. Here is a bright future ahead for these fine young athletes. It is times like this I feel most rewarded as an MLA. It is such a privilege to recognize such devoted hard work, leadership and determination.

I wish both the staff and members of this team all the best for their future endeavors. Such—team, driven by achievement, is applauded by our government, as way—as a team, are committed to a brighter future for our citizens and our family.

Madam Speaker, I do ask for leave to have the names of the coaching staff and players added to Hansard.

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

AAA Bantam 2 Warriors: Ethan Alsip, Aiden Anderson, Nolan Anderson, Dylan Bauknecht, Aven Cockerill, Nolan Domenico, Blake Goretzki, Lukas Hansen, Brett Kaiser, Parker Lee, Dario Macchia, Jack McFeetors, Jayden Perron, Liam Saxberg, Chase Simon, Noah Slobozian, Reeve Sukut, Mason Tabak, Dylan Vitelli. Tyler Riel, head coach; Ryan Riel and Adam Sefton, assistant coaches; Larissa Cerasani and Zack Zaman, athletic therapists; Derek Riel, manager.

Take Your MLA to Work Day

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Every year, Disability Matters organizes Take Your MLA to Work Day. This time around, I had the opportunity to get to know Samma. She's also joined us today in the gallery with her mom, Marcy; her dad, Sam; and Melissa from Work and Social Opportunities.

Samma enjoys coding on the computer and sports such as walking and swimming, but her real passion lies with books and reading. Her love for reading is evident through her library and

information technology diploma and all her volunteerism and work experience at five different libraries.

In addition to her passion towards books and reading, she has volunteered and worked at MCC thrift store, the autism society of Manitoba, the society of Manitobans with disabilities, and as an assistant voting officer.

Samma is currently working at Elwick school library where she shows her passion and dedication every day by taking a 90-minute bus ride to the school and a 90-minute bus ride home.

Samma's work ethic inspires me. She's an incredibly intelligent woman with a big heart. She aspires to ensure students in the library feel supported, cared for and respected. A notable example of this is when Samma purchases—with her own money—educational story books and donates them to the school library. She hopes that by donating these books, she can stimulate the imagination and desire to learn among our students.

Samma will probably continue to beat me at Battleship, but that is a small price to pay for the lessons that she has taught me.

In closing, Samma has a piece of advice that she wanted to share. She recognizes the importance of volunteering and she would suggest more people volunteer, as it feels good and it looks good on the resume.

Thank you, Samma, for allowing me to get to know you, and I ask that my colleagues join me today in recognizing all that Samma has accomplished and continues to do.

Assiniboine Community College Cougars

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I am so pleased to stand in the House today to talk about a young group of women from various communities across Manitoba and Ontario who currently make Brandon their home.

Whether it be someone studying business administration or someone in the nursing program, each of these women come with the determination and confidence to be the very best that they can. They work hard every day in the classroom but equally as hard on the ice.

Led by their head coach, Tony Bertone, I speak of the Assiniboine Community College Cougars, who had joined us in the gallery yesterday.

In 2018, Madam Speaker, the Cougars attended the American Collegiate Hockey Association National Championships in Columbus, Ohio. Finishing with two wins and one loss, the experience gave these players the determination to make a return visit in 2019.

With 17 players on the roster, nine of them returning veterans, three experienced coaches and a large following of fans, the Cougars headed to Frisco, Texas, for this year's ACHA championship.

The Cougars went through the tournament undefeated, scoring 23 goals while allowing only three, and they captured the ACHA Division II title with a 1-0 win over the Minot State Beavers on Sunday, March 31st.

I want to single out Simone—pardon me—Simone Turner-Cummer of Carman, who scored six goals in the tournament, including both goals in the semi-final and the only goal of the final, and she was also named the tournament's most valuable player.

I stand here proud, Madam Speaker, as I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the 2019 ACHA Division II national champions, the Assiniboine Community College Cougars.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon East.

Mr. Isleifson: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include the names of the coaches and the players into Hansard.

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

Assiniboine Community College Cougars: Alyssa Alderson, Haylee Anderson, Lauren Blight, Blair Brodie, Rachel Charles, Samantha Christensen, Jasmine Denby, Erin Doherty, Karli Frederick, Kenzie Heide, Stephanie Jones, Mariah McCue, Erica McIntosh, Emily Nichol, Marley Quesnel, Alix Tosh, Simone Turner-Cummer. Tony Bertone, head coach; Terry Senkbeil and Tara VanCauwenberghe, assistant coaches; Larry Shannon, manager.

Early Childhood Education

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I rise today to speak with a true mix of emotions.

On the one hand, I am absolutely inspired by the incredible political activism and work and talent that

our early childhood educators have demonstrated by bringing a petition to the Legislature today with 26,000 names on it. That is far and away the largest petition that I have ever had the honour of receiving in my sixteen years here as an MLA, and I commend them for their work.

I also want to thank everyone in my Wolseley constituency who is hard at work, right now, providing invaluable child-care services to my constituents. And I want to offer my personal and deepest thanks to those workers who have helped raise my own children into the fine people that they are today and hopefully will continue to be.

Investments in our children's early years are some of the very best decisions that we can make. Kids end up being more ready to go to school; they can develop their cognitive and emotional development in a licensed and community-based and accessible child-care centre. And parents can actually have the opportunity to enter the workforce or to go and upgrade their skills.

In Quebec, the government there, despite a massive investment in child care—the best one—the best program in the whole country—their government actually came out financially ahead because of the huge influx of workers, most of them women, heading into their economy. Investing in child care makes sense.

So why is it that we now have tens of thousands of Manitobans calling this government to account on their horrific treatment of their sector? Because this government has frozen funding to child-care centres for not one, not two, but three years in a row. Where was that promise, Madam Speaker, on the Conservative election brochures back in the last election, when there was going to be no cuts and no layoffs?

I tell you, Madam Speaker, those people are not going to stay silent, nor should they. And I stand in full support of their message today for full, accessible child care in a non-profit community setting—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (13:50)

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to revert to tabling of reports.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to revert to tabling of reports? *[Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

(Continued)

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I am pleased to table the following report of the 2019-2020 Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, Estimates supplement for Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Child-Care Centres Operating Grants

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Every family in Manitoba deserves to have high-quality child care, and yet, almost every family in this province has a story about all the hoops that they've had to jump through in order to get daycare.

Twenty-six thousand of these Manitobans have signed a petition that they brought forward to the Legislature today. These 26,000 Manitobans want to access quality, affordable licensed child care right here in the province, and we are joined by representatives of the Manitoba Child Care Association, who are raising their voices on this important topic.

Now, we know that the Premier has frozen funding in this area for some three years and these de facto cuts are taking their toll. It results in frozen wages for employees. In some cases child-care staff are even paying out of pocket for important supplies.

Will the Premier stop his freeze and increase operating funding for child-care centres in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate the timeliness of the member's comments, Madam Speaker, and I would say that we continue to be committed, and strongly so, to improving the wait times we inherited from the previous administration. It was far too long, and we all—I hope—all agree on that, and although the members opposite didn't have an answer when they were in government, they seem to believe they have one now.

I would say, though, that our commitment to create 3,100 new child-care spaces is on track to be achieved. In this year's budget alone we are committing to an additional 1,600 child-care spaces in the province, which I think is certainly evidence not only of our commitment to the parents of the province, but, more importantly, I think,

perhaps, Madam Speaker, the children of the province as well.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we know that the need is there. Many parents, even parents-to-be, put their children on a waiting list just as soon as they can because they know it will take so long to be able to access the child care that they need.

Now, unfortunately, we know that the Premier has frozen operating grants for a number of years; that's the reason 26,000 Manitobans have put their names on these petitions that have been brought forward today.

But it goes beyond that. We know that the waiting list was over 17,500 Manitobans at last count. The reason why I say at last count, because those numbers are significantly out of date; apparently, the Province has stopped even updating.

And, finally, in their most recent budget this Premier cut \$1.4 million from child-care funding. That's completely in the wrong direction. *[interjection]* I appreciate the heckles from the other side. They're right, that is the wrong move, to cut \$1.4 million from child care.

Madam Speaker, will the Premier listen to these 26,000 Manitobans and end the freeze on daycare operating grants?

Mr. Pallister: I would ask the member to discuss with his own member from Wolseley his talking points, Madam Speaker. Both members have contradicted each other in their preambles today; neither has evidenced the facts.

The fact is that they are wrong, that there's been no reduction in funding for child-care centres, and quite the opposite, Madam Speaker. They're ignoring the reality that under the NDP government the wait time for child care in the province of Manitoba doubled. It went from 8,000 to 16,000, and we are committed, as a government, to addressing a problem they failed to address, more than that, that they helped create in the first place.

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

Mr. Kinew: I would encourage the Premier to take the time and to review the petitions that are being brought forward to the Legislature today: again, 26,000 families in this province that put their name

on a document calling for him to increase operating grants for daycare centres in the province.

We know full well the impact of this freeze that he's brought into place. It's resulted in many child-care centres having difficulty staffing up their positions. It's led to turnover, and, of course, we know that those early years are so important for bonding between caregivers and children, and turnover certainly doesn't help the early childhood development of those kids in the daycare centres.

Now, beyond the operating freeze, we know that this government, at this Premier's direction, has cut \$1.4 million from child-care funding in their latest budget. On this side of the House we say that's the wrong direction. We say that they should be investing in children. We say that they should begin that investment in early childhood education by lifting the freeze on operating grants for daycares in Manitoba.

Will the Premier announce action on that today?

Mr. Pallister: Well, a new direction would be required by the member opposite, Madam Speaker. A new direction would require him to go towards truth town and not run away from it with his preamble, and the fact of the matter is our funding's been—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —maintained. But it's much more than that, Madam Speaker. We've also maintained the second most generous family supports for child care in the country of Canada.

And, Madam Speaker, I do appreciate the work that people put into petitions, but I can also remember—because I have been here a little longer than the member—that during the NDP time there were, in fact, dozens upon dozens of petitions asking the NDP to address the problems of the growing wait times in child care, which were ignored totally.

So the fact of the matter is that families in this province deserve more—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —than just vague accolades about the industry. They deserve commitments on the part of those they elect to address the problem. That's what we're focused on doing.

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

**Children's disABILITY Services
Program Funding Concerns**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, today is world autism day. It's an important time for us to stand together and support the inclusion of all young people and people of all ages who find themselves on the autism spectrum.

Now, perhaps the government can't do everything, Madam Speaker, but I would suggest that the government should do everything within its power to give every kid in our province a fighting chance.

Now, just this morning, a mother from Virden emailed me to say that her nine-year-old son is losing supports, therapeutic supports, at school because of this Premier's cuts to education.

Now, when the Premier cuts or freezes education funding in different divisions that does nothing to help with the growing number of kids with exceptional needs in our schools. In fact, it makes a situation worse because the same amount of money gets discounted by inflation and then has to serve a growing number of kids.

Will the Premier advance inclusion for those with exceptional needs by ending his cuts to education?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, Madam Speaker, if the truth was a country the member wouldn't reside there.

The fact is that we've increased the education budget in this province by several hundred million dollars over what the NDP ever invested. More than that, on the issues of autism I recall members, when in opposition, now on this side of the House, advocating strongly for the programs for autism which were never invested in by the previous administration but are being invested in by this one. We continue it.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, last week I met with a group of parents in Dauphin who told me that sometimes exceptional kids have exceptional needs. Now, these parents come from many different walks of life. There are nurses; there's teachers, farmers. What unites them all is that they are doing everything they can to give their kids a fighting chance. Their message to me was simple—that they

wanted passed on to this government—and I quote: Don't take anything else away. End quote.

They've seen their travel supports when they travel to get health care cut. They only get \$3.26 for breakfast when they travel to health-care appointments. These families have seen their respite care cut, so that's a major source of stress for them. They've also lost occupational and physiotherapy supports. Bottom line, they're worried about the future of Children's disABILITY Services.

Will the Premier stop the cuts, restore the services and give all kids, including those kids with exceptional needs, a fighting chance?

Mr. Pallister: Well, more than that, Madam Speaker, I think, apart from the words of the member, the actual investments that are being made are important to comment on.

Our increase in our education budget, globally, is \$434 million over what the NDP ever invested. Our commitment to the children of this province is evidenced by that investment. And, Madam Speaker, it is more than that; it's what we derive from the investment that's important. And so it is important to understand we are partnering with the federal government on an additional \$47-million commitment to improve the quality of care for our children, of which \$10 million is earmarked specifically for the needs of autistic children and families.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Kinew: Children's disABILITY Services in the—in the Department of Families, Madam Speaker.

A father in the Parklands shared with me that when he takes his child to get an MRI, to meet with a specialist or to attend a medical appointment in Winnipeg, he can only claim 42 cents per kilometre, while an MLA from the same region of the province is allowed to claim 53.4 cents per kilometre.

Why aren't parents of kids with special needs allowed to claim the same amount for mileage as an MLA?

Parents in Swan River and Dauphin are upset their care is being cut—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –their respite care is being cut at the hands of this government. One parent told me that it doesn't make sense to cut their respite care because they're only using that to backfill the cuts that happened to physiotherapy and occupational therapy. They're cutting the supports that families are using to make up for other cuts, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier end these cuts, restore the services and guarantee provision of benefits under Children's disABILITY Services in Manitoba today?

Mr. Pallister: Well, wow, Madam Speaker, is all I can say.

The member obviously wasn't here and maybe didn't want to do the research, but here's the research. In 2010-11 for special needs level 2 and 3 funding support, the number was \$44,791,000. I repeat: \$44,791,000. That was in 2010-11. The level of funding in the last year of the NDP government was 23 per cent less than that.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding, I was just given some information that we have some students in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

We have the students from the Dasmesh School, Winnipeg, the first Sikh faith-based school in Winnipeg, and on behalf of all members, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

Ad Campaign–Nurses Apology Request

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): It saddens me that I have to stand here today and put on the record and ask that the Minister of Health formally apologize for his government's recent insulting and ignorant actions: Photoshopped images, Madam Speaker, of nurses getting facials, doing yoga and some skiing in their scrubs without jackets, here in Manitoba. Manitoba Nurses Union has summed it up well with the short-sighted ad campaign, and I quote: Tone deaf and demeaning to women and Manitoba's nurses who are dealing with 16-hour workdays, record overtime and crushing workloads. End quote.

Will the minister get up today and formally apologize–

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Already done, Madam Speaker.

That member knows that those ads in no way represent the view of this government towards nurses and the hard work they do. That's why as soon as I learned about the existence of the ads and viewed them for myself I had them suspended. I spoke and had a very good–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –frank and honest exchange with MNU president on Friday morning. I consider this issue closed. I continue to look into the causes of how this–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –ad campaign was generated and the reasons for it. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Health-Care Reform Impact on Nurses

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I find it hard to believe that that minister didn't approve that ad. He is the Minister of Health. It is part of his job.

Nurses are being worked off their feet. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: They're being forced to work massive overload of overtime, and then they're sent emails telling them that they live in a valley of despair. That's not respect or support for nurses or patients.

What is causing this massive chaos? Krista Williams, chief health operators officer for the WRHA, attributed the increased wait times to the Premier's ongoing overhaul of the health-care system. Since the Premier started closing emergency rooms in 2017, wait times have gone up, up, up.

Will the Premier stop his cuts and his plans to close–

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): As I already stated for that member, those ads that she referred to in no way reflect the views of this government.

We know that nurses in our communities, in our hospitals around this province work hard every day. It's a noble profession. It's not an easy one, but it's one that many Manitobans continue to choose, and we are proud of those who do this work in our communities; we salute them today.

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

Wait Times for Procedures

Mrs. Smith: Last week Manitobans got a clear picture of the repercussions that this government's cuts are having on our health-care system.

These are the facts, Madam Speaker: 17 per cent wait time for hip surgery; 21 per cent increase for knee replacement surgery; wait times for cataract surgery went up 5 per cent; wait times in ERs, 30 minutes more waiting time. All worse. Not only are they getting worse, Madam Speaker, but they're actually—they're tied for worst in the whole country.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) commit to hiring more nurses so that we can ensure that wait times are decreased and more surgeries are completed this year?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, that's not the full picture. If that member had done a little more research, she would have understand that the Canadian information for health—Canadian Institute for Health Information study that was just released also showed marked improvement, when it came to Manitoba, for things like MRI wait times and CT scans. In those areas, volume increases of 30 per cent, and yet the times are acceptable.

What the data also shows is that going back 10 years—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –10 years—these are long-standing issues that for the first time, through a transformation of our health-care system, we have the ability to address and mitigate. That work was never done by the NDP.

Curriculum Support Centre Elimination of Library Services

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Last week teachers expressed their frustration at a government that is just not listening.

The curriculum resource library served almost 10,000 clients here in the province of Manitoba and that number was only on the rise. Yet, the minister has now closed the curriculum resource library that served Manitoba for over 100 years. The minister cut the library without any consultation, in the middle of a school year, and then when he was confronted by an outcry from teachers he sped up the closure and he shuttered it with no plan, this week.

Why is this minister so dismissive of teachers and so willing to cut education resources?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Of course, education resources continue to go up in the province of Manitoba: hundreds of millions of dollars more being spent in education than was ever spent under the previous NDP government.

We've already seen today the example of how support for those who are most vulnerable, those special needs students, continued to go down every year under the former NDP administration. We stopped that decline, Madam Speaker, that was happening because we knew that those students needed support.

We are putting resources in the priority areas where the members opposite, the NDP, took away those resources, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, educators are speaking out at a rally they had last week. The chant was: Kids not cuts.

High school teacher Lacey Forbes said that this cut has come without talking to teachers, saying that, quote, the conversations need to happen before sweeping cuts take place. If you're not talking to the people in the rooms with the kids, I don't get who's at the table. End quote.

But the minister doesn't want to hear from those teachers, otherwise he would hear that the resources of the library were well used and ensure that access for thousands of students would continue.

Why did this minister bully through his cut without listening to the teachers in this province?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the chant could have also have been: Facts not fiction.

The member opposite is simply putting fiction on the record. There are hundreds of millions of

dollars more that are being spent in the public education system than there were before. We've reversed the cuts that were happening under the NDP, particularly for those—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —particularly for those who need special funding, Madam Speaker, for those who are most vulnerable.

* (14:10)

We are certainly reviewing the K-to-12 system after having years of poor results under the NDP. We were worst in the country when it came to literacy, math and science. We're going to get better results.

It's not just about money, but if he just wants to talk about money, there's more now than there ever was under the NDP.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, this isn't fiction. This is the words of teachers in this province who are trying to get a message through to this minister.

Ian Smith, who teaches at the Pembina Trails Alternative High School, says closing the library makes no sense. As an educator he values the physical resources that the library provides. He says that the minister, quote, has a limited understanding of how the educative process works and how libraries work and how they—how they play a role in the classroom. End quote.

Another teacher, Gayle Glanfield, teaches in Lakeshore School Division. She reminds the minister that he has called a review of education and to move forward with this abrupt closure without listening to teachers is a mistake.

I ask the minister once again: Why won't he listen to the words—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I wonder where the member's opposite passion was when he sat in a government caucus that cut funding for students with special needs. I don't ever remember him standing up in this House and trying to raise that issue at that point.

But I do hear from members in our caucus who are always standing up for education, who are saying we need more classrooms, Madam Speaker. That is

why we are building seven new schools—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —around the province. There were teachers—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Want to know where they are? We can start listing them off across the province, Madam Speaker. They're happening in Niverville.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: They're happening in Morden, Madam Speaker. They're happening in Winnipeg. They're happening right across the province. I'm happy to take the member on a tour. We can tour all the new schools, all the happy people that are getting new schools in Manitoba.

Health-Care Services Federal Funding Available

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): For years, Madam Speaker, the Premier's been repeating inaccurate information about health-care funding in Manitoba.

When the Premier, as a Harper Conservative MP, voted to change the health-care formula and cheat Manitoba of funding, I thought it was wrong. I thought it was wrong when in 2014 the Harper Conservative government unilaterally imposed health increases of 3 per cent a year instead of 6 per cent, but an increase of 3 per cent is still an increase. The government's own figures show that for the last three years actual health-care funding has been frozen.

Madam Speaker, the Premier spent 18 months refusing \$400 million in new funding for mental health and home care.

Can the Premier explain what he expected to gain by denying Manitobans new funding for mental health and home care for 18 months?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): What we expect to gain, Madam Speaker, by standing up for Manitobans and all Canadians who value health care is a sustainable health-care system, and to do that we need a partnership with a willing government in Ottawa and I certainly hope we find one soon.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, the Premier is a kind of Monty Hall in reverse. His motto could well be: Let's Break a Deal. He's ripped up deals he didn't like. He's refused to honour agreements of municipalities—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —with the MMF, and he's dragged his feet on signing deals on cannabis revenue, the environment, housing, health care, infrastructure.

The question is whether this is useful or effective, Madam Speaker, because it's not clear—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —the Premier is achieving anything from his failed negotiation tactics because what is happening is that we're losing opportunities right, left and centre. The Premier's opposed to what he calls boutique funding for strings attached. The reason strings have to be attached to this funding is that the Premier doesn't just use \$400 million to give himself and his ministers another tax cut.

I'm sure most Manitobans don't think of mental health care or home care as boutique programs. Does the Premier?

Mr. Pallister: Of course not, Madam Speaker. Nor do I, nor do members on this side of the House consider the rule of law to be a boutique right, nor do we consider freedom of speech to be anything but something that people in this country are entitled to.

That's why we object to a Prime Minister that would limit the freedom of speech of his own Cabinet members. That's why we take strong exception to any Prime Minister and any government that would subjugate the rule of law to their own political purposes in the province of Quebec—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —or in any other province of the country. That's why we'll continue to stand up for the people of Manitoba and for the rule of law, and I would encourage all members of the House to do the same.

Madam Speaker: I'm starting to have some difficulty in hearing what is being asked and answered because of the increased level of heckling

that is going on here, and I would—just going to give everybody fair warning: I've started my list today and I have heard a number of people that are on that list, and I would urge you to be very careful for the rest of the time that we are in oral questions and the rest of the day and the rest of the week, because this will be an ongoing list now.

I think we have to move towards a better sense of respect in this Chamber, and as we move towards that we will move towards a better system of democracy.

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

Mr. Lamont: This government has enjoyed talking about the promises since their—their promises since the release of their most recent budget. One they seem to have forgotten is that shortening wait times for priority procedures like hip and knee replacements and cataract surgeries, along with many of the other neglected promises this party has made; it's located in the Premier's 2016 platform, on page 21, which I table.

The wait times in—for these procedures in Manitoba have been getting worse for four years straight, and these are not just numbers on a page, Madam Speaker. Each of these are Manitobans whose health is being threatened, and it's not just to balance the budget because we're still going deeper into debt with this government.

This government has broken promises on health with every budget. Every year they've promised to spend more, but by year's end it's been frozen; it has never been spent.

Why has this government been actively opposing more investments in health care?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the question. A \$400-million-plus increase in the Health budget is certainly evidence of a commitment to health care.

I also would thank the member for raising the topic of breaking deals, in fairness, because any question like that from a Liberal currently would be kind of a welcome opportunity for anybody to respond, and I'm going to respond today by saying we're keeping our commitment to making the workplace safer here in Manitoba.

When Winnipeg Labour Council president, Basia Sokal, went to the provincial NDP and asked for help after she was subjected to intimidating,

insulting and vulgar remarks, she got none, and they replied that they didn't have a policy on harassment. Well, we do, Madam Speaker.

We have a policy, and it's a no-wrong-door policy, not that the wrong door is the NDP door. Every one of us has an obligation to provide better working conditions for women in our province.

All of us have that obligation, and the members opposite should be ashamed of themselves, and I'd like a full explanation from them as to how it is that they can turn a woman away when she's facing that kind of intimidation and do nothing about it.

The Pas Volunteer Firefighters Liquor & Lotteries Legal Action

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): According to the minister, an insurance company that has a contract with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, that is being paid by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is suing six individual firefighters from The Pas. They're suing them as individuals and this lawsuit is ongoing.

But it is the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries name that is listed on the court documents. It is—this Crown corporation's name that the lawsuit is being made, and I'll table these documents. The minister got them last week. Maybe she could look at them this week and see that the Crown corporation is the one.

Will she, as minister of Crown corporations, direct them to withdraw that lawsuit?

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): Yes, we have heard the correct information put on the record, by myself. I can tell you, to be very clear, that the Manitoba government is not suing these individual firefighters.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries operates under the control of this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his ministers. We know they interfere with Crown corporations when it suits their political interests, but, in this case, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is wrong. They're suing individual firefighters who may lose their homes. Who knows how long this lawsuit will take to get resolved.

The minister has the power and authority to direct Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to withdraw from that lawsuit.

Will she tell them today to withdraw from that lawsuit and apologize to those firefighters?

* (14:20)

Mrs. Mayer: Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries received an insurance payment for their losses due to the fire. There was no reason for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to be included on this claim. To the best of their knowledge, this is a claim filed by the insurance company that insured Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries for its losses.

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

Mr. Lindsey: If the minister looks at the statement of claim as has been presented to her, she'll see that the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries name is on that document, not some insurance company.

Now, she's clearly not going to suggest that they should withdraw from that lawsuit.

Will she stand up today and guarantee that those firefighters will be indemnified for all legal costs associated by this lawsuit that is being perpetuated by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries under the control of this Minister of Crown Services?

Mrs. Mayer: You know what, I'm just going to clarify one more time, and I'm going to table some documents because, apparently, member opposite isn't listening.

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries was not advised of the filing of the statement of claim. To the best of their knowledge this is a subrogated claim on the part of the insurance company. They've received payment in full amount by—the Town Centre Hotel VLTs in June of 2018 and, therefore, have no reason to be a participant in this claim.

Would the member opposite stop spreading lies, stop—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I think what we see happening is, when there is a lot of enthusiasm in the room and a lot of heckling in the room, that sometimes things take us a little bit over the line.

So I would ask the Minister of Crown Services to please withdraw that word because that is not acceptable in our language of parliamentary rule. So I would ask the member to please withdraw using those comments.

Mrs. Mayer: Thank you Madam Speaker, and you are correct. I do apologize to the House that that is not parliamentary language.

But I will—we are a professional and parliamentary institute here and I would expect the same concern—the same consideration that I give members opposite, that they give us on this side of the House.

I table the document so the member can know the facts.

Ambulance Fees Reduction Announcement

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, for 17 years under the NDP government Manitobans were receiving some of the worst health-care outcomes in the country. That is why our PC government pledged to ensure that we would fix the services.

Ambulance fees were at an all-time high of over \$500, among the highest in Canada, which we found unacceptable. That is why yesterday we were happy to stand outside to show a promise made—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nesbitt: —and another promise kept.

Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living please update this House on the work our government has undertaken in this area?

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

Yesterday, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and I and our colleagues were joined by the Paramedic Association of Manitoba for an important announcement.

When we came to government the ambulance fees in Manitoba were more than \$500, among the highest in all of Canada. We made a commitment to Manitobans. We've kept that commitment by reducing that ambulance fee to \$250.

That is better for seniors, better for people on a low income, better for people with a disability. It's better for Manitobans who are getting better health care sooner and cheaper.

Curriculum Support Centre Elimination of Library Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre has been an incredible resource. For example, one teacher-librarian who serves three small schools accessed its resources several times a month, every month, all school year for more than 35 years.

The Curriculum Support Centre is absolutely essential for teachers and students, particularly for smaller schools who have limited budgets and limited alternative resources. The Internet can complement but not replace it.

Why has the Pallister government gone chop, chop, chop and eliminated the curriculum resource centre?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member opposite is wrong, wrong, wrong. When it comes to the resources, those resources continue to be available online. There are—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —more than 2,000 audiobooks and books that are available online. There's many other resources. There's not another province in Canada, Madam Speaker, that had this particular kind of facility, yet those provinces got better results on literacy and other parts of the curriculum, Madam Speaker.

Other provinces have modernized this. I'm sure that teachers across their provinces were about to get resources. Every other province has been able to do it and get better results. This member is advocating for something no other province does and wants us to continue to get poor results.

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

K-to-12 Education Review Manitoba School Boards

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Sadly, the CRC had so many resources which can never be accessed online. The minister is misguided.

The government of Manitoba has hired Avis Glaze, a lead consultant for its commissioned review—K-to-12 education. In her report for Nova Scotia, she referred to school boards as undisciplined, fractious, and role-confused entities

representing narrow interests, and she recommended that all school boards be eliminated.

Why would the government hire a person with such a negative view of school boards; a view totally different from the reality of the innovative and leading-edge school boards we have in our province?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): The government did not select Avis Glaze as the lead consultant. It was the K-to-12 commission, the independent K-to-12 commission, that selected Avis Glaze. Of course, she has worked, not only around the country and—including the royal commission on education in Ontario—but around the world and has been recognized for her work around the world.

Now, if not surprising, I guess, in this environment that a Liberal would stand up in the House and now want us to interfere with an independent process, Madam Speaker. It seems to be the way they want things done.

They want some things to be independent, but they want to monkey around with all of it. I wonder what he wants. Does he want an independent process, or does he not? We're supporting an independent process. He can interfere, like all of his friends in Ottawa.

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

Funding Cut Concerns

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, just like Hydro and the Manitoba liquor control commission.

Manitobans are wondering why the Minister of—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —Education chose Mr. Clayton Manness and Ms. Janice MacKinnon to chair his education review. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Both are chiefly known for their expertise as finance ministers who are good at cutting budgets. The government's objective in hiring these two individuals is to find areas to cut education funding.

Why is the government's objective to cut funding rather than to seek the highest possible quality of education for Manitobans?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, our motivation in setting up the K-to-12 review was clear and transparent. It was echoed by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and other members of this government. It was to listen to find out how we can do things better.

We are last in the country when it comes to literacy. We're last in the country when it comes to science. We're last in the country when it comes to math. That wasn't acceptable to parents. That wasn't acceptable to students. It wasn't acceptable to this government. It seems that it was acceptable to the NDP and it's acceptable to the Liberals. They can continue to be happy with last. We're going to get improvement, Madam Speaker.

Climate Change Politics Science-Based Request

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Six months ago, the United Nations, under the auspices and the advice of the world's leading climate scientists, issued a dire warning to the world that emissions simply have to be cut in half by 2030, little more than a decade from now, if we are to have a chance of passing on a sustainable future to our children.

* (14:30)

I want to invite the Premier, today, to join with us in sharing the political objective and the policy that climate action plans must be based on climate science.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Madam Speaker, our government takes the issue of climate change very seriously, and that's why we've made historic investments in protecting our landscape with a \$102-million conservation trust.

Member opposite is clearly wrong when he says his government did anything during 17 years. They did nothing for 17 years on climate change. The member opposite was also wrong last week when he erroneously accused the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton) and myself of draining a class 5 wetland.

I'd like to table some information that would clarify for the member that his issue should be taken up with the—his former colleague and Conservation and Water Stewardship minister, Tom Nevakshonoff.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Altemeyer: The—I don't know why the minister still bothers to stand up, she's delivered absolutely nothing.

It's the Premier who is in charge of this file, as he is in charge of everything. He dragged a large number of people out to Oak Hammock Marsh to talk about 11 things he was going to do for climate change, such as a Manitoba carbon tax.

Gosh, what happened to that? No, not happening. The biodiesel mandate was going to be increased. Has that happened? No. Efficiency Manitoba? Let's not go there. Electric buses were going to come onto our roads, 100 of them. We now have fewer electric buses than we had originally.

The Premier is the climate denier and the climate delayer.

Will he please, for the sake of my kids, grandchildren, everyone else in this Chamber who cares about the future, will he get on board with a climate-friendly future, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I do appreciate the member any time he rises in this place.

The NDP's total absence of a green agenda and green credentials is there for all who wish to research it. Madam Speaker, the Auditor General's report is definitive on that purpose.

The NDP cares about green, but it's the green in Manitobans' pockets. That's the only green they've ever cared about. That's the only green Ottawa cares about, either. They're so focused on tax they forget about the real battle, and that's against carbon.

The fact of the matter is, when it comes to green plans the NDP is for higher PST; we're not. They're for charging people more to drive to work; we're not. They're for charging people more to get their kids to soccer or ringette; we're not. They're for taxing people more to heat their homes; we're not. And they were, of course, and continue to be for charging people more for basically everything they buy, everything they need, everything they have to have to have a better life, the NDP's against, and we're for.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

And—

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Madam Speaker: I understand that the member for Assiniboia had already indicated he wanted to speak on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I understand the rules of this place forbid the use of an electronic—BlackBerries or android devices or iPhones.

Madam Speaker, the member from Radisson spent the majority of the time on his phone. I understand it can be lonely up there, but solitaire should not be played during question period.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): On the same point of order.

Madam Speaker: On the same point of order.

Mr. Teitsma: Please accept my apologies to the member and to the House. That was inappropriate and I apologize. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I would just add for the benefit of the House that the use of any type of device in here during oral questions is not allowed unless somebody chooses to go and sit in the loge. But during oral questions there is to be no use of devices. It is different in committees or at other times, but during oral questions that is a rule.

So the member for Assiniboia does have a point of order, and we thank the member for Radisson for his apology.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for—the honourable House leader for the official opposition, on a point of order.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): As per rule 40(5), where in a debate a member directly quotes from private documents, including digital representation or correspondence, any other member may require the member who was speaking to table a printed copy of the document quoted.

The Premier, who is not able to listen to the point of order right now—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier (Mr. Pallister), in his last—*[interjection]*—I just meant that the Premier's not listening to my point of order.

So, the Premier, in his last response—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Let me start again, Madam Speaker.

The Premier, in his last response to the opposition leader's question regarding children with exceptional needs, quoted several figures directly from a piece of paper which I now request he table in the House.

Miigwech.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): The Premier wasn't quoting from a private document or a private letter that was written to him, Madam Speaker, but if the leader—or the Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) wishes for me to delineate for her the cuts that happened under the NDP, I'll be happy to provide that to her.

Madam Speaker: Is the Government House Leader continuing on with this point of order? No?

An Honourable Member: No, I think I've expunged that, but I do have a—House business—

Madam Speaker: Well, I have to rule yet on the point of order.

And is the House leader for the official opposition also rising on that same point of order again?

The honourable House leader for the official opposition, on the same point of order.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I am requesting that document, please.

Madam Speaker: In terms of whether or not that was a private document, I think the member is going to have to verify why she in fact thinks it is a private document. No?

It is a rule that when somebody reads from a private document it does have to be tabled in the House. I guess I need to be clear that it was actually a private document, which, I guess, I am going to have to take under advisement to then review this to see if, indeed, it was a private document.

The member is correct with citing that rule, however.

Petitions?

House Business

Madam Speaker: Or—okay, we'll go first to the honourable Government House Leader on House business.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 33(7), I am announcing the private member's resolution be considered on the next Tuesday of the private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma). The title of the resolution is Reducing the PST.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 33(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Radisson. The title of the resolution is Reducing the PST.

PETITIONS

Daylight Saving Time

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

And 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 injuries.

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

(3) Daylight savings time is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Graydon: —associated with a decrease in productivity the day after clocks are turned forward with no corresponding increase in productivity when the clocks are turned back.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:40)

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 in perpetuity.

And this petition is signed by Colin Sabern [*phonetic*], Nicole LeClair, Clinton Clinton Hofer and many more fine 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, 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 limited services in the North, the Premier is forcing families and seniors to travel further for the health care they need.

(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 northern—excuse me—(6) The result of this petition 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 the 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 Patsy Matchett, Connie Murray, Brittany McCombie and many other 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 rescues, who 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 non-existent veterinarian 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 veterinarian 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 Manitoba 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:

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, the 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.

**Addictions Services—
Brandon and Western Manitoba**

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

Background to the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

(4) To request that the Minister of health and active seniors living consider providing supports for the families of those who are struggling with addictions, including counselling, patient navigation and advocacy, and direct access to free 'naloxolone'.

And this is signed by Henry L. Hildebrandt, George Murray, Phyllis Murray and many, many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

* (14:50)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement.

I'm advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader and the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) regarding the member for Emerson's selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 24 permits each independent member to select one private member's bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote. Rule 24 also requires written notice to be provided to the Speaker regarding the date and time of the debate and the vote.

Accordingly, Bill 205, The Official Time Amendment Act (Daylight Saving Time Abolished), will be debated on Tuesday, April 9th, 2019, starting at 10 a.m., with the question to be put at 10:55 a.m. that morning.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Madam Speaker: The House will now consider the opposition day motion of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

I will now recognize the honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Kewatinook, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government for initiating cuts to education that puts the quality of education of all Manitoba students at risk, for closing the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre and for making a charade of the education review by hiring Avis Glaze, who has been central to the elimination of school boards in Nova Scotia, and also hiring Clayton Manness and Janice MacKinnon, who were Cabinet ministers who cut funding to education in order to balance budgets.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I rise on this motion because we in the Manitoba Liberal Party are very concerned about the direction of education under this government.

And we are concerned not only about what has already been done but about the individuals who are going to be involved in the education review because, as a result of hiring these individuals, it looks to us that the fix is probably in, that this government, if it gets re-elected, will eliminate school boards and do various other damaging things to education in this province.

I want to speak first of all about cuts to education. And there have been significant cuts. I would speak to—for starters with the cut—the elimination which has occurred just in the last few days to the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre. This was an amazing resource which teachers from around the province accessed and used to help their kids to learn. It was an amazing resource which helped particularly smaller schools and more isolated schools where they didn't have the resources that larger schools have.

I mentioned in question period earlier today about a teacher librarian who accesses the—or, has accessed in the past the services of the Curriculum Support Centre several times a month every month all school year. And she's been accessing this for the last 35 years. She supports some 525 students and more than 40 teachers. With limited library budgets, this material from the Curriculum Support Centre is absolutely essential to the quality of education for these students.

The minister keeps repeating that there's only a few people who come in each day to the library. In fact, one of the many benefits of the Curriculum Support Centre was that you didn't actually need to go to the building to receive materials. Many school divisions had courier access; a teacher could connect with a—one of the librarians at the Curriculum Support Centre, describe the project they were working on and the grade level, and the staff, who are very knowledgeable, would curate a collection of resources customized for that teacher's and that student's needs.

The Curriculum Support Centre provided many other types of resources that can't be accessed online: DVD resources, which are copyrighted and not streamed; many hands-on kits, including magnet kits, sound kits, hands-on kits for light; and many other science topics and science projects. The kits also

include indigenous artifacts often and other materials that cannot be duplicated online. Indeed, the closure of the Curriculum Support Centre is a devastating loss for students and educators around Manitoba. The minister is misguided in suggesting that it can be easily replaced online.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

This Curriculum Support Centre is vital. The online resources can be a compliment to it, but the Curriculum Resource Centre has been essential, has been used by many, many teachers and students and needs to continue, even though this government has now closed it.

There are a variety of other areas of cuts, and I would just say that as I travel the province, I have parents coming to me and teachers coming to me and talking about this program or that program which has been cut, support for special needs children being, in some areas, cut back. These are problem areas and these are real cuts.

The second area I want to talk about is the hiring of Avis Glaze. Now, she is the author of a report in Nova Scotia. Her report refers to school boards as undisciplined, fractious, and role-confused entities representing narrow interests, and she recommended that all school boards be eliminated in Nova Scotia, and in fact, that is exactly what has happened.

The Nova Scotia government eliminated all school boards, and what I would say to you, Madam Speaker, and to members of this Chamber, that there is a lot of concern about the results.

People in Nova Scotia are saying there is no one holding the system to the fire. There is no one standing up for local interests and make sure that parents in local areas are adequately listened to, and there is no one with the power of being elected to stand up when school boards disagree with the direction that the government is going.

In fact, that is probably one reason why this government is moving to eliminate school boards. This government doesn't want elected school trustees standing up to it. They want to squelch dissent, and so it is a sad day when we have the hiring and the involvement of a woman who has been very negative towards school boards and who has called for the elimination—and in fact, they have been eliminated in Nova Scotia.

It is worth noting that school boards were eliminated in New Brunswick, and a few years later

they were brought back because people realized that school boards are absolutely essential and very important to the input from parents, and from community people, and for the development of community connections.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the school boards in Manitoba have very often been very innovative—new ideas like the Met schools in Seven Oaks School Division, new ideas have come from St. Oaks—from Seine River School Division in terms of programs like the Roots of Empathy and understanding of what one can do to help school kids.

* (15:00)

Many school divisions have brought in and are working with programs for helping children make sure that they get something nourishing to eat. And there is a lot of individual attention from one area to another because local school boards understand what is happening locally, and they pay attention, and they make sure that they are responding to local needs and help kids to get a good education.

We were also concerned about the choice of Mr. Clayton Manness and Ms. Janice MacKinnon, both of those have been Finance ministers—one in Manitoba, one in Saskatchewan—and both have a reputation for cutbacks. One, of course, is Conservative, one is NDP, but both of them are similar in that their reputation for cutbacks was what they made their reputation on. And whether those cutbacks were good or ill is to be debated, but I think it's not to be debated that there were major problems in education in the '90s, when Mr. Clayton Manness was involved in Finance and then in Education as a minister.

Sadly, neither one of these two has had direct involvement as a teacher in the K-to-12 system, and so we are having people who are going to be talking about the future of education who have not been adequately and directly involved, I would suggest.

Certainly, we are very concerned about the direction that this review is going. We should be looking for a vision for education. A vision for education which, in fact, provides concrete steps that will ensure that our children in Manitoba get a high-quality education. And one of the problems is that there are children with learning difficulties and learning disabilities who are not being helped. And, if we could bring them up and improve how they're doing, we could make a big difference. But this is

not an area where the current Minister of Education has been interested in.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I conclude and look forward to the comments by others.

Thank you.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): I can dispense with some of the—and the opposition motion has a lot of different components. I won't be able to speak to all of them as fully as I'd like in 10 minutes, however, I can dispense with a couple of the inaccuracies. And it's all inaccurate, but I'll try to focus in specifically on this—the parts of it that I can do quickly.

When it comes to the false allegation that there are reductions in funding, there are cuts to the system, this year alone there'll be \$26 million more that'll be invested in the funding of the K-to-12 system than there was in 2016, when the former government was in place. And, of course, that doesn't include the seven new schools, the many, many millions of dollars of capital funding that is being put in place.

So my friend from River Heights is incorrect when it comes to the numbers when it comes to finances. A quick look at the budget would have given him that information. I assume he did look up the information and just chose to ignore it, Madam Speaker, and that is more of a reflection, I suppose, on his willingness to put factual information on the record.

But going more specifically, then, to some of the other issues that he's raised, particularly with individuals, Madam Speaker, I won't be able to speak to all of them in the length I would like to. He mentioned Clayton Manness. Of course, he tried to associate actions in a former government with Mr. Manness's views as they might be when it comes to this particular commission. I would remind him, if he needed reminding, that he sat in the Cabinet of Jean Chrétien, who dramatically cut funding to health and education to the Province of Manitoba. I wonder if that disqualifies him from speaking on issues of education and health. He may want to recuse himself from any more discussions on health care and education because he sat around a Cabinet table and, I guess, according to his own logic, never said anything when Manitobans were having money taken away from them in the hundreds of millions of dollars from that government.

So I know now going forward that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will no longer speak to the issues of health care, education, having now just disqualified himself from speaking on that based on his own logic.

Of course, I know that Mr. Manness has—did many significant and important things in the province of Manitoba. And they are on the record. And, for those who are familiar with Manitoba politics, they can look them up. But they might not be as familiar with other individuals who the member has referenced.

When it comes to, for example, Janice MacKinnon, Madam Speaker, a former NDP, a former New Democratic Cabinet minister, I understand, in Saskatchewan—she has a long and distinguished career in public service. One of the things that she did when she was Finance minister, I understand, from a quick perusal of her record, is that she increased funding to the family builders program, which provided in-home therapy to families in crisis. So perhaps the member from River Heights, because of the words that he's put on the record in opposition to Mrs. MacKinnon being appointed, maybe he doesn't like that, doesn't like additional supports going to families.

Ms. MacKinnon, when she was Finance minister, also increased funding for infant-care centres to help encourage single parents remain in school and finish their education. I would think that that would be a laudable thing, having lived in a home with a single mother who raised myself and my sister. I would think that that kind of investment would be something that's important, but, clearly, by the member from River Heights' comments, he doesn't believe that those are worthy goals or worthy investments. He doesn't want to see additional funding into infant-care centres or to help single mothers, based on his comments.

Janice MacKinnon also, I understand, in her time as Finance minister, increased funding for low-income seniors, resulting in increased 'benefits' for them. I don't know why the member for River Heights would be opposed to supporting seniors, but that is clearly what he's opposed to, based on the words that he put on the record.

She also, I understand, oversaw the provision of increased support to provide fair wages for child-care workers when she was Finance minister. Now, by the member opposite, River—member for River Heights, by his comments on the record, he clearly is opposed

to that as well. He is really distinguishing himself in many different ways here by this opposition motion.

Ms. MacKinnon, when she was Finance minister, also provided \$17 million more—keep in mind this was 1997-1998 dollars—to renovate Saskatchewan's schools; that was a 40 per cent increase in the renovation fund from the year prior. So I suppose that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), by virtue of the appointment of Janice MacKinnon, is now opposed to more money going into the renovation of schools, and I'll remember that when he raises this in Question Period in the future, although, because he sat in the Cabinet of Jean Chrétien, which reduced health-care funding and education funding, I'm sure that he won't actually be raising any more health-care or education questions, based on his own logic.

Now, turning to the issue of Avis Glaze, Madam Speaker, and I know that I've said in Question Period already, but it was the K-to-12 commission that made the recommendation to hire, because they have that authority, to hire Avis Glaze as the lead consultant. And remember this is not the Glaze report; this will be the commission's report, but she is going to be providing support, and I suppose others will as well, at their discretion, but it was the independent commission that decided to hire her.

Avis Glaze, from a downloading of her resumé on the Internet, Madam Speaker, served as a commissioner in the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning in Ontario—recommended a number of different things there. I understand she represented Canada at the UNESCO conference on inclusive education. Now, I don't know what the member for River Heights has against inclusive education. Clearly, by the words he put on the record, he's not in support of inclusive education. I think that that's regrettable; that's not the individual who I thought he was.

I also see that Avis Glaze has honorary doctorates from several Canadian universities, has won more than 30 awards for outstanding contribution to education, including: educator of the year; the distinguished educator award; the 2001 YWCA Women of Distinction Award; the Harry Jerome Award; the Sanford E. McDonnell [*phonetic*] lifetime achievement award for character education, offered by the Character Education Partnership in the United States; and the Order of Ontario, among many other awards. Maybe the member opposite is getting a little jealous by all the

different awards that the—that Avis Glaze has won and doesn't like how distinguished she is. Certainly, she is a strong and educated woman, and I would hope that he wouldn't have objection to that, Madam Speaker; I'm sure that he doesn't.

Avis Glaze also has done international contributions, recognized when she received the Robert Owen Award for the first of its kind offered in Scotland. She was invited to Norway by Queen Sonja to address the issue of how schools can build better societies in that country, Madam Speaker.

So these are all things now that the member opposite, by putting these words on the record in opposition to Mrs. MacKinnon and to Avis Glaze, have spoken against, Madam Speaker. The member for River Heights has now put on the record that he doesn't support those individuals who are working for inclusive education. He doesn't support individuals who have been awarded significant awards for their work in education. He doesn't seem to support individuals who have provided additional funding for the renovation of schools. Doesn't seem to support individuals who have increased funding for infant-care centres.

* (15:10)

He's now spoken against individuals who have provided funding for families, in particular for single mothers, Madam Speaker. He seemed to have now spoken against the provision of fair wages for child-care workers. He's spoken against many, many different things.

Now this is not the member who I thought he was, Madam Speaker. This is a member who I thought cared about a lot of these different things, at least that's what he said on the record in the past, that he's cared about these many different issues. And yet he is now disavowed himself of all the things that he used to say that he cared about by coming out and speaking against these individuals.

Now I hope, Madam Speaker, that the member will reflect on his comments today, will go away with a different light, and perhaps provide a positive contribution to the K-to-12 review, and I wish he would, I sincerely hope that he does. Perhaps even makes a submission to the review on behalf of himself individually or on behalf of the Liberal caucus. I would support him in doing that. I think it would be a helpful addition, as I would encourage all members of this House, and all Manitobans to make a submission to that independent review.

Now, if the member opposite continues on the path that he's on to try this something other than an independent review, then he's following in the footsteps of his colleagues and his friends in Ottawa who seem to want to interfere in a many of different things, particularly those that involve legal matters, but I suppose in other things as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I hope that the member opposite will reflect upon that and not continue on with the comments that he's been making here today because he has spoken against highly regarded individuals who have received many different awards, Madam Speaker, and I think that he needs to take back his comments and try to provide a positive contribution to the K-to-12 commission. That is what I would expect for the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). That would be the reflective of the member for River Heights that I've come to know over the last 15 years, and to not speak so negatively against these many positive things that he seemed to, in the past, advocate for, and now today doesn't seem to be in support.

So I would encourage the member opposite that maybe this was just a bad day for him. We all have bad days, and maybe Tuesday wasn't a good day for him and he'll reflect upon this and he'll come back tomorrow, withdraw the comments, and support all the good things that these individuals have supported over their distinguished careers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, I have to admit I was a bit surprised to see this particular opposition day motion come before us. First of all, because I was reading through it and I thought, boy, this all sounds very familiar, you know, sounds like a lot of the words that have been on the record here in this Chamber by myself, by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), week after week, day after day, and also in the media.

In particular, the member's comments about the curriculum resource library, an issue that we have been pushing. As soon as we heard about this particular issue, our caucus was ready to stand with teachers, ready to stand against this cut, ready to demonstrate every single day to this minister that teachers in this province care about resources like the curriculum resource library, and explain to them just how important it is for the work that they do every single day.

So I was surprised, you know, that all of a sudden it seemed like the member or the Liberal caucus was catching up to the work that we had been done, and that's fine. That's something that they're certainly allowed to do, and we welcome more folks on the bandwagon to help stand up against this government's cuts.

But what was most surprising about this particular opposition day motion is that it's come forward from the member for—*[interjection]* River Heights. Thank you. And the member for River Heights, the member who sat in this very Chamber for all those 17 years that the members opposite always talk about, every single one of those 17 years when the previous government increased funding for education year after year after year. And this member voted against it year after year after year. And he stood up and he railed against the previous government for investing in education, for investing in our children, and putting resources towards it.

Now, of course, he sees what this Conservative government is doing to the education in this province, and now all of a sudden he says, whoa, whoa, actually those were the good old days. Now it's really bad; now it's bad, and continues to vote against this government. Well, we will vote against this government as well.

But it's just—I just wonder why Manitobans should trust the Liberal Party of this province to all of a sudden now be the champions of education where, for 17 years, they wouldn't stand with us to support and fund education as it should be.

So I wanted to take this time this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to just talk a little bit about the frustration that I'm hearing out in the community. As I mentioned off the top, the curriculum resource library has been an example of that frustration. And I want to just—I want to let members know just how seriously teachers are taking this, because it's not a resource that I think a lot of members might know about or would have known about before this cut took place. I can admit openly that I didn't understand how the curriculum resource library worked. I send my kids to school, their teacher—both of their teachers are phenomenal this year. They are wonderful teachers. They are giving my children an absolutely top-notch education.

And, you know, to be honest with you, we—I mean, we certainly sit down with our kids at dinner, at the dinner table—we find out what their day was like, but when it comes to kind of the nitty gritty

about how a teacher obtains resources or implements the curriculum that they're given, I've got to be honest: it's not something that I think parents really understand.

And so that's why I can understand that when the minister sat around that table—maybe the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was there, glaring at him, maybe he wasn't—maybe he just had that picture in his mind of the Premier, you know, making sure that all the cuts that he's demanding were implemented.

But he was probably sitting around a table with some consultants, with some, you know, number crunchers. And they were probably sitting around and probably came to that line in the budget and said, curriculum resource library, what is that? I'm sure nobody uses that; cut it. And the minister probably said, fine, let's cut that resource.

Again, he may not have known. He may not have understood how important that resource was. So, when he cut it, he probably didn't give it a second thought. However, when teachers stood up, when librarians came forward, when educators across this province—when educators from his own backyard, from rural Manitoba, from northern Manitoba stood up and said, wait a minute, this is an important resource, I would hope that he would have gotten that message and would have taken that to heart. But did he? No. No, Mr. Speaker.

In the face of widespread condemnation and an outcry across this province from teachers and educators, what does the Premier and this minister do? They turn their back once again on teachers. And that is a shame.

So this is just one of the frustrations that we're hearing. We're hearing about cuts in the classrooms. Not only are class sizes getting bigger, Mr. Speaker, you know—just an unbelievable turn of events here in this province. Where we were moving towards smaller class sizes for K to 3, where there was real investments that were taking place that were making education better in a measurable way, when we had an opposition who knocked on every single door—they were the opposition at that time and they said, we want to be government, and guess what, we believe that small class sizes make a difference. They held up the evidence, the same evidence we had. They held it up to people and said, this is what we're going to follow. They acknowledged that the evidence was clear, that small class sizes make a difference. Did they follow that? No, Mr. Speaker. Instead, they cut it.

It's not just the class sizes, though, we know, Mr. Speaker. We know that the classrooms are getting more complicated, the composition of the classroom matters so much, and that's why supports in the classrooms are so important. So not only do we want to support teachers, we also want to support those who support teachers in the classroom—educational assistants. When it comes to complex cases, we want to make sure that they have—the teachers have the resources that they need to make sure that students are getting everything that they need.

We see schools closing, Mr. Speaker. Unbelievable in this province that school divisions are talking about closing schools at a time when they see their funding going down and running out and no guarantees from this government to increase that funding any time soon.

So this is the frustration. This is the base level we're at in this province. This is where we're at across this province. And so what does the—how does the minister and the government react? Well, instead of coming out and saying, you're right, we should increase the funding, we should support the programs that are important, instead what they do is they go down the road of an educational review.

Now, why are we concerned about this education review? You know, reviews—well, there's just nothing inherently wrong with them. I think if a government undertakes them in an honest way, I think there really is some value in that. Has this government done that? Well, every step of the way, we see that they have not. Not only have the commissioners that have been chosen for this particular review—does their previous work speak for itself—you know, I saw the press conference with the minister sitting there next to Clayton Manness. I think if you turned the volume off and just watched the body language of that particular press conference, you could see the unease that the minister had with the determination that Mr. Manness was coming to this review with—to finish the business that he left undone in the 1990s.

*(15:20)

And I can tell you—you know, as a person who was very young in 1990s, as were many teachers in this province as a matter of fact now, you talk to them, they even know Mr. Manness's name because they know of the cuts that came under his watch. So his reputation precedes him. And when he was asked

directly, he said very clearly yes, I have a bias, and I'm bringing that to this commission.

So this minister saying that it's an independent commission that has no predetermined outcome is completely false, and even his commissioner admitted that to be the case. You know, this—I could go on, you know. Avis Glaze, you know—somebody who we've already seen the work that's been done.

And what's interesting is, is that not only is her work, you know, something that we should look at very carefully about something that's coming to Manitoba, but what did we see in Nova Scotia? Again this government seems to be following their lead. And what did we see? We saw them actually ignoring a lot of the recommendations, only implementing the politically motivated recommendations that they wanted to.

So there's no question that people are fearful out there because they know this minister who first took the axe to the health-care system has now turned his sights to the education system, and they know what's coming next. They know that these cuts aren't going to stop. They know that this process is flawed from the beginning and there's no actual interest from this government to take an honest look at education in this province and actually try and make sure that our students have better outcome.

So, you know, once again, Mr. Speaker, we see a government who has a predetermined outcome already in mind, who is starting the playing field from a position of cuts where teachers are afraid for their jobs, where staff in the schools are afraid for their jobs, and this is just the starting point. So there's a lot of fear out there.

I think that an NDP government, that a government that actually stands with teachers, that stands besides educators, that actually puts students first, that makes sure that funding is appropriate, to make sure that our students have the outcome is the best place to start.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have a lot more to say on this. I know members in this caucus will have a lot more to say on it, and we will going forward into election this spring, next spring, doesn't matter, we're ready to talk about it and stand with—

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

The honourable member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher). Oh, the—sorry—the honourable member for Kewatinook.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I've asked this PC government several times to get rid of the ignorance that is really prevailing here in this province, and the only way to do that is through education. Education is power.

We need treaty education within our curriculum. We need the PC team to learn what was done to us. Of course, they probably already know what was done to my people in this province because it was probably their own relations enacting those hate crime policies against us.

We don't need any more cuts.

When I said that our teachers in the North are underpaid and have to pool together any remaining dollars that they can to help pay for additional staff, such as those for operations and maintenance in our communities, you know, I was asking for the North to be brought up to par. I wasn't asking for the rest of the province to be kept back.

We need our teachers to be adequately paid because they do a lot. You know, the administration as well, they do a lot and they need to be paid fairly. All these cuts that are coming to this province are going to hit the teachers, and they have hit the teachers and, you know, so many teachers across this province are suffering because of it. And that's really unfair because they are the ones that are bringing up our bright young people in the—across the province. You know, our most vulnerable students are going to be especially affected by these cuts.

You know, I'm so sick of this PC government's misuse of any brilliant initiatives that come out of the federal government, such as Jordan's Principle. You know, under that wonderful program, so many people across the province, so many young individuals are finally getting the resources they need. And I knew, if I was a betting gambler, I would have put money on that. As soon as that initiative came into being, I knew right away in our province the monies that are going to specialized programming for those most vulnerable kids would be cut, would be severed.

Anything good that the federal government does to help my people in my communities get the vital services they need, as soon as the PC government gets wind of it here in the province, they start cutting more and more. And it's quite unfair. We are only

trying to be on par with the rest of the province. But, apparently, time and time again, it's proven—demonstrated that, according to this PC team, my people don't count.

I'm almost too scared to boast about the fact that—of the great work that my federal colleagues are doing within my First Nation communities. You know, the minister was bragging that he's building seven new schools. But that's the whole province. You know, I stand here today knowing that in my riding of Kewatinook, the provincial riding of Kewatinook, we're getting seven new schools and that's just my riding. Compare that to the entire province when they're getting the same number of schools. You know, that's quite detrimental to the rest of the province, and we need to invest.

Once we have these schools up and running, you know, we're going to start seeing the children of my riding succeed. They'll be able to breathe fresh air. No mould on the walls. No continuous sick days. No school closures because of the lack of fuel in the communities—because we'll be able to utilize the resources that we have around our communities. You know, our provincial standings will improve. And it won't have a single thing to do with this PC government. But I guarantee that they'll take all the credit like they usually do.

Education is power. It takes investments, not cuts.

Megwetch, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): And I'd like to thank the second opposition party for bringing this forward, because it brings attention to education. And education is the best investment society can make in an individual. And it's the best investment an individual can make in themselves.

I'd like to start by saying Clayton Manness is a great Manitoban. He has a distinguished public service career. He has served four, five terms over two decades. He's been a Finance minister. He has been involved in national politics. And he's even the—right now—the chairperson for a company called the Prairie Pulp and Paper sector with that Woody Harrelson—you know, the guy from Cheers—I know, it's true—Cheers, and a bunch of movies. Anyway, the Hollywood actor.

And now, interesting, he—this company promotes the development of environmentally friendly, non-wood-based pulp programs in Manitoba. So that's not really—seems like a good idea. I don't know if that's

right wing or left wing; it's just a good idea. That's Clayton Manness. He's a good man.

As far as Nova Scotia is concerned, I don't know much about the other co-chair, other than what happened in Nova Scotia is in Nova Scotia.

Manitoba is totally different. Much larger, different demographics. So, to pre-presume the outcome of the review. I don't—it's not really fair to the commissioners. And, if there's—if their recommendations are not appropriate or whatever, it's up to this place, ultimately, to implement them.

*(15:30)

The NDP, in 2002 under Gary Doer, amalgamated school divisions, it happened before that. And maybe that was good, maybe it was bad, but all parties have done it.

I'd also like to just give a quick shout-out to Nova Scotia because today they announced an organ donation bill on presumed consent, something that we had the opportunity—but this House refused. But that will be a great leadership move by the government there, and that is what we need here—is leadership.

When Clayton Manness was in public life, it was about two decades ago, and education has totally changed. So what was true then may or may not be true now with technology, distance education, great stuff on YouTube like the Khan Academy or Crash Course. Even universities are going to be changing. The brick-and-mortar traditional views that we've all grown up with is not how people are learning now.

How do we test is what I haven't heard in debate—this debate so far. Is—what is in the best interest of the students? The students aren't in class wondering am I in this school division or that school division, I wonder what the collective bargaining agreement is, or what the tax rate is. They're not thinking about that. The parents aren't—well, the parents might be thinking about it, but ultimately it is what transpires through tests and evaluations what is in the interests of the students.

I am going to table some documents just for the record, and I'm not necessarily advocating this, but my niece who lives in the UK is 10 years old. She wrote something called the 11-plus. This is an exam that provides an opportunity for kids to go to a grammar school or a regular public school—both are excellent, it's just one is more academic than the other. At 10 years old, I don't think anyone in this

place, including myself, could pass this test. It's given at the same time across the country, they even average it out for how many days the kids have been alive. It's—yes, it's intense and I'm not recommending that, but it does show a different system that would totally blow the minds of a lot of people in the education sector here.

I think a comparison to what happens in other countries will be very helpful in this review, and I hope that occurs. My other niece and nephews are in California. Whole different story there. Yes, different story, different vocabulary for sure, even different spelling. But, interestingly, they all take cursive handwriting—not here in Manitoba.

I want to address the comment from Kewatinook about residential schools. This is not analogous, but in some ways it is. My dad went to Christchurch—boarding school, St. Andrew's—when he was growing up in New Zealand for—and then Nelson College. And the reason why he went to Christchurch boarding school is because his dad was a Malaya, fighting a communist insurgency. When he would go home, he could hear bombs at night, Lancaster bombers going and bombing the insurgents. So he was away from home 5,000 miles by plane, maybe. He had to go to KL to Dawson [*phonetic*], or, to Darwin, to fly to Sydney, then Sydney to Auckland, like, it was a long, long way, a long way from family without Internet, without anything and, you know, and when his dad went to work he had a pistol, he'd go to work with a pistol.

But they felt that his education and his safety were paramount and they made huge sacrifices to ensure that my dad had the education, the best that was possible. I think that's what every dad wants for their children, I think that's what every mother wants for their children and every aunt and uncle want the best education available for their nieces and nephews.

I hope this review will deal with the issues that the Liberal party has raised and the NDP. I hope it also helps address the issue of those who want to excel beyond what is currently acceptable. It should not be everyone passes; it should be, everyone gets the education and has the opportunity to receive it.

Mr. Chair, University 1 at the University of Manitoba was in part introduced because the professional programs like engineering couldn't rely on students coming from different schools with the same grades to have the same abilities in math and

physics and science and chemistry. That's ridiculous. We need to improve—

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

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): It gives me great privilege to stand up in the House today to speak on education, something I'm very passionate about as an educator myself and someone who benefited from the curriculum library.

I spent hundreds of hours in that library especially as a student teacher who was learning, you know, how to lesson plan, who, you know, was going through university—university gives you some skills but they don't give you the practical skills that you need to actually go into a classroom and teach; you can't get those books when you're in university. So I couldn't afford some of those curriculum books, so I would often go and take those materials out of the library. So, when I had to do a lesson plan for university, I would go to that curriculum library, I would see one of the staff members that were working there—the librarians that I can't say enough about and give so much accolades to—to supporting, you know, the educators in Manitoba here.

So I went in, you know, I'm in my second year of education not knowing a lot about, you know, how to teach high school curriculum and I go in and I tell them I need to do something on science. They—what in science do you want to teach? So I tell them. They walked me through—they knew every single book that was in that curriculum library, they knew every single resource that was in that library.

So, if a teacher called there—and I know the minister had said, oh, only 14 people would visit that place in a day—I tell you, when I was in that library, that phone was ringing off the hook, those people were on the computer pulling materials to send out to communities, to send out somewhere like Flin Flon that don't have access to those kinds of materials here in Manitoba, here in Winnipeg, things that we take for granted that are right at our fingertips. Something that you can't possibly put onto a computer like the minister is saying, well, everything is going to be online, you know, get out of the Dark Ages. This isn't the Dark Ages, you know, this is about supporting students, this is about supporting teachers who are supporting students.

And our kids in Manitoba deserve the best quality education and the best supports that they could possibly get. And this government seems to

forget that these are our future leaders. And, you know, they're continuing to make cuts that are affecting kids.

* (15:40)

So I'll get back to this curriculum library. So I go there, you know, I'm in my second year and I'm—it's kind of daunting, because you're like, oh my goodness, like, I have to teach 30 kids in this classroom. I need to know—make sure I know what I'm teaching, because they—kids think teachers know everything. Like, we should know everything as teachers, but you're human, right.

So we'd always say to kids—I'd spell something wrong on the board and they'd say, Miss Smith, and I'd be, like, oh, yes, just checking that you're paying attention. And I often did that with kids just for them to see the human side of teachers, right.

But going into this curriculum library, they pulled everything I needed. They helped walk me through it. So, when I went back to university and I had to teach this lesson in front of other teachers, you know, people who were going to school to become teachers, that's also daunting, because this is a group of your peers, right. You don't want to look like you don't know what you're doing. But I went in there, I was confident, I had everything I needed, and it was all because of these people, you know.

And then fast forward to when I became a teacher. You know, my first teaching in my own classroom, I student taught many grades, but my first grade that I taught was grade 3, 4, and I taught at A.E. Wright in The Maples community in Seven Oaks School Division. And the class sizes were small; they were, you know, 19, 20 kids. I remember getting maybe 21 kids because we were overloaded in our school as well.

And, you know, to be able to give each kid the support and the care—because we don't just teach in classrooms; we're like parents. And parents would often say this: Like, you spend more time with my kid than I do, because you're with my son or daughter for five and a half hours. They come home, you know, I cook them dinner, I spend some time with them, I read a bedtime story, and it's bedtime, 9 o'clock. You know, so we don't just, as educators, just provide education, but we also provide nurturing, love, caring and we help, you know, lift up these kids and really, you know, support them in other ways that I don't think this government

understands when they're cutting these class sizes—because I couldn't imagine.

Actually, I went to high school and I had a high school group of 27 kids—I was teaching indigenous people's course—and that was a big class. And the reason it was a big class—because our indigenous kids wanted to learn more about themselves, they wanted to learn more about the indigenous culture, they wanted to learn more about their history. And many of these kids were going into education themselves or they were going into social work, and these are areas that this government is cutting.

I spoke yesterday on our ACCESS programs, these very programs that are on Selkirk Avenue, that are there intentionally, because there's so much poverty in the North End. And that hub was created to uplift people out of poverty and to help make life changing—you know, for their kids, not only for them.

And I benefited from an ACCESS program. I went to what's called community Aboriginal teacher education program, and it was a program that was designed to ensure that there were teachers that were reflective of the kids who were being taught in the schools. So that was an ACCESS program. And had that program not been there, like, I don't know, maybe my kids wouldn't have, you know, valued education themselves.

So and now my kids aren't in poverty. One of my sons works at Boeing. You know, he still lives at home, he's 28, he's got a good job, but, you know, we're happy he, you know, he's contributing to the household and he's a great kid. My other son's 26. He's—he works in pipefitting. You know, they'll never have to worry about poverty, and it was because of an ACCESS program.

And this government, what they're doing, dismantling ACCESS programs, dismantling the very bursaries that helped me—because I couldn't afford to go to school, there was no way I could afford the tuition. And, when I did go to school, like, my kids were four and six—so they were very young—and I was a single parent. And this is the program that helped take me out of poverty, that helped lift me out of poverty.

And, when I met with students on Selkirk Avenue and the member from Concordia—when we went to listen to them, they talked about being single parents, they talked the need for these bursaries in order for them to get a higher education, in order for

them to get out of poverty, in order for their kids to have a better life.

But this government—I don't—you know, they're not worried about people that are suffering, that are worried about paying tuition. They, you know, took the tuition cap off. They've taken those bursaries away. A bursary of \$5,000 would help a student go to school for a whole year—a whole year.

And you know what that ripple effect would be for that family? That family's kids probably wouldn't have to worry about living in poverty, worry about having access to education, because guess what? Now their parent's working, has a good-paying job and can pay their tuition; exactly what we did.

As a parent, when I became a teacher, I was able to put money away to pay for my kids' tuition. They didn't have to get a bursary, but I did. This is what it could do for, you know, families in Manitoba.

And I know, you know, the members opposite don't want to hear about poverty and people who are struggling, but these are Manitobans. These are Manitobans that deserve these ACCESS programs. They deserve these programs. They deserve these bursaries.

And I want to get back to the teachers, because, you know, teachers are the ones who are caring for our kids every day, and they deserve the utmost respect and support from this government. They deserve to be collaborated with. They deserve to be listened to.

And I urge, you know, members opposite—and I know there's a few of them that were teachers. And I know they know how hard they worked, because I would go to work at 7 in the morning, and sometimes I wouldn't leave there until, you know, 6 at night. And then I would go home and mark, and I would go home and plan my lesson for the next day.

And, you know, I knew every single one of my parents of the children in my class, and they were so appreciative of the work that teachers did, because teachers are more than educators. They're the ones that are nurturing and caring for our kids.

So, you know, this government really needs to think about the investments that they're making, and those are our future, and they need to stop the cuts and start—

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

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): It's a pleasure to speak to this issue.

One of our major challenges, of course, is that the Province has launched a K-to-12 review. And one of the reasons why we're incredibly skeptical of it is because, in the middle of it, they announced the closure of the curriculum library.

I have a letter from a teacher who said exactly that: It's that it's concerning the decision to close the library was made after initiating but not concluding an education review, and was not made in consultation with any of the library's stakeholders. The decision was not made in good faith. End quote.

And, frankly, the decision to appoint certain people to this board I—has managed to revive a bunch of people from the 1990s: Janice MacKinnon and Clayton Manness. It's Jurassic Park. Basically, they're bringing some dinosaurs back to life.

Because—and I wanted to address some of the issues that the Minister of Education mentioned when he repeatedly suggested that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) holds opinions he does not hold. And I just wanted to talk a bit about the issues, specifically, of Janice MacKinnon, who, of course, was used—was an NDP Finance minister back in the 1990s.

And it's a very common refrain to hear from this government, and from Manitoba governments generally, that the federal government is always to blame for everything and the provincial government, apparently, is just a powerless figurehead.

But one of the things that happened in the 1990s in Saskatchewan was that the Romanow and Calvert NDP refused to enhance the rights of labour and ignored calls to introduce pay equity legislation. They legislated SaskPower employees and nurses back to work, which is not 'partially' socially democratic. They closed hospitals all over the province. They froze welfare rates for 15 years, from 1991 to 2006.

And one of the things I want to mention about this is the fact that it started in 1991, the frozen welfare rates, just as all sorts of austerity also happened under the PC government of the 1990s before a federal government was elected at all.

* (15:50)

I was a student at the University of Manitoba in the 1990s, and I saw first-hand what the effects of cuts to the—cuts to funding for university and cuts to

bursaries were. I remember seeing a line in the budget that had been \$3 million for bursaries to help post-secondary students through school, and it was slashed to \$14,000 and replaced entirely with debt.

So that's one of our major concerns, not just for the K-to-12 review but for post-secondary education, is that all sorts of costs are being downloaded onto people who simply can't afford it by this government.

We've seen the impact of amalgamations before, because the previous NDP governments also forced amalgamations of school divisions in Manitoba, and the effect wasn't positive. It didn't result in better education, as we know, and it didn't result in lower costs. So the fact that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) is talking about possible school board amalgamations and that the commission has hired somebody who recommended abolishing school divisions in Nova Scotia is a concern, because there's a real concern here that they're simply cherry-picking people for a result they already know is going to happen.

One—another major concern, frankly, aside and—aside from the curriculum support centre was the elimination of the BEF, the Bureau de l'éducation française, which is actually extremely—played a role very much like the curriculum library. And, when that—it provided French language services to teachers all across Manitoba, and it was dismantled and basically destroyed.

And I just want to mention the—one of the issues that the minister has claimed when it comes to the curriculum library, another email from a teacher who said, quote, there's no possible way that relying on the Internet as it is today will improve access to educational resources across Manitoba. A number of Manitoba communities have inadequate Internet access which prohibits them from easily, as your letter, is the letter from—referring to a letter from the Minister of Education, accessing online resources. I know this from personal experience; I worked extensively with remote and rural Manitoba communities as recently as 2018.

Your letter states that these changes will bring the Manitoba education system in line with all other provinces. Numerous studies show, however, that Manitoba is ranked last for Internet connectivity and download speeds among Canadian provinces. Flin Flon, for example, does not even have high-speed Internet at all. This is a fact your government knows well, so this assertion about bringing Manitoba in line with our peers is actually a false comparison.

And I also heard the Minister of Education make claims that his government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars more on education, and this is simply inaccurate. I table this document, which shows actual spending on school finance in Manitoba and the—what it shows is that we are actually spending less than we did 10 years ago—2009, 2010, actually had higher spending on school finance than the 2017-2018 year. And in—this government has spent less on education in actual spending on school finance than every single year up—back to 2008, 2009.

Another one of the issues with the K to 12 is we have a—as part of our curriculum, we've accepted a private organization which has placed so-called economic and financial literacy, which includes tax advice from someone who died in prison, because of tax—because he went to jail for giving people bad tax advice.

And one of the other things I want to touch on is the fact that—is—which my colleague the MLA for Kewatinook mentioned, Jordan's Principle, and the importance of First Nations education. This is—the underfunding of First Nations education is a national disgrace that students in First Nations schools have been underfunded by thousands of dollars per student in every school for years. This is the consequence of frozen funding at the federal level, including out of the Conservative federal government as well as inadequate funding for post-secondary education for First Nations communities. This is something that the federal—the provincial government has basically set aside and it ignored.

But it's also incredibly important, because there are 'arraignments' right now some First Nations to bring First Nations education funding up to a par with nearby school boards. There's one example of Waywayseecappo First Nation. But the result is that if funding is cut to local fund school boards, that First Nations funding is also going to be cut as well.

These are the consequences that we're looking at, because, frankly, one of the things about the K-to-12 review in particular is that the people involved have very little or no involvement in actual education or as educators. The vast majority are human resources, and it's about cutting and cutting and cutting and not about the quality of education.

I have four children in the public school system; I know what it's been like to deal with bad curriculums and underfunding for years. I know what it was like as a university student to graduate with

tens of thousands of dollars of debt, because the PC government decided to abdicate its responsibility to fund education and push it onto the next generation by kicking away the ladder.

I just want to add one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that—again, the Minister of Education in his response was incredibly disrespectful towards the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

He suggested that the member for River Heights holds a bunch of opinions which he clearly does not, and rather than actually debating the merits or talking about what action needs to be done for education in our province, he really stooped to a really disgraceful level. And it's just simply not appropriate and really—I—like, really an embarrassment to this Chamber.

Education is incredibly important, is the single greatest leveler that we have in society, and the most important thing because it can enable anybody to—from any walk of life, if they have access to it, can actually make the most of themselves. And that is something that has been denied often; too often in this country, and in this province. And other provinces have done a better job of it. Saskatchewan, even despite its cuts, often spent far more on research and development. And there are also areas where Manitoba has simply fallen behind because of a refusal to recognize the importance of education for economic development and for social development in our province.

I will add that there are—the idea that we are spending huge amounts of money on education, there are all sorts of areas—and I talk with people all the time where they're from various different groups, but including educational institutions who are—who have severe infrastructure deficits, they have also not seen increases in funding for decades. Brandon University for example has not seen an increase in its capital funding since 1978.

So we just want to express our concern. I think that this—I think this government is completely on the wrong track when it comes to education, because it's purely focused on quantity in terms of dollars and not quality in terms of what we're actually trying to achieve for our students.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I want to begin by thanking the member from River Heights for bringing forward this opposition day motion. You know, education is something that the Liberals have

always fought strongly for and the member from River Heights in particular, he's been one of the biggest advocates for education in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to be encouraging students. We need to be creating opportunities. We want to be able to be proud of education here in the province of Manitoba.

And this government has capped the tuition—or scrapped the tuition cap, they've cut the tuition rebate, they've cut funding for our universities, they've added financial barriers for people like international students and health care. Many have expressed how tuition fees have gone up and education has not improved.

You know, we can begin by talking about international students who I believe are being taken for granted. Here in Manitoba, we are known for our vibrant multiculturalism. This is also reflected at our universities. Our international students are an important part of university and college communities across Manitoba.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, international students have played a critical role in the advancement of our province. That is why it's so disheartening that this government doesn't acknowledge this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is showing that they do not value international students at all. We know this because our actions reflect our values and, while the University of Manitoba—for example—is made up of 18 per cent of international students, this government has taken away their health care and has hiked up tuition which was already ridiculously high. Instead of attracting international students to study and then hopefully stay in the province through a post-graduation work permit, this government wants to make it as hard as possible for international students to come and stay in our province.

You know, the other day the member from St. Boniface, the member from River Heights, and myself, we actually went down to the University of Manitoba and we met with a good-sized group of students and they expressed to us a lot of their concerns and how it's getting too unbearable that students are actually leaving our province because they are—it's impossible to plan for the future because this government has removed the cap for tuition rates.

* (16:00)

A student does not know what they're going to be paying the following year. How can you plan around that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

This government has to also take other factors into consideration. Students who are in post-secondary, they're often having to find renting expensive. They often have to rent houses and apartments. They have to pay for their food. They have to think about transportation. And we know things like bus fees—those haven't gone down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are putting every single—this government, sorry, is putting every single barrier up for students. What are we doing to help the students, to encourage students to be going to school?

You know, I want to revert back for just one moment and talk about Met schools. So we have two, here in Manitoba. And I've actually met with Maples Met School on several occasions now. I've even brought them to the Legislative Building and asked questions in Question Period on their behalf. And, you know, there's practical—this practical hands-on knowledge, it's incredible knowledge. It's tangible. It's something that these students will be able to use out in our world. And I don't understand why all these rumours of this government wanting to cut our Met schools is actually coming to 'flurition.' We want to protect our Met schools. We know that changes have to be made. And sometimes we have to keep up with the times, and that may mean having different ways of educating students and one of these other ways is having Met schools. Madam Speaker, we don't want the government to cut them. It's time we keep looking at ways of teaching, and the Met schools allow for this.

Also, when I talk with the students attending the Met schools, I hear great things. And I know if I could personally go back in time, I would really consider attending a Met school. I'm all for that: the experience, the hands-on knowledge from it. We can also talk about Sisler High School and Maples High School. You know, they're both in my constituency—

An Honourable Member: Sisler. Yeah. Spartans.

Ms. Lamoureux: That's right. The member from St. Norbert, I hear him yelling across the way: Go, Spartans. We need to take their factors into consideration. These are high school students coming from the North End and, when I talk with them, they don't know if they can afford post-secondary. Again, we need to stop putting up these barriers.

Now, going back to post-secondary education, we know that funding from the Province has been

starved so much that universities have deferred hundreds of millions of dollars in much-needed maintenance projects for deteriorating infrastructure. It has been reported by the University of Manitoba that in the last two years more than 31 campus buildings have lost power for up to 12 hours. Students have even had the lights go out during exams. How are we supposed to attract or retain students when universities can't even keep the lights on? Why should students have to continue paying these extreme fees for these working conditions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I reflect upon committees. Just last year, we had tons of students come down to the Legislature and many of my colleagues, here in the House, they were at those committees. And we heard them talk about the importance of keeping education affordable. We all heard, first-hand, in these committees rooms, just down the hallway, that students want to continue going to school here, but because of this government's poor decisions, they are leaving our province. We are literally telling students to leave our province and it is wrong. We want to retain students. We want to encourage students to come here. People—sometimes this government doesn't want to acknowledge that students make up our economy. Our economy would be nowhere near where it is—or how advanced it is without students.

What this government demonstrates is that they like—the government wants the rich to get richer. It's always been this way. But we need to start thinking about the middle class. We need to start thinking about people who live up north. We need to start thinking about people who live in my constituency, in the North End of the city. What about lower income students? What about students whose grades are suffering because they're forced to work two jobs during their semester in order to get by?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want Manitoba to prosper and a big part of this is having a strong education system in place. So, again, just to wrap up, I want to thank the member from River Heights for bringing forward this opposition day motion and I look forward to voting on it. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the opposition day motion that was—in the name of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Do the members wish the—to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemns the provincial government in—for initiating cuts to the education that puts the quality of education of all Manitoba students at risk; for closing the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre; and for making a charade of the education review by hiring Avis Glaze, who has been central to the elimination of school boards in Nova Scotia, and by hiring Clayton Manness and Janice MacKinnon who were Cabinet ministers who cut funding to education in order to balance budgets.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear some noes.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Hon. Jon Gerrard (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, a recorded vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested.

Call in the members.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the opposition day motion.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 14, Nays 35.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

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