

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

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 232—The Election Financing Amendment Act

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm proud to stand up and introduce Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act, which enhances our democracy here in Manitoba; bill 32 will ensure a level playing field in elections by further reducing financial barriers for candidates, lowering the maximum contribution limit, taking the wealth aspect out of elections and placing a 90-day advertising limit on non-fixed elections.

These measures ensure any Manitoban who wants to represent their constituents can attempt to do so without the fear of financial limitations, encouraging political competition and voter choice.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table the Vehicle Impoundment Registry Annual Report for the fiscal year of 2017-18.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, 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.

Sikh Heritage Month

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to formally proclaim April as Sikh Heritage Month for the very first time in Manitoba history.

On Monday I was delighted to attend a wonderful event hosted by Sikh Heritage Manitoba right here at the Manitoba Legislature, where I was honoured to present our very historic proclamation.

By designating April as Sikh Heritage Month in Manitoba, we are bringing attention to a community that has made important contributions to our development as a province and as a country. The Sikh community has historically observed celebrations during the month of April for its importance to the Sikh faith, namely, for signifying the creation of the Khalsa and Sikh articles of faith and Vaisakhi.

Sikh cultural heritage has been a part of Manitoba's history for over 100 years and continues to inform our multicultural identity here in Manitoba, and by proclaiming the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month in Manitoba, we recognize the importance of fostering greater intercultural understanding, mutual respect, acceptance and social cohesion between people of all faiths, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba is truly a cultural mosaic and our Sikh cultural community is a very special part of it. We should all be grateful that we live in a province where we can build meaningful connections with people from so many different parts of our world, cultures and faiths. Our diversity makes us very strong and makes our province the very best place to live and raise a family.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank Sikh Heritage Manitoba for the opportunity to join them here on Monday for that wonderful proclamation. I encourage all Manitobans and all members of the Legislature, all members in the Assembly today to join me in recognizing April as Sikh Heritage Month in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh. [*Punjabi spoken, English translation unavailable*]

Wanted to begin with a few words in Punjabi and the invocation from the Sikh faith and acknowledge our guests here today from Sikh Heritage Month Manitoba for their wonderful celebration so far. I mean, how about that wonderful exhibit in the Rotunda and the beautiful celebration that many of our colleagues joined in and helped to celebrate them with earlier this week?

We've heard so far about the importance of April, the month of April, to honour the creation of the Khalsa and its importance to the Sikh faith, and we've also heard about the Sikh faith community and their tremendous contributions to here in Manitoba and also across Canada.

It was one of our guests today, who I believe is Parminder, who said at the opening that sometimes his community may understate their impact by calling themselves immigrants when, in fact, they are nation builders, along with many other communities here making up our great multicultural mosaic here in Canada; and I really appreciated that message and I hope you continue to spread that message throughout Sikh Heritage Month, both this year and for many, many years to come.

Of course, we're very happy to have a bill for consideration before the Legislature honouring Sikh Heritage Month and we hope that that can pass this month of April.

And I would merely close by saying that, for many older members of the Sikh community I think it was a huge, huge moment to be welcomed into the Legislature, to have the proclamation rendered and to have that sort of recognition.

But for the younger members of the community, this is their new normal. Inclusion, representation and being integrated here at the Legislature and in the social fabric of Manitoba is their normal, and

from here on in, only higher and higher integration, inclusion and celebration will follow.

So with that I just want to add my good vibes, my well wishes and sincere thanks for being included in these celebrations.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this ministerial statement celebrating Sikh Heritage Month.

It was just last month, for the first time ever the House of Commons introduced official legislation declaring the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

Having attended gurdwaras, including the Golden Temple in Punjab, to walking in the Nagar Kirtan with thousands of others here in Winnipeg, I am delighted to recognize this month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

Madam Speaker, Sikhism is rooted in the teachings of equality, unity, selfless service and social justice, and these are the values that we Manitobans strive for every day. The Sikh community has contributed greatly to our community, and that's why it's so nice to see that it's being recognized from coast to coast to coast, because it's a part of our Canadian identity.

* (13:40)

In closing, Madam Speaker, I too want to just thank those who have joined us in the gallery. I see my uncle and I see Parminder up there, and I want to use this opportunity to wish everyone a very early, happy Vaisakhi in—which we will be celebrating on April 14th.

And I'd encourage all of my colleagues and all Manitobans to stand proud in recognizing the many contributions of our Sikh community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Angela Eastman

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize and acknowledge the life and the accomplishments of a special friend, the late Angela Eastman, who was a resident of Sandy Bay First Nation. Angela attended Sandy Bay Indian Residential School from 1952 to 1962 and later received a teaching degree in 1976 from Brandon University.

Throughout the years, Angela upgraded her education through the University of Winnipeg, University of BC and Keewatin college. She worked for over forty years at Sandy Bay School as a teacher, vice-principal and the principal.

Having not had any children of her own, Angela considered all her students to be her own. Her love for children and fondness of teaching will always be remembered. She introduced the first kindergarten graduation at Sandy Bay School in 1975. This included handmade caps and gowns for the young kindergarten students. She instilled the importance of language and culture at Sandy Bay at a very young age.

Upon her retirement, Angela came back to teach cultural art to early years children and she filled her class with traditional items, and students enjoyed her activities, singing and playing her drum.

Angela was an extraordinary lady who made friends very easily, talked to everyone and held no judgment. She would help anyone she could with her kind and thoughtful ways. Angela's legacy will live on in the school as well as the community. May she always be remembered for the person she was, her commitment to Sandy Bay School and, most of all, to the children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Northern Youth Mental Health Programming

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, there is a mental health crisis happening amongst our northern youth. That crisis is linked to higher rates of poverty and addictions in the North and the effects of intergenerational trauma.

Indigenous youth are six times more likely to commit suicide than their peers and the chances of them experiencing substance abuse is more than double the rate of other Manitobans.

There are not enough mental health resources available in the North to help our children. We need more. Most First Nation communities do not even have a permanent mental health professional. In order to see a psychiatrist, our northern youth have to leave their home and travel hundreds of miles away from their friends and family, including mine.

The VIRGO report called for the removal of the geographical gaps in treatment access nearly a year ago, but this government has done nothing.

In fact, they've made it harder for our northern youth and their families to seek treatment. We've seen no action from this government on mental health and addictions, even after there's been a federal transfer for mental health and addiction services of Manitoba.

Northern Manitobans deserve better, especially our youth. Too many have taken their lives because they could not get the help they needed. This government needs to step up and fund northern youth mental health programming.

Thank you.

Ice Safety Awareness

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, Manitobans enjoy many activities on our lakes and rivers throughout the year. These activities are part of the treasures Manitoba has to offer that make Manitoba a great place to enjoy for many residents and tourists.

Last week, I was horrified to see families placing themselves and their children at risk fishing close to open water in the St. Andrews Lock and Dam area. This prompted me to place some words on the record concerning common sense around ice safety on Manitoba's bodies of waters.

My point here today is not to take away from the enjoyment, but to bring awareness to the risks associated with ice-related activities for people to consider.

An average of 26 Manitobans die each year from drowning. Many are ice-related fatalities. Keeping yourself and your family safe requires knowing the risk factors.

Those venturing out need to understand ice appearance can be highly deceptive. Thick ice can be rotten or fragile, even with a solid appearance. Ice conditions can change rapidly. Flowing bodies of water have currents that can be strong enough to often undermine the ice below the surface. Currents can change ice strength rapidly and ice that was safe may not be safe later.

I ask all Manitobans and our guests to know the risks, understand the environment, the weather conditions, take all necessary safety precautions and educate themselves to avoid tragic circumstances. Contact local residents, conservation officers, or local stores to check on local conditions and heed their warnings.

Remember, the risk to your personal safety or that of others is not worth not knowing. The consequences of being impatient or unprepared are severe. Those who do not act in a safe manner not only place their lives at risk, but also the lives of our first responders.

Manitoba has endless recreational opportunities. We all need to use common sense and place safety first when enjoying all that Manitoba has to offer. I urge everyone to stay safe on our hard water.

Thank you, and keep safe.

Flood Preparation

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The flood season is upon us and water levels are projected to hit 2009 levels. Now is the time for all Manitobans to start thinking about how they can prepare themselves and their homes.

Even if you live in the city, the seasonal thaw can still cause damage. As Winnipeggers know, flood season also means basement flooding. The City of Winnipeg has already identified 123 properties along the Red River that could be subject to flooding.

Homeowners can help protect their homes and basements by placing sandbags around their property to protect against water leakage. Shovelling snow away from your foundation and creating a drainage path will also help.

You can make your own sandbags or the City offers free pick-up in the case of a river-flooding threat.

If you know your home is prone to flooding, now is a good time to move anything stored in the basement to higher ground.

For Manitobans I wish, I pray for a slow melt so we can all avoid flooded basements and heartaches.

Sexual Assault Awareness

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I have three daughters and I also have three sons, so that's six children in all if you're counting—that's a lot of kids, so Joanne and I take our responsibility for educating them very seriously. We believe our children are entrusted to us by God and, consequently, we strive to do our very best at preparing them for adult life.

Thanks to you, Madam Speaker, April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month here in Manitoba and it's a

good time to reflect on the lessons that we teach our children.

In our home we start with a proper understanding of self. We teach our children that they and all people are made in the image of God and therefore deserving of love and respect.

We also teach them that many of their so-called natural inclinations aren't particularly good. It's entirely natural but not good to be selfish, proud, greedy, lustful, envious or have a temper or be lazy.

So we teach our children to fight those natural inclinations and instead be selfless, humble, generous, to put the interests of others ahead of their own, to be patient, kind, diligent and good, and we teach them to repent when they, and we, inevitably fall short of these impeccable standards.

We believe if—that you're—if you're committed to all of this you'll be ready: ready to stand up to perpetrators of sexual harassment and violence and to hold them accountable for their actions even if they're your friends or colleagues; ready, as well, to stand up to the enablers to hold them accountable for their inaction; ready to do what you can to ensure others don't have to suffer at the hands of those same perpetrators; ready to be someone who helps victims, like my constituency assistant, Belinda Squance, does when she helps women exiting the sex trade; ready take—ready to take action, like she did when seven months ago she came to me with the suggestion that we now have before us in this Legislature in Bill 19 to help women escape domestic violence; ready to listen; ready to support; ready to make sure that your door isn't a wrong door.

If we do this—if we all do this—I believe we'll make a difference. In some ways, I believe we already have.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Child-Care Centres Fee Increase Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We know that every family with children has the issue of child care top of mind, and I think it should be no surprise as a result that 26,000 Manitobans signed a petition calling on the government to increase operating grants for child-care centres right across the province. They know the importance of daycare centres in their own lives.

Now, in the absence of those operating grant increases, we know from FIPPA documents that this government has been considering raising parent fees for daycare. The Premier has denied this. However, the minister said yesterday, in response to the following question, quote: Is there any appetite to increasing the amount of money that parents in subsidized care contribute? End quote. The minister said, and it is a direct quote here: Yes. I think that we need to really talk about that. End quote.

*(13:50)

So we know that the Cabinet member is not always on the same page on the other side there.

But will the Premier guarantee that parent daycare fees will not increase in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Not only that, Madam Speaker, and that I certainly will do, but I will also guarantee that, as opposed to the NDP position, we will lower the PST on these families and they will save money in their homes.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, it's not every day that 26,000 Manitobans unite and put their names on a petition calling on the government to increase operating grant funding for daycares right across the province. It's a united voice that they're speaking with and they're calling on this government to act very clearly and decisively.

However, this government appears to be moving completely in the wrong direction. We know that in the budget that this Premier has brought forward that he is cutting \$1.4 million from daycares right across the province. While his announcement of his cut—the value of dollars being cut, \$1.4 million—has been very clear, what has been less clear is where these cuts will be felt in the child-care centres themselves.

So I'd ask the Premier to please announce for the House today: His \$1.4-million cut, where will that be coming from? Will that be coming from subsidies? Will that be coming from wages, or will that be coming from programming for early childhood education?

Mr. Pallister: It's not every day you get three or four hundred thousand people rejecting an agenda of a political party, but that's what happened about three years ago in this province because of preambles like that, Madam Speaker, because people can't trust

misinformation from the NDP, and that's repeated by the leader opposite.

We're increasing the funding. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: We're increasing our spending on community-based, school-based, home care child-care projects by, in this budget alone, \$2.7 million.

The member puts false information on the record. He has nothing new over there, Madam Speaker. He's just repeating the mistakes of the past. Several hundred thousand Manitobans already rejected that approach.

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

Child-Care Wait List Tracking Method

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, they only brought forward the budget a few weeks ago, and already the Premier is running away from it. He cannot stand up in this House and defend his \$1.4-million cut to daycares right across the province.

We know that their record when it comes to child care is not great in other areas either. At last count the number of kids waiting for daycare in Manitoba was 17,500—17,500 children on the waiting list. But, of course, that was as of last June, and it's grown by thousands and thousands of people under their watch.

Now, of course, that's not a good indicator. So what did the Premier do in response? Well, he ordered government to stop tracking the numbers. That's why they haven't updated the 17,500 waiting list since last June.

So I'd like the Premier to tell—and since he's not going to answer—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —about the \$1.4-million cuts, will he tell the House why he stopped counting the number of kids waiting for daycare in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate a question from the member opposite on running away, Madam Speaker, because I tell the member, again, that if he continues to raise false information in his preambles he will be disregarded by those who listen to his comments as soon as they find out the

real fact. And the real fact is we're investing more than \$230 million more in this year's budget and in the collective contributions we have made to families in this province than the NDP ever did in a single year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Action on Climate Change Provincial Policy Needed

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Madam Speaker, I guess the Premier got a text from Andrew Scheer over the weekend when we see the announcement that his government made today. I got the same text myself, but I just replied: New phone. Who 'dis'? And, you know, that was the end of that text 'convo.'

Now, we know on this side of the House that a court case will do nothing to help the environment, particularly a court case—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —that is being launched even after this government received advice that their position, trying to launch a court challenge against the federal government, was untenable.

Now, all of this hyperbole and rhetoric on the other side is doing nothing to deal with the issue at hand, which is to halt climate change here in Manitoba.

So will the Premier stand in this House and abandon a frivolous court challenge against the federal government and instead come back with real action to stop climate change in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'm surprised and I am pleased that Andrew Scheer is sending texts and emails to the leader opposite and Jagmeet Singh won't, Madam Speaker. I don't know.

I've got to say, though, Madam Speaker, the member opposite has decided that he's now going to campaign on green. That's interesting, because the only green the NDP has ever had any interest in is the green in Manitoba's pockets.

We're going to put more money on the kitchen tables of Manitoba families, stand up for a cleaner, better future for Manitoba's environment, and we're going to do it without raiding the pocketbooks of the

Manitobans the NDP love to pillage every chance they get.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, we know that the Trudeau plan nor the Pallister government plan will do enough to fight climate change.

This really is a fight for our future here in Manitoba and it is our—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —kids', you know, futures that is at stake.

Now, we know that the Premier spent the last campaign travelling the province. He had all his backbenchers knocking on doors, campaigning about why there should be a price on pollution. So, again, the last campaign they talked about the need for a price on pollution, and now they're launching court challenges against the concept of putting a price on pollution.

So I'm curious as to why the Premier is launching this court challenge today; does he really find Doug Ford to be that compelling?

Mr. Pallister: Well, until just recently the leader opposite found Justin Trudeau extremely compelling, Madam Speaker. He was basically rejected by the federal NDP and went looking for another party, I guess. It appears he found one until just recently.

Look, Madam Speaker, we're going to stand up for Manitobans. We're going to stand up for green here in Manitoba. We don't like the federal plan; we've been clear on that. The member opposite now says he doesn't, but he liked it up 'til just a few days ago; and now he says he wants to take even more money off the kitchen tables of Manitoba families, more money away from Manitoba small businesses.

He doesn't think that the Trudeau government's going nearly far enough in raiding the pocketbooks of Manitobans. I'd love him to go to the doors with that one, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, we're still unclear on some of the facts of this matter, Madam Speaker. Is the Premier

going to launch this court challenge after he's done suing The Pas firefighters, or is he going to launch it before? Is the Premier going to launch this new carbon tax court challenge after he's done suing the Winnipeg Free Press or before?

The bottom line is this: we know that a court challenge will do nothing to fight climate change in Manitoba and our children demand better. This is truly a fight for our future and we need to arrest climate change in its tracks.

So will the Premier please stand up today and commit that he will—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —abandon any and all frivolous court challenges, including the others that I mentioned in my preamble, and instead come back with a real plan to stop climate change in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate any question involving court challenges from the member opposite, Madam Speaker.

The fact remains that—acknowledged by the federal environment minister and the Prime Minister of Canada—that we have put forward, as Manitobans wanted us to, the best plan to keep green going in this province—grow green—of any province in the country.

The members opposite had 17—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —years—17 years—and they did absolutely nothing.

I appreciate—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —the member admitting, Madam Speaker, that he is unclear on the facts. That is ever-presently evident here in this House.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Methamphetamine Addiction Request for Government Strategy

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Medical professionals have been telling the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that they need to do a lot more in respect of the meth crisis and just to keep up with

it, but, unfortunately, they are doing absolutely nothing to address the meth crisis.

* (14:00)

Staff in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority say there's a lack of provincial leadership to address this present meth crisis. Ginette Poulin, the medical doctor of the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, testified before Parliament, Madam Speaker, her organization is not receiving what they need to be able to address the meth crisis.

Why is the Premier continuing not to take this meth crisis seriously and develop a strategy and a plan?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Rejecting the preamble as completely false, I was interested, as many Manitobans were, in the parliamentary committee that came yesterday—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —to Winnipeg to learn more about the unique challenges we face in respect of methamphetamines. *[interjection]* And I noticed that while that member chirps and won't listen to the answer, the founder of Morberg House, who is Marion Willis, said she would not support a meth injection site because there is, in her words, no safe way to use meth, and she told that to the parliamentary committee.

That member said listen to the experts. There is one right there.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Police Chief Danny Smyth says, and I quote: We are a city in crisis. If you look around, you see evidence of meth and meth use all around us, in all corners of the city. End quote.

The police chief is right. Hospital visits for meth use have increased by 1,200 per cent and there is a 700 per cent increase amongst those seeking drug treatment, and, instead, this Pallister government is doing nothing to keep up with it.

And speaking of Marion Willis, the founder of Morberg House, who says, and I quote: This is like fighting a war with a water gun. End quote.

Why is this government not doing anything to address the meth crisis?

Mr. Friesen: Rejecting the preamble as totally false, I noticed that in their meetings yesterday all of those MPs of various political stripes listened to presentations by former meth users and the director of Morberg centre—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —as well as Winnipeg police officers, I should note, who agree that it makes, and I quote, no sense to spend resources on a injection site in Winnipeg when 'methamphetamies' many users would not benefit from such a facility.

Madam Speaker, that member said listen to the experts. Will she listen to them now? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Speaking of experts that this Pallister government chooses not to listen to, the children's advocate warned the Pallister government that, and I quote, still does not have a concrete plan of action for youth mental health and addiction. End quote.

Months later, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) still has no plan. They closed Manitoba's only long-term treatment centre for teens dealing with addiction and mental health issues. Their approach has been absolutely lacking.

Will this government, this Premier, these ministers on this side of the House, actually stand up for Manitobans today and deal with the meth crisis by developing a comprehensive provincial strategy to deal with the meth crisis?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, that member has painted herself into her own corner by this week trying to use procedures in this House to block the passage of Bill 10, which calls for the coherent connection between mental health and addictions, a fundamental plan, going forward, that brings effective response to all these things.

She says why aren't—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —you doing it, and she herself is the mechanism that prohibits us from going forward.

We will go forward with a mental health and addictions strategy on behalf of all Manitobans.

Ad Campaign—Nurses Apology Request

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The government's social media advertising campaign, one that attempted to recruit nurses, was demeaning and insulting to women and Manitoba nurses.

Yesterday I asked the Minister of Health to formally apologize to the hard-working nurses in our province, and he failed to do so. The minister actually referred to this 'mattader'—manner as having—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —already been dealt with. But the reality is, Madam Speaker, an apology on Twitter does not constitute a formal apology.

So I'll ask the minister again to stand up in this House and apologize to our Manitoba nurses.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Already done. Madam Speaker, that member knows that as soon as those ads were viewed by myself, we immediately suspended them. We looked into the matter and we continue to do so. Those ads, as Manitobans know, in no way reflect the views of myself, my Premier or my government.

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

Hip and Knee Replacement Wait Time Concerns

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I didn't get him to get up to, you know, talk about the ads. I asked him to get up and apologize to the Manitoba nurses. They're asking for an apology from this minister.

The consequences—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —of the Premier's cuts are longer wait times now. We have longer knee replacements. The trends are going down, down, down under this government; health-care funding keeps going down and the percentage of people receiving much needed hip and knee replacements keeps going down. The minister can't deny these.

Will the Premier commit today to hiring more nurses so that we can ensure that the people that need hip and knee re-surgeries get them in Manitoba?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Again, the member needs to catch up. We did hire those new nurses at both St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre in the neonatal intensive care units.

Also, she should catch up with the fact that Manitobans are aging and we're responding to that increase in volume need with 26 per cent more cataracts than in the last year of the NDP; with 26 per cent CT scans more than the NDP in their last year; with 29 per cent more MRIs than in the last year of the NDP—more Manitobans getting better health care sooner.

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

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Families have called the wait times in ERs unbelievable and mind-boggling, and the WRHA told us at the start of March the wait times were only going to get worse.

Well, here are the facts, Madam Speaker. In April, wait times are only getting worse in our emergency rooms in Winnipeg. Across the board, wait times are worse than they have been in the last two years, yet this Premier is still planning on closing Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs. Putting patients first is clearly not a priority of this Premier or his government.

Will the Premier stop his plans to close Concordia and Seven Oaks emergency rooms?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, again, I wish that member had read the actual text of Bill 10 that they designated and decided to hold 'til the fall. There's probably a copy in her desk that she could read, because she talks about—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —putting the patient at the centre, and Madam Speaker, that's exactly what Manitobans have asked for. It's exactly where the evidence leads. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: It's exactly what the hand-picked consultant—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —by the NDP called for. It's exactly the plan that we will implement to get better care sooner for Manitobans.

Federal Carbon Tax Provincial Legal Challenge

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): We have to question the Premier's futile decision to join a court battle over the carbon tax. While the Premier is cutting programs right, left and centre, he's spending public money for a lawsuit that experts have told him he can't win. The Premier knows that a lawsuit is pointless because his own climate plan said so. The government obtained a legal opinion from Professor Bryan Schwartz saying the federal government has a right to do this.

So, Madam Speaker, it's bad enough that this Premier is spending public money to get himself re-elected. He's also spending Manitobans' money trying to get his boss, Andrew Scheer, elected.

So why is the Premier proceeding—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —with a lawsuit he knows he can't win?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, speaking of bosses, Madam Speaker, I mean, the member is—member probably right to be hopeful. I think there are a couple of new vacancies in the Liberal caucus.

* (14:10)

What we've got to do, Madam Speaker, and what we're—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —going to do is stand up for Manitobans.

If the member doesn't want to, it doesn't surprise me at this point. I know he'd prefer to stand with Ottawa as they raid the pocketbooks of Manitoba families and Manitoba small businesses that we depend on to provide us with goods and services at the same time.

But, Madam Speaker, we're resolute and we will stand by Manitobans on this issue. We will stand with those who want a greener future for our children and grandchildren. We'll stand with those who want a stronger economy for those people as well. If the

member chooses not to, that's his choice. I believe he chooses wrong, but we choose right on this side.

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

Mr. Lamont: The Premier's motto seems to be that when all else fails, pick a fight with someone. He has no plan to grow the economy. He's freezing and cutting funding and he had an opportunity to introduce his own climate plan, but he walked away in a huff and scrapped it entirely.

Now he's decided to join Andrew Scheer and deny that our house is on fire and—storming into an election without any plan to mitigate the climate crisis that is at our doorstep.

How can the Premier possibly justify spending hundreds of thousands of Manitoba's dollars on what is sure to be another failed Pallister court case to tell him what we already know?

Mr. Pallister: Finally the member's taken a position in contrast to the federal Liberals, Madam Speaker.

The federal environment minister has said that the Manitoba plan is the best plan of any province. The Prime Minister of Canada has said that the Manitoba plan is the best plan of any province, and the member sits in his place and is now, finally—and congratulations to him—taking a position that is different from the federal Liberals—first time, probably the only time.

Madam Speaker, the member is standing up, not for Manitobans, but for some unknown cause that will cause Manitobans to pay more for gas, to pay more to get their kids to hockey or ringette or soccer, that will cause Manitobans to have to pay more for their groceries, that will cause Manitobans to have to pay more to heat their homes, and that will absolutely cost small businesses across the province a lot of money that they'll pass on in extra costs to customers, no doubt.

So the member chooses that side of this debate. Welcome to that choice. Madam Speaker, we're choosing to stand up for Manitobans, and we'll keep doing it.

Madam Speaker: I would just remind the member that in using members' names, while we are allowing the use of Pallister government, there is no acceptable case for using Pallister court case, and that is used and is a breach of our rules. So I would ask the—[interjection] Order, please.

I would just caution the member on his use of recognizing members in that way.

Mr. Lamont: I apologize, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Premier's just the latest in a long line of Manitoba leaders who, when asked to rise to the occasion and deal with climate change, shrugged instead. Climate change is going to be far more costly for Manitoba's bottom line than the carbon tax. Canada is warming at three times the level of other countries and we are seeing the effects already: forest fires, torrential rains and droughts. And we have a responsibility to future generations to act now. We can't sit back and watch governments like the Premier's sacrifice the future because of their own political cowardice, temerity or greed.

If the Premier is truly concerned about climate change and the carbon tax, why didn't he simply go back to the table and negotiate a different deal instead of launching pointless lawsuits?

Mr. Pallister: Well, apparently Liberals don't believe that court systems are necessary to protect, Madam Speaker, but we do. We do and we believe that we have a great case to make in respect of having Manitoba's plan be the one that's recognized, and we believe, also, that it would benefit our province environmentally and economically as well. The member chooses not to believe that. That's fine, Madam Speaker, but we do and we'll stand for that and we'll stand up for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we believe in acting on the issues around carbon, not pretending to act, like the previous NDP—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—government did and, apparently, like the federal Liberals want to do. So we have outlined a close-to-70-page plan, Madam Speaker, developed by Manitobans, thousands of Manitobans who should not be discarded and disrespected by the member opposite.

Madam Speaker, one page of our plan is about carbon tax. The rest is about acting on green and that's precisely what we're going to continue to do.

Communities Economic Development Fund Review of Program

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Business loans through the Communities Economic Development Fund have been frozen since 2017. The program's been under review for that entire time, apparently.

Now, after two years, the minister has delayed yet again with, guess what, another review.

The minister and the Pallister government don't want a single dollar to flow into financing to help northern businesses.

Why is this minister again delaying much-needed support for northern Manitoba?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, I can understand why the member is grumpy. That—there's not a lot of things that really agree with him. But it's unfortunate that he chooses to disparage the five new members we've got for the board of the Communities Economic Development Fund. We've asked them—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, there you go—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: These five people who come from the North, who live in the North, who know the North, are going to review the loans program for the Communities Economic Development Fund, and we trust their judgment far more than we'll ever trust the NDP.

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

Mr. Lindsey: I have absolutely nothing against those five people. It's this minister and this government that I have a problem with because they continue to delay, delay, delay.

The only thing they do in the North is look, look, look and some talk, talk, talk, but they don't actually do anything. It's all about just vague platitudes.

Business support through the CEDF was frozen for more than two years, and now this minister expects congratulations for another review. So, two years is far too long.

Why didn't the minister have these programs ready to go years ago? He's had at least two years.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, Madam Speaker, I know why the member's so grumpy. Like, he goes to the doors in Flin Flon and he tries to tell the people in Flin Flon that they should pay a higher carbon tax. How is that going? He goes to the door and tells them that they should not get a reduced sales tax—provincial sales tax, that they should pay 8 per cent or even more as they promised in the last election.

I can understand his grumpiness. There's lots of great things happening in the North. The Communities Economic Development Fund will help build the North, and we support the—our board members in this endeavour. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

I'm calling for order on both sides of the House, please.

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

Mr. Lindsey: There's a lot of grumpy people in northern Manitoba and the reason they're grumpy is because this government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —and this minister continue to refuse to help the people of the North.

They've taken millions of dollars of financing away from small and medium-sized businesses. They've done at a time when northern Manitoba needs investment, and this government is ignoring them again. They've frozen the program for over two years. Now they're going to review it again for—is it another year? Is it two more years? Who knows, Madam Speaker, because clearly the minister doesn't know.

So why is he stopping loans to northern Manitoba businesses for at least three years? Will he get on board and actually do something for the North today and get over with the—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I understand why the member's so grumpy. He's certainly no Clarence Pettersen. We know that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: In the past, the NDP thought that they could direct everything—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: —from Winnipeg. Everything should come out of Winnipeg, instead of listening to the people of the North, instead of empowering the people from the North to build the North.

That's what this government is doing and will continue to do.

Commercial Truck Driving Industry Mandatory Entry-Level Training

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Our government is committed to enhancing public safety and that includes the safety of everyone who travels on Manitoba's roads and highways.

Manitoba's trucking—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —industry has called on the Province to introduce mandatory entry-level training for commercial truck drivers, and I'm proud to say that our government is taking action.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure please update the House on this important announcement?

* (14:20)

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the Interlake for that fantastic question. And the member for the Interlake is absolutely correct, our government's main focus is safety when it comes to our highways and our roads, something that was lacking under the last 17 years under the NDP. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: Now, Madam Speaker, we announced that as of September 1st the MELT, or mandatory entry-level training, of 121.5 hours for new truck drivers coming in will be mandated. This is good for our trucking industry, our strong and robust industry. This is good for all Manitobans driving on our roads and our highways.

Madam Speaker, we were elected to repair the services and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Investing in Canada Fund Update on Indigenous Projects

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): The Investing in Canada fund made available through Infrastructure Canada will cover 75 per cent of any indigenous projects. Many of my First Nations submitted their proposals several months ago in a timely fashion and have not heard from this government.

The Province solely gets to decided who gets what, if anything, and with our lack of infrastructure I truly hope they took advantage of this program.

Can the minister give us any update as to where they are at in the selection process for indigenous projects?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Acting Minister of Finance): We were very proud at—last June to sign a \$1.1-billion agreement with the—our federal partners in Ottawa. We are working through the process. Matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I can tell the member and this House that we are looking forward to an announcement coming. And I can tell you also this is a 10-year, \$1.1-billion investment that'll affect generations to come.

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

Remote Fly-In First Nations Infrastructure Projects

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): There is much-needed infrastructure throughout all of my riding and the revision of unfair policies that entrap us to live in survival mode. I'm sure we can all recall the pictures of the Island Lake forest fire and the looks on people's faces trying to flee the fires.

Wasagamack needs an airport capable of landing large planes not only to lessen the burden of high food costs, but for emergencies such as wild fires.

Can the minister tell us if they have approved any projects specifically for a remote fly-in First Nation?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, our government has been in the forefront of helping our airports across this province. In fact, we just announced more than a million dollars for airports across Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we will take this member's concerns forward. We do have a lot of issues when it comes to our airports in the North, and we will always be listening to new ideas and we appreciate the member raising that with this Legislature.

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

East-Side Road Construction Request for Five-Year Plan

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): As per my constituents' requests, I voted with this PC government to shut down the East Side Road Authority. We had assurances from this government that they would enact a timelier plan in its place. This is the

fourth session that we have had to wait to hear of this government's plan.

Will the minister finally table their PC's five-year east-side-road-development plan for the communities in Kewatinook?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the member opposite that her community waited 17 years for Freedom Road, and not an inch, not a mile, not a kilometre—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —nothing was ever built, Madam Speaker, and it was—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —our government, within the first two years—the first two years of being elected our government got Freedom Road built, something the—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —NDP never got accomplished in—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I have been asking for order a number of times today. I shouldn't have to stand and ask for it that often.

The other thing is that members complain about heckling in the House and then turn around and heckle, and so I'm asking for everybody's co-operation. You can't have it both ways, so I'm asking for people to show respect when questions are asked and answered, please.

CFS Newcomer Unit Closure of Unit

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Child and Family Services' Newcomer Unit has been helping serve newcomer families since 2009. This unit was an important resource to newcomers, helping them navigate their new life here in Manitoba by integrating them into a new culture and connecting them with culturally appropriate services and supports.

In recent days, it's become apparent that the minister has cut this important service, and the only way it became public knowledge to those who relied on the service was because they suddenly could no longer connect with the unit. This unexpected closure is a shock to many within the

newcomer community and organizations who help support them.

Did the minister consult with child-, family-service authorities and newcomer organizations in the province prior to making this cut?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I want to thank the member for this question. It's an important one. Immediately upon learning of this yesterday, we are looking into this to make sure that we do what is in the best interests of newcomers to Manitoba.

We are very supportive of those people who are moving to Manitoba. We are—we have always been so, back to our, you know, in the '90s, when we had the Provincial Nominee Program and so on, Madam Speaker, and I will say that we will continue to work with stakeholders in the community to ensure that we do what is in the best interests of those families who are newcomers to Manitoba.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations said, and I quote: newcomer-serving organizations of Winnipeg are concerned about this change. We've had a good working relationship with team members in the Newcomer Unit, and we're concerned that the newcomer families won't be supported as well without their expertise and relationships in the community. End quote.

Breaking up the service across 10 other service teams makes it difficult for newcomer families to know who to reach out to and access the services they need.

Will the minister listen to the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations and reinstate the Newcomer Unit today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Indeed, Madam Speaker, we are listening to newcomers who are coming to Manitoba. We have a tremendous amount of respect for those people who choose Manitoba as their home, and we will continue to ensure that they get the services that they need. I will ensure that they get those services.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The Newcomer Unit helped keep newcomer families together by helping them integrate into parenting culture in Canada. Many

newcomer families have had to deal with parenting through the repercussions of war and refugee camps.

Coming to a new country can be overwhelming alone, but learning what is considered to be culturally appropriate when it comes to raising your children can be another obstacle itself. This unit helped newcomers through these complex situations to ensure that their families stay together.

It is concerning to see that the minister is cutting an important unit in that child and family services system, a unit that helps keep families together.

Will the minister reinstate the Newcomer Unit today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is just wrong. We are not cutting these services to newcomers—to Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, these will continue to—we will continue to make sure that those services are provided to newcomers who come to Manitoba. They have been redeployed to other areas of the department. But what I will say is that those services will continue for those newcomers who need it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Institutional Safety Officers Enhanced Skills Training

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Everyone in this House knows that security guards in health-care facilities and other public places throughout our province work hard every day to ensure the safety of all Manitobans. That is why our government introduced legislation to better support security professionals by enhancing their authority, their skills and their training.

Can the Minister of Justice please explain to the House how creating institutional safety officers will keep Manitobans safe at work and safe to access the provincial services that they need?

Thank you.

* (14:30)

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for Brandon East for that question.

We know that security professionals face real challenges in hospitals and other public institutions. That's why we are enhancing authority, enhancing training and skills for security professionals with a

new institutional safety officer designation under Bill 17.

These new institutional safety officers will have more authority and better training to protect the people and property at these designated facilities.

Madam Speaker, we're confident that Bill 17 will make our hospitals and other provincial institutions safer for all Manitobans. We will seek the support of all members of the House for this important legislation.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, yesterday I was answering a question from the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) concerning the needs of autistic children, and I was reading from a Public Accounts document. The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) had asked for the figures to be released or for information to be given out. It is in the Public Accounts, but I'll be happy to share it with the member now.

Funding for special needs to—support, in 2010-11, under the previous government, was \$44,791,000. In 2011 and '12, that funding was reduced by two and a half per cent by the previous government. That's one-point-one million, thirty-two thousand.

In 2012 and '13, the number was further reduced by 5.7 per cent. That's \$2.488 million, Madam Speaker.

In 2013 and '14, the previously reduced number was reduced again, this time by 5.5 per cent, or \$2.275 million.

Then in 2014-15, the number was reduced again—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —this time by 5.5 per cent. That would mean \$2,157,000 was taken from autistic children. And then in 2015-16, the final year, Madam Speaker, of the NDP government, that number was again reduced, but this time by 1.1 per cent, being a pre-election year—\$394,617, for a total reduction of over 20 per cent in that time period.

We are maintaining the funding that the previous government reduced—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—every year for the last six years it was in power.

Oh, out of respect for the member's request, I'll table these documents which come from the Public Accounts of the Province of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Yesterday's point of order was a request for the First Minister to simply table the document that he noted—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, it's not an opportunity for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to grandstand and sit up here and waste this—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: As I was saying, Madam Speaker, it's not an opportunity to grandstand and read out numbers that actually has not come from Public Accounts. So actually I'm going to ask you for a ruling on this because this is actually not from Public Accounts.

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the member opposite talks about, you know, grandstanding on points of order after spending two days filibustering bills and another two more filibustering Interim Supply.

But that's not really what I wanted to speak about. The Premier already addressed the issue that he wasn't reading from a document. He was providing information. Now he's provided it in a written form for the member opposite. He's gone a long, long way in accommodating her request.

She may not like the information, but in this House you should be careful what you ask for, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable member for Assiniboia, on that same point of order.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, on that point of order.

The government may be frustrated that the opposition is doing its job holding the government to account, but that is no reason not to provide the opposition with the documents it has request; and if the House leader of the opposition is not satisfied with the tabling of the documents, there needs to be a resolution between the House leaders and the Speaker or some other resolution in this place to satisfy both parties so that we can all get on with the business of the House.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Related to this last point of order that was just raised, I would indicate that it might be a good idea to have the House leaders discuss this further so that maybe this could be taken under advisement.

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: But I would also then like to indicate that I have a ruling on the point of order that was raised yesterday.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine), I thank all members for their comments on this matter as I believe the rules and practices relating to the tabling of documents in this House are important and worthy of a moment of consideration.

Before addressing the point of order, I would like to provide a little context as a point of reference for all members.

First, our rule 40(5) states, and I quote: Where in a debate a member directly quotes from private documents, including digital representation or correspondence, any other member may require the member who is speaking to table a printed copy of the document quoted. This rule—end of quote—forms the basis of our approach to the tabling of documents in our debates.

Second, we are further guided in this House by House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Third Edition, where, on page 615, Bosc and Gagnon offer the following insights on tabling of documents referred to in debate. Quote: It is not necessary to table a public document referred to but not quoted by a minister. If a minister quotes a private letter in

debate, the letter becomes a public document and must be tabled on request. However, a minister is not obliged to table personal or briefing notes referred to during debate or question period. End quote.

Third, rulings from previous Manitoba Speakers reinforce these sentiments. Speakers Hickes, Dacquay, Rocan and Walding all ruled in similar circumstances that if a member quotes a private document in debate, the member is then obligated to table that document in the House.

There are also numerous recordings from these Speakers indicating that if a member is referring to a private document but not quoting for—from it or quoting from a public document, then they are not required to table the document.

Based on this collection of references and precedents, I will remind members of the following guidelines for members regarding the tabling of documents in debate: (1) if a member directly quotes from a private document in debate they are obligated to table it if requested to do so; (2) a member is not obligated to table a public document even if they quote from it in debate, though they may table it if they choose to do so; (3) a member is not obligated to table documents referred to in debate but not directly quoted; and (4) a member is not obligated to table briefing notes or speaking notes.

I would note that in reviewing the matter at hand from yesterday's question period, at the time it was not completely clear to me whether the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was directly quoting from a document, paraphrasing information or simply speaking to the House. I also had to acknowledge—pardon me—of whether or not he was referring to his briefing notes, which he would not be obligated to table.

The Premier has since advised the House that he was referring to a public document. Accordingly, there is no obligation for him to table anything and I would rule that the Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) did not have a point of order.

And I thank members for their attention to this ruling.

* (14:40)

And I do have another ruling for the House.

Following the daily prayer on Friday, March 15th, 2019, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) rose in the House to contend that the honourable First Minister had wilfully misled the

House regarding facts related to the Mining Community Reserve Fund during comments made on the previous day.

To support his assertions, the honourable member for Flin Flon tabled a number of documents related to the Manitoba Prospectors Assistance Program.

Following the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable member moved, and I quote: That this matter of the Premier knowingly misleading Manitobans about the government's inaction in the face of a job crisis in the North be moved to an all-party committee immediately. End quote.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable House leader of the second opposition also offered advice to the Chair. I then took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the matter of privilege.

In raising privilege, members must satisfy two conditions in order for the matter to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege: it needs to be demonstrated that the issue was raised at the earliest opportunity and that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached, in order for the matter to be put to the House.

The honourable member for Flin Flon asserted that he needed to verify whether comments made by the Premier on the previous day were factual, hence the member had to wait to consult Hansard to verify the facts.

I should note for the House that the onus on the member is not to verify what the facts are when raising privilege about misleading the House. Rather, it is to provide proof of intent to mislead the House, as a variance of facts is not necessarily proof of intention to mislead.

I ask members to keep this in mind when assessing the aspect of timeliness in the future.

Regarding the second condition, the noted authority Joseph Maingot advises on page 241 of the second edition of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, and I quote: To allege that a member has misled the House is a matter of order rather than privilege. End quote.

In addition, previous Manitoba Speakers have consistently ruled that in order to prove allegations that a member deliberately misled the House, it is necessary to prove that there was a clear intent involved to purposely mislead the House by knowingly making statements that would mislead.

Speakers Walding, Phillips, Rocan, Dacquay, Hickes and Reid have all ruled that such a burden of proof is placed on the member raising the privilege to demonstrate this.

To quote Speaker Hickes on this from a 2011 ruling, and I quote: A burden of proof exists that goes beyond speculation or conjecture but involves providing absolute proof, including a statement of intent by the member involved that the stated goal is to intentionally mislead the House, as it is possible members may have inadvertently misled the House by unknowingly putting incorrect information on the record. End quote.

In 2007, Speaker Hickes also ruled that providing information showing that some facts are at variance is not the same as providing proof of intent to mislead.

Also, Speaker Dacquay ruled in 1998 that without a member admitting in the House that he or she had stated the goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is virtually impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended to mislead the House.

Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I must rule there is no prima facie case of privilege.

And I also wanted to note for the member that in raising his matter, he stated that the word grumpy is unparliamentary. However, that word has not been ruled unparliamentary in this House.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): With all due respect, I do challenge the decision on the Chair.

Madam Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the ruling, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Fontaine: A recorded vote please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

The one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing the division bells to be turned off and the House proceed with the vote.

The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Kinew, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 37, Nays 11.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll continue with routine proceedings and petitions.

PETITIONS

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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

Madam Speaker in the Chair

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

* (15:50)

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

We petition the Manitoba–Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To request that the provincial government consider providing additional addictions 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 public—a publicly available inventory of all addictions facilities in Manitoba.

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

This petition is signed by Corrine Jacobson, Mark Jacobson, Ritchie Jacobson and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Daylight Saving Time

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Jordan Wieler, Taylor Bestvatir, Michael Stepaniuk and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Janice Ballard, Cavin Ballard, Angie Pearson and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill 25, The Municipal Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act, for second reading.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 25 this afternoon, so I will call Bill 25, the municipal amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter amendment.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 25—The Municipal Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): I move—*[interjection]*—thank you—I move, seconded by the Minister of Crown Services (Mrs. Mayer), that Bill 25, The Municipal Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act, now be read for a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wharton: Municipalities are mature and democratically responsible local governments that fulfill an important role in our society by providing services and making decisions on behalf of their residents, Madam Speaker. This includes important decisions about their local property tax framework.

Manitoba regularly reassesses all properties to ensure that assessments keep pace with changing market conditions and are easily understood by ratepayers. These reassessments may result in municipal tax shifting between properties.

We've heard from municipal governments who sometimes feel they do not have enough information

to make informed decisions about their options for responding when tax shifting is significant.

Madam Speaker, we've also heard from ratepayers who feel that they do not have enough information to actively engage with their council representatives on these important local tax decisions.

These amendments will improve the flow of information to municipal councils for informed decision-making and strengthen transparency for ratepayers about how their local government can respond to significant municipal tax shifting after a reassessment year.

*(16:00)

This bill will enshrine in law municipalities' right to early information from the Province about the effects of each reassessment on municipal property taxes. After municipalities have had a chance to review this information, the Province will also make the information publicly available for ratepayers on the municipal relations website.

Madam Speaker, if the information from the Province indicates that significant tax shifting is expected in municipalities, the municipalities' CAO will—and staff will be—will need to prepare a report for their council about the options to address tax shifting and mitigate its impact on affected properties.

Municipalities have access to various tax tools, which may be used in this purpose for many years, Madam Speaker, and this information will enhance councils' ability to use these tax tools effectively and efficiently.

As a result, councils will have more flexibility and control over their local property tax framework. Some examples, Madam Speaker, of the existing tax tools available: tax credit programs, special service and local improvement levies, creating a local urban district, and varying the portion of property tax class assessed value that is subject to property tax.

This bill also provides automatic access to this information for ratepayers; to strengthen transparency and allow citizens to work with their local representatives to proactively address any concerns.

Manitoba will continue to consult with associations of Manitoba municipalities to establish a threshold for when this reporting will be necessary, Madam Speaker. This will limit any regulation—regulatory burden on municipalities so that reports

are only necessary when they add value for councils and ratepayers.

This legislation continues to respect councils' authority and autonomy in making decisions about local taxation and Manitoba will assist municipalities, Madam Speaker, through this process by providing templates and support as these reports are developed.

These requirements will apply to municipalities outside of Winnipeg, as Winnipeg has a large and diverse assessment base to mitigate tax shifting.

Madam Speaker, the bill will also streamline and balance how municipalities, including the city of Winnipeg, are required to refund excess taxes after an appeal. Currently, municipalities must pay 4.75 per cent interest on excess taxes to property owners if their property assessment decreases after an appeal.

Conversely, property owners are not required to pay interest when an assessment increases. The requirement for municipalities to pay interest and the specified interest rate haven't been reviewed, Madam Speaker, for over 22 years.

We have heard from the City of Winnipeg and other municipalities that these outdated provisions have created imbalances and are not in line with current economic conditions.

Recently, Madam Speaker, the Municipal Board has streamlined processes resulting in shorter timelines to complete appeals. This means that interest payments would be minimized so that the administrative burden associated with processing interest payments no longer merits this effort.

These amendments, Madam Speaker, will eliminate these outdated requirements and modernize and streamline this process. Going forward, municipalities will simply refund excess property taxes directly to the ratepayer without interest, and a balance will be restored to the appeal process.

This will also align, Madam Speaker, with practices of other jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, in closing, these amendments will enhance information for municipal councils and transparency for ratepayers around important local taxation decisions, and modernize and streamline how excess taxes are refunded to ratepayers in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to debate and passage of this important legislation. Thank you.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequence questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members; or no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I've had a look at the bill.

So this bill would now require the assessor to provide a report to every single municipality in the province of Manitoba, except the City of Winnipeg. It would require each municipality to then issue a report, presumably to ratepayers in that municipality, for everyone in the province of Manitoba except Winnipeg, unless there's a new regulation that's passed that would then give exemptions.

How is this reducing red tape?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Certainly, one of our goals in government when we were elected in 2016 was to ensure that we reduced the burden on municipalities when it comes to implementing even local municipal bylaws, Madam Speaker, and resolutions. And I can tell you that this bill will certainly help with transparency—I know something that the member opposite struggled with over the 17 years while they were in power.

This will ensure that there's clear communication between the ratepayers and elected officials, Madam Speaker. And I can tell you that the elected officials in Manitoba in municipalities are very responsible forms of government, and I know that their No. 1 priority is to look out for ratepayers in their communities.

Mr. Swan: Well, you know, I asked what I thought was a pretty reasonable question.

The very press release that the minister put out says this is going to reduce red tape. And the question I have for him is: How does he see the assessor having to provide somewhere north of a hundred reports and each single one of these municipalities having to then use their own resources to

provide a report unless there's new regulations this government's going to bring in?

I'd like to hear from the minister: How does he want us to believe that that's reducing red tape in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Wharton: Well, again, and I know that municipalities—and I can tell you that we've had several months—and not only that, Madam Speaker, I would say better part of about a year and a half of consultations with municipalities. And they have been able to have these tax tools available for them which are very proactive in determining how portioning works in their communities.

And, quite frankly, they've said, look, we just need some support from our government, Madam Speaker, to ensure that we understand how these tools are there for us to ensure that our ratepayers in our municipalities have clear, transparent look into how their taxes are derived.

So we certainly would agree that—disagree with the member opposite, that this does reduce red tape, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): My question is: Who did the minister consult with?

Mr. Wharton: Apologize, I did not hear the question.

Ms. Klassen: My question was: Who did this minister consult with?

Mr. Wharton: I thank the member for that question.

We—as I mentioned in my preamble in the last answer, we consulted with a number of stakeholders: Association of Manitoba Municipalities; we consulted with stakeholders throughout the province in, of course, many jurisdictions like agriculture and other industries, Madam Speaker; homeowners; ratepayers; simply constituents right across Manitoba.

So, certainly, we feel that the information we're providing in this bill is a reflection of those consultations.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): One of the issues that could come down on Manitoba taxpayers is the mitigation portion. Properties like farmland, which increase at a much higher value than residential property, which means that if mitigation happens, that the property

taxes on farmland will be kept low while residential taxes could increase at a much higher rate.

I was wondering if the minister could explain how residential property owners will be protected under this change.

Mr. Wharton: I thank the member for the question.

And, during my introduction to the second reading of the bill, I mentioned that municipalities have a number of tax tools in their toolbox currently, Madam Speaker, that will help, as I mentioned, mitigate some of those tax shifts during an assessment year. And, of course, it was very relevant in the last assessment year on farm property, for instance, where in some cases in Manitoba, property values went up by over 77 per cent.

So the tools that the municipalities have—they have a number of tools, and I'll explain a couple of them if I have enough time, Madam Speaker.

Local improvement districts, for instance, is one area where they can shift taxes over from one area to another, Madam Speaker.

And, if I have time, I will answer some more of that question after.

Mr. Swan: Not a single one of those tools is anything that's new that's being created by this government.

* (16:10)

I'd like to ask the minister if he's done an assessment of how much more of the assessment branch's time is going to be taken by now providing a report to every single municipality in the province of Manitoba.

Has the minister determined how many more staff are going to be required and what the total cost is going to be of providing this additional report as the minister purports to cut red tape?

Mr. Wharton: I'll certainly be pleased to get back to the member's question, but I would like the opportunity to finish with an answer from the previous question, Madam Speaker.

And, again, I'll just kind of go back to when I was a municipal councillor, and I can recall when we put in a low-pressure sewer system in a particular area of our community, Madam Speaker, and we were concerned about tax shifting going throughout the entire town, so we had in our tax tool kit—as local

councillors, we had the opportunity to create a local improvement district.

So we have what is called an LID 1 and LID 2. So what we do is we have low-pressure system in one L—local improvement district where we have city-town-operated local improvement district. There is a significant difference.

Mr. Swan: Pretty clear the minister does not have an answer to what I think is a very reasonable question, which is how many more provincial resources are going to be needed for this additional layer of red tape this minister's putting in.

I'll ask another question along the same line. How much more is this going to cost municipalities across Manitoba given that they now have to provide another report, presumably, every time the assessor's report comes over, and is this minister providing any additional resources to those municipalities to help them meet this additional requirement that they now have to meet?

Mr. Wharton: I'm very proud of our government's position with municipalities and, for example, Madam Speaker, support that we provided in the new basket funding model. We continue to enhance the operating—unconditional operating basket for municipalities throughout Manitoba, 136 rural and, again, the City of Winnipeg, as well, have an enhanced operating—unconditional operating basket.

So, you know, to the member's point about additional resources having to be spent, Madam Speaker, we've given municipalities full opportunity to ensure that they can invest what they feel is best for their communities.

Mr. Swan: So I believe I hear the minister saying that, given the basket model for municipalities that he's now imposed, there will not be a single additional cent of money for Manitoba's municipalities to comply with this additional burden that's now being put on them by this minister.

Could the minister just confirm if anything in that statement is not correct?

Mr. Wharton: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, unlike members opposite, for 17 years when they actually just turned off the phone and unplugged the computer—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —I could tell you, Madam Speaker, that we are in constant communication with our

municipalities. We provide not only support in person, on the phone, by email. We ensure, and we don't—we certainly don't operate on Twitter or Facebook like members opposite do, but we actually sit down and have discussions with our communities to ensure that their needs are heard by this government, unlike the government of 17 years ago.

Mr. Swan: Well, I hope the minister stays around for the debate because there's actually quite a few municipal officials in the city of Winnipeg and elsewhere who have put on the record how difficult it is to deal with this minister, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government. This minister does not have an answer to any of the questions that I've asked.

So the next question I'll ask the minister is why does he think it's fair that a ratepayer who's successful in reducing their assessment isn't compensated for interest lost on the money that a municipality has held with an assessment that's been ultimately proven to be excessive?

Mr. Wharton: Well, it's more and more obvious, Madam Speaker, that the member did not listen to my introduction on the second reading, because I was very clear on exactly what—matter of fact, there was probably two or three answers in my introduction in bill—in this bill.

But, you know, the bottom line is that the City of Winnipeg—I don't know why the member doesn't like the City of Winnipeg, Madam Speaker, but I'll tell you why we do. The City of Winnipeg asked us about the 4.75 per cent interest that actually equates to millions of dollars coming out of the City of Winnipeg's account when assessments are not appropriately done. We're actually helping the City of Winnipeg by removing that 4.75 per cent interest rate and streamlining and, I might say, cutting red tape.

Mr. Swan: I'm fascinated that this minister's just put on the record there's millions of dollars in interest that the City of Winnipeg and other municipalities are having to pay ratepayers who have to use their own money and their own resources to file an appeal to the Board of Revision, the Municipal Board, and this minister has just put on the record that comes to millions of dollars that he's not going to give back to ratepayers in Manitoba.

Could the minister tell us exactly, then, how many millions of dollars is he going to take out of

the hands of ratepayers who successfully challenge their assessment?

Mr. Wharton: Well, I guess there's two sides to this, and I'll tell you the actual facts of this side, because there are obviously hearing some misinformation put on the record by the member from Minto, and that doesn't surprise me, Madam Speaker.

I know he's grumpy—oh, I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, I shouldn't use that word from the recent outcome of this weekend's events—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wharton: —but you know, I can tell you that the City of Winnipeg—and under the watch of the NDP, Madam Speaker, there were appeals—there were, dating back to 2005—on appeals and assessments under their watch.

Well, I can tell you, under our watch, those appeals have dropped substantially, Madam Speaker. And I'll tell you, there would be no—there will be no need to put an interest rate charge on any ratepayers in the City of Winnipeg—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Swan: Well, you know, the minister's the one who's put that number on the record this afternoon. The minister stood up and said there's millions of dollars in interest that—until this bill is to pass, if the minister wants to proceed with it—should be going back to ratepayers. Again, ratepayers who have successfully challenged their assessment.

So I would like the minister then, to put on the record exactly how many millions of dollars is he suggesting should be taken out of the pockets of successful ratepayers?

He must know the number, because he threw out a general number this afternoon. What's the actual number that he's talking about?

Mr. Wharton: Well, and—certainly again, if the member does read the bill and has a tendency maybe to listen once in a while in this House, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that quite frankly, when the bill is hopefully passed in this House—and we'll work hard to ensure that this bill does get passed to protect municipalities and ratepayers at large—that quite frankly, the bill, once it comes into effect—we're certainly not doing what the former government did,

and go retroactive and try to take out of the pockets of Manitobans.

I can tell you that once this bill reaches royal assent, that will of course reduce that 4.75 per cent burden on municipalities.

Mr. Swan: Well, it's obvious the minister first threw out a number just a few minutes ago. But clearly doesn't have the information at his fingertips—which he should have for question and answer period on his bill.

So I'll ask the minister: will he then undertake to provide our caucus, and the second opposition caucus, with the total cost to ratepayers that this bill is going to create by taking away the responsibility of municipalities to pay interest to ratepayers, who are ultimately successful in challenging their assessment?

Will the minister agree at the very least to do that?

Mr. Wharton: Well again, Madam Speaker, I'll be very clear: any appeals that are on the books now are subject to 4.75 per cent. Upon royal assent, there will be no interest charge—charged to municipalities in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, on the subject of interest, and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —returning that interest, it seems to me—has the minister or his department considered that it could be a disincentive for municipalities to settle these cases quickly, because they can hold on to that—taxes that they've wrongly taken?

Mr. Wharton: Well, I'm not quite sure what the question was but I'll try to answer it. Something about taxes that are not rightfully due to the municipality should stay with the municipality, even though the assessment was wrong? I'm assuming that's what the question was, but I'll give the member another opportunity to rephrase the question.

Mr. Lamont: Well, to be clear that currently, because municipalities have to pay 4.75 per cent interest, there's an incentive for them to settle these cases more quickly, and that if there is no such penalty, they don't have to follow that.

I was just wondering if that's something that the minister has considered, that if the interest penalty is removed, that municipalities have less of a reason to settle quickly.

Mr. Wharton: Well, as I mentioned earlier, Madam Speaker, to one of the other questions, the bottom line is that we are trying to reduce red tape, and ensure that the appeals process functions the way an appeals process should.

* (16:20)

We—municipalities and ratepayers shouldn't have to wait 10 years for an appeal, not only to be heard, Madam Speaker, but to be dealt with. And quite frankly, the 4.75 per cent interest rate that was—that has been on the books for several years—there isn't another jurisdiction west of us that—Saskatchewan or Alberta—that charges interest. We're actually aligning the legislation with other jurisdictions and we're very proud of that.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement for the House.

I'm advising the House that I have received a letter from the Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) regarding the official opposition's first selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 24 permits each recognized party to select up to three private members' bills 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 vote.

Accordingly, Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act, will be debated on Thursday, April 9th, 2019, starting at 10:30 a.m. with the question to be put at 10:55 a.m. that morning.

SECOND READINGS

(Continued)

Bill 25—The Municipal Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act

(Continued)

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I've—you know, we've had a chance to listen to a few question and answer sessions on various bills that have come forward. It was something that we practised, actually even

before it was a formal rule in the last days of the NDP government, and it is now part of the process with this Progressive Conservative government. And I think I can say quite honestly that was the worst series of answers that I've ever heard a minister give in this House. And I know, unfortunately, the minister's not even going to listen to the concerns that have been raised unless, of course, he's off to collect a wooden buffalo from the big guy.

However, let me talk a little bit about some of the concerns we have with this bill. And I had hoped today, in those questions and answers, that we would have been satisfied and said, all right, the minister has thought these things through, the minister has been quite prepared to consult, the minister has considered all of the different parties involved with this, and it is so fundamentally clear that this minister doesn't actually know what this bill would do.

And let me talk just a little bit about some of the concerns we heard just a few minutes ago in questions and answers. We know that this bill would take away the obligation of municipalities to provide a certain amount of interest to ratepayers who are successful in having their assessments reduced, and let's just understand how the process works.

The assessor comes around, provides the notice of assessment every two years to anybody who owns real property in the province of Manitoba, and when that assessment comes, Manitobans have a choice of what they want to do. They can say, that's fine, that appears to be reasonable.

There's a lot of tools online in the city of Winnipeg, someone can go and actually take a look at how much all their neighbour's properties are assessed at. I know I've done that. It's actually quite fun. In cottage country, of course you can do the same thing, as long as it's not on provincial park land, and you can have a look at how much different properties are worth.

You can, perhaps if you wish, look at what properties have sold for and if you want to, you have the ability to challenge that assessment. That is a right that we give to people in Manitoba, if they disagree with the assessor. And there are a few different steps that happen along the way.

In the city of Winnipeg, there is a Board of Revision. Individuals who receive their notice of assessment and are unhappy have the right to go in front of that Board of Revision and the person can

then make their case—and the case is usually based on the value of surrounding properties. It can be based on the sales values of certain properties. There are a whole bunch of different factors that come into play when determining what a property is worth.

Now, of course, you have to pay a fee to file the application to go to the Board of Revision. And, of course, what is interesting—and something one of my friends, who lives on Spruce Street in the West End, had asked me to ask about some time ago, was why it is that the City doesn't actually refund the cost of appealing to the Board of Revision, even if the City quietly agrees that you're right, even before a hearing—which is a good question.

I wrote a letter to the former minister of Finance, who really didn't want to deal with that issue. But what happens is somebody goes to the Board of Revision, and if they are unsuccessful, they have a further right of appeal to the Municipal Board. If they are successful and the municipality is unhappy, that municipality has the same right to go before the Municipal Board and have that assessment considered.

And, ultimately, the Municipal Board may agree with the ratepayer, the Municipal Board may agree with the municipality or the Municipal Board has the power to split the difference or to come up with an amount somewhere between what the taxpayer and the municipality believe is appropriate.

What has been the case until this point is that, if somebody has been effectively overtaxed by the municipality, they're entitled to receive their money back, and there is an amount of interest. The minister's put on the record that it's 4.75 per cent. I have no reason to disagree with that number, although it's likely something that could easily be changed by regulation. I'm not going to suggest that number is right or wrong, but the idea that a government should have to provide some fair amount of compensation for the privilege of having taken someone's money when they've over-assessed their property does not actually seem to be an unreasonable thing.

And I believe that the leader of the second opposition party also, by the types of answers or non-answers given by this minister, shares some of those concerns, and I'm looking forward to the things that he'll be putting on the record about this.

I had actually anticipated, when I asked the question, that the minister was going to say, well, the

amount of money is so small, it is so little that it would be unreasonable for municipalities to have to have infrastructure to return \$10,000 a year or \$20,000 a year.

But, instead, the minister stood in his place just a few minutes ago and said there are millions of dollars in interest that are now being refunded and, with the stroke of a pen, we're going to take that away.

You know what, taxpayer? You're right, you had to go and you had to go and fight your assessment. You had to go and you had to line yourself up against the City of Winnipeg or the City of Brandon or whatever rural municipality it might be. You had to take time off work to go down and challenge your assessment. You had to photocopy the details of your neighbours' properties.

Thanks a lot, you're absolutely right. The Municipal Board has now agreed with you. So you know what? Here's the extra \$2,000 that the City or the other municipality took out of your pocket. We're going to give you back that money and nothing further.

Well, that might be something that the minister thinks is appropriate, but I think there's some questions about that. And today, with the minister standing there, put it on the record—which I have to admit was a complete surprise it was that much money, that it's millions of dollars being paid back to Manitobans every year. I'm not sure why the minister then got so upset when we tried to get some clarification of exactly how much money, how many millions of dollars is he talking about.

And then the minister seemed perturbed that we had even asked a question which came straight out of the thing he said on the record, and, as my—one of my colleagues has said, I'm sure he is now trying to run back the tape to find out exactly what it is he said, because I'm willing to bet before 5 o'clock he'll be going to visit the Premier (Mr. Pallister), who's then going to ask him exactly what he said.

And, you know, some of the other questions I asked, I thought it was quite fair to ask this minister about the additional burden that's going to be put on the provincial assessment office and about municipalities.

And I asked that because the news release that was issued on March 19, 2019, when this bill was introduced—well, right in the headline, it says this will reduce red tape.

So I think it's a fair question to ask the minister if he is bragging with this reducing red tape. I think it's quite appropriate for the opposition parties, in a question and answer period on a bill that the minister wants to debate in this House, to ask how much the actual cost of the new red tape that's being added are going to be.

And rather than provide anything akin to a real answer, unfortunately this minister chose to do what the Premier does, because the tone starts at the top; when he can't answer the question, when he gets caught out doing something that is the exact opposite of what he says he's going to do, he lashes out and he blames the opposition parties for asking questions about a bill that's before this House.

* (16:30)

And I'm sorry—for the members that are chattering opposite, I'm sorry for standing up for ratepayers in the city of Winnipeg and in every municipality across the province. I'm sorry for standing up for the provincial assessment office which, of course, is now going to have more responsibilities put on it by a number of employees whose wages have been frozen by decree of this government. And I'm sorry that these members apparently don't support people working in that department for the additional work they're now going to have to do.

And, of course, we know that would not be a new thing; that would not be the only department facing that. Across the province we are hearing from provincial employees who are now being asked to do the work of two or three or four or five people because people are quitting; people are being cut; people are retiring and not being replaced, and there's more and more work being laid on the desk of just about anybody who's still here doing their best as a civil servant, the civil servants that this Premier pretends to support but, in fact, does nothing but undermine.

So I ask the question of this minister: All right; there's going to be this new report that now has to be provided. The explanatory notes and the bill itself—very clear: Every time there's an assessment, the assessor shall provide a report to the municipality.

So the question I asked was: All right; how many more resources is this going to take, and will the minister make sure that there's proper resources given to the department to make sure this can happen?

Did we get an answer from this minister? No. We got the same kind of non-answer that we've been hearing from this minister and other ministers and this Premier now for nearly three years.

I think it's a very reasonable question to ask. It apparently did not seem like a reasonable question to answer by this minister, and that is greatly disappointing.

And then, beyond that, not only does it require a report to be done for every municipality in the province except for the City of Winnipeg, it then actually obligates each municipality to provide its own report and it says, and I will quote from the bill itself:

" . . . the municipality must give council

(a) the assessor's report; and

(b) a report on measures that the municipality may take under the following provisions to mitigate the shifts in the real property tax burden between the property classes that will occur as a result of the general assessment:

(i) Division 5 (Local Urban Districts) of Part 3,

(ii) Division 5 (Grants, Tax Credits and Tax Increment Financing) of Part 8,

(iii) Division 4 (Local Improvements and Special Services) of Part 10,

(iv) subsection 6(1.1) (variable portioning) or section 68 (phase-in of tax increases or decreases) of *The Municipal Assessment Act*."

Now, the minister today stood up and made it sound like he invented all of these different things. Well, he didn't. These are actually things which have been in place for some time, and in fact, the whole idea of tax increment financing, what—it was brought in by the NDP government and has been part of the revival of downtown Winnipeg.

And I know they are—there they are chuckling away, but I know that they would still love to have the Eaton's building, the asbestos museum; they wouldn't want a state-of-the-art hockey rink downtown. They wouldn't want the kind of development that's happened in downtown Winnipeg because of the things that the NDP government did, and they certainly now, surprisingly, want to put a further burden on every municipality in the province of Manitoba.

And that section I read in, and I know it comes as a shock to the members opposite, this is now a report that shall be provided each year that the assessor reports under this section and the officials in each municipality are now going to have to provide this to council, and I asked the minister what I thought, again, was a reasonable question:

All right, Minister, you're putting a new obligation. You're giving a new mandate to municipalities. How are you going to assist them with meeting the burden of this new obligation?

And the minister lashed out once again, didn't—either didn't understand the question or knew what the question was but didn't know the answer, or just didn't have an answer to it.

And the minister did not have any answer except the standard answer they've been giving to the City of Winnipeg and to other municipalities: that somehow—because they're now giving basket funding—that somehow that's the magic answer.

Well, the fact of the matter is the basket funding they're giving is no bigger than, and in fact is now smaller than, the funding municipalities were getting, and this government has the audacity now to put more obligations on those municipalities.

And, of course, what is the alternative? There is an escape clause in this legislation. They say, well, all right, we know we really hate red tape, even though we're imposing more red tape on the assessor, we're imposing more red tape on the municipality, but you know what we can do? If you're a municipality, you want to do this, we'll pass another regulation.

And does that mean that then they have to go find another regulation; maybe protecting clean water; maybe protecting children in daycare; maybe protecting children in school—are they then going to rip up that regulation because they've got to have a new regulation in place so they can unburden the municipality from the needless red tape that they put on by this bill?

That's the kind of ill logic that this minister has stood up and delivered. And I would expect, if the minister believes in his legislation, which—and we'll talk later on about why we're even debating Bill 25 this afternoon, and after the minister's performance, I'm sure his own members are wondering why we're debating this this afternoon. We don't fully understand why the government wants to move ahead with this.

So, again, questions and answers are supposed to be an opportunity for the opposition to ask real questions on the record and to get answers. And I appreciate if questions are truly partisan in nature, well, you know, the member asking the question might get back what they give.

But, when I ask the minister to comment on how much this is going to cost, how many resources are going to be used, that deserves an answer in this House. And, if the minister can't stand in his place and give that answer, then there is a problem.

And I actually said to the minister: All right, you've put this number on the record. You've said there's millions of dollars. Now you're getting upset that we're using your own words from minutes ago against you. So, you know what, Minister, you clearly don't know the answer. Will you undertake, then, to provide us with the correct answer?

I gave him that opportunity, and the minister refused. So it's disappointing that it appears that the bench is that short over there, that ministers are coming into this House entirely unprepared to introduce an—for second reading, and to talk about the bills that they want to become part of the law of this province. It is a true shame.

But I want to get on to some of the other comments that this minister made, and this minister would like you to believe, my goodness, there's never been another government that has just been more prepared to deal with municipalities and to consult with municipalities.

And the truth is quite a distance from what the minister has put on the record today; in fact, whatever the minister puts on the record inside this House or outside of this House.

And right now, of course, even as the minister brings in this bill, his new additional red tape, the new let's-rip-off-the-ratepayers-who-are-successful bill, we have a minister that has created a huge problem for the largest municipality in this province: the City of Winnipeg.

And, I mean, maybe this minister is too busy running away from the mayor and council from Winnipeg to actually sit down and read his bill, to get proper advice, to give direction as to how the bill should be drafted, because right now I would think that members of this government—and especially a lot of those backbenchers who represent Winnipeg seats, who may be experiencing their last weeks in this Legislative Chamber—should be very

concerned about the rift, the fight that this government and this minister has picked with the City of Winnipeg.

And what happened? Well, it's very simple. This provincial government left a \$40-million gap in municipal funding for the City of Winnipeg at the very last minute—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —which led the City of Winnipeg to conclude that they're not going to be able to do any residential roadwork in Winnipeg in 2019.

And, well, let's quote a city councillor—I mean, he's a decent fellow. I actually—first time I met him was at a—actually, an opening of a Habitat for Humanity project, where the old Thistle Curling Club burned down. Scott Gillingham: decent man. He serves, actually, I believe, as the military envoy for the City of Winnipeg, if I'm correct.

An Honourable Member: He was former.

Mr. Swan: All right, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes) has corrected me. He was formerly the military envoy, very decent fellow, but was a Progressive Conservative candidate in St. James not that long ago.

* (16:40)

And what did Councillor Gillingham put on the record about this \$40-million gap? Well, quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press on March 7, 2019, Councillor Gillingham said about cancelling the residential roadwork program for the City of Winnipeg in 2019, he said, this speaks to the impact of the \$40-million hole in the 2018 budget that has been left by the Province. I knew the impact was going to be substantial, but I didn't know this.

My goodness, even their friends—even their friends are shocked and dismayed by this government's suddenly stepping up and yanking away \$40 million from the City of Winnipeg, without consultation, without notice, without any regard to what this actually is going to do to the projects of the City of Winnipeg.

And there's others who are very, very concerned about this minister's style—far in contrast to the comments that he put on the record speaking about Bill 25.

What did Chris Lorenc of the Heavy Construction Association have to say?

Well, he also was very concerned to hear that this government is all of a sudden reneging on paying \$40 million to the City of Winnipeg. And he warned in—on CBC radio March 5th, 2019, that not only could these kind of cuts mean less construction, they could actually imperil the entire Manitoba economy.

And, you know, I think he's right because we've had a look at the Conference Board of Canada, not exactly a socialist organization. The Conference Board of Canada has done their figuring and they have determined actually, that Manitoba's economic growth is forecast for 2020 to be the lowest in the entire country. Dead last in economic growth in 2020 and in large part that's because this government does not understand the importance of infrastructure, does not understand the value of working with municipal partners to get things done, to get things built, to get things moving. And it's unfortunate that we're stuck a minister that is unable to deal with that.

And, of course, it's not just the city of Winnipeg. It's municipalities large and small across the province of Manitoba that are being affected. For yet another year, the Pallister government has frozen funding for municipalities, even as their costs continue to rise, even—for many municipalities, even as their populations continue to grow. And there are some communities in Manitoba that are growing and we certainly celebrate that and support that. These communities are scrambling to try to deal with the fallout of these cuts.

And, you know, it's been fascinating, Madam Speaker, going to AMM every year. I mean, boy, you went to the first AMM meeting after the election, and boy, a lot of those reeves and councillors, they thought, this is great—here's our guys, they're in power now. And even by the next year, boy, it felt different in that questions and answers.

My goodness, it sure sounded a lot different in there, as all of a sudden, reeve after reeve after mayor after councillor got to the microphone and said, well, wait a second, we supported you because you said you were going to increase the spending on our market roads. You said you were going to fix those bridges. You said you were going to pave these roads.

And now three years later, boy, AMM is a lot different than it was right after the election because they have seen the impact of hundreds of millions

dollars coming out of the infrastructure budget. We have seen what happens when a government freezes support for municipal governments, their partners in getting things done. And it is frustrating for municipalities across this province to have to make do with a provincial government which really, really doesn't appear to care.

And, you know, in Winnipeg, Winnipeg officials weren't even given any sense of what kind of funding they could expect, even as City officials were sitting down to draft up their own budget. As—at least the members in Cabinet over on that side, understand that you don't do a budget overnight. It's months and months of preparation. The City went through and did a lot of work on their budget, only to have this yanked away. Forty million dollars yanked away at the very last minute by a government which, I think the only word you could use, is vindictive.

And, you know, it's always been a shell game for this government. I was amazed when we were talking about some of the rapid transit funding, and of course this government is not interested in improving transit. We've seen that in spades. But I was fascinated one time when the minister, under pressure—well, most of the ministers don't actually go out in the hall and talk after question period. Most of them run back to their offices and their press secretary sends out an email later in the afternoon.

But I was absolutely shocked—I was absolutely shocked when the minister sent out an email, trying to claim credit for investments made in rapid transit, which were made by the NDP government, and tried to claim that as their own investment in transit.

It is a government which is absolutely unprepared to deal with the important issues that citizens of the city of Winnipeg, that citizens of other municipalities across the province are concerned about, and, instead, treat them poorly by refusing to consult, by refusing to listen, by refusing to provide more funds and, in the case of the City of Winnipeg, by actually yanking away money at the very last minute.

And, of course, what does this Premier (Mr. Pallister) do when he's called out? The same thing he does all the time: he doubles down. He goes and fights, and denies, and complains and then, of course, requires the City to respond. And what did the mayor of Winnipeg have to say? Well, Mayor Bowman told the media that no one in this government had briefed him or any other official on

the Province's plans to stop the funding for local roads.

And quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press, on March 20, 2019, the mayor said: We've asked for written documentation to demonstrate that—and by that, he means the \$40-million cut—we haven't received it, and I don't think any of you have, or will. We weren't provided with anything in writing. Neither the minister or anyone else in the Province ever indicated they would not be making good on that \$250-million commitment, nor did they articulate, even verbally, that they felt they had exhausted it.

Well, I think every member of this Legislature is aware of the challenges that municipalities have, and we know the roads in Winnipeg, the back lanes in Winnipeg are a constant issue. We know that Winnipeg has huge changes in temperature; we know the conditions create uneven and sometimes dangerous roads with potholes, with dips, with cracks. We've all experienced that.

And the roads are so bad that—well, what did one city councillor have to say? Jeff Browaty, who, I do not believe, is a member of the New Democratic Party, at least not yet, not yet—and what did Councillor Browaty have to say? He said: When I speak to Winnipeggers, people tell me it's the conditions of the roads that's their big concern.

And of course, Councillor Browaty was so concerned about this that he recently raised a motion calling to devote federal gas tax revenue to fill the \$40-million gap in provincial funding for road renewal.

So filling potholes is actually a very good analogy. Once again, we're seeing this provincial government walk away from their responsibilities, and then when the federal government steps up and is actually providing funds, it's then necessary to use that federal money. Instead of using it to build something new, we're using it to fill potholes—literally, in this case.

That \$40 million which is now coming from the federal government could have been used to build something new. It could have been used to build something great, and instead the City is going to be using that federal money to try to repair the very worst of the worst streets which have been identified as priorities by the City of Winnipeg, and that's a shame, and that should not be the way that it works. And, you know, if the Province had simply

committed to follow what had already been offered and committed and promised to the City of Winnipeg, we would never be there.

And, frankly, the members of this government who represent Winnipeg seats should be absolutely ashamed of their silence—their silence as this minister and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government have turned their back on the City of Winnipeg.

But I guess I shouldn't be surprised, because these are the same Winnipeg—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —MLAs who remain silent, as this Premier and this Minister of Health have indicated their intention to close the emergency room at Concordia Hospital and the emergency room at Seven Oaks hospital, and who remain silent when this government closed the emergency room at Victoria General Hospital, who've done nothing as the wait times now have continued to grow, ever since those closures began.

* (16:50)

So I guess we shouldn't be too surprised that there's silence when it comes to even being able to fix roads in the city—have been unable—well, I hear the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) for now, talking about emergencies—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: And, certainly, I would say it is an emergency. I agree with the member for St. James. It's a huge emergency that now, wait times in our emergency rooms are going up and up and up—even before two more city emergency rooms get closed. I consider that to be an emergency. I also consider it to be an emergency that we now have lengthening wait times for hip surgeries and for knee surgeries and for cataract surgeries, which continue to go up under this government's watch, after they'd been coming down for a decade with the previous government.

These things are all very—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —disappointing. It's an opportunity for this government to step up and do the right thing. I just don't understand how this minister could have possibly come into this House with a bill that somehow just came out of nowhere. And I'm sure others will want to talk about the priority of this government bringing on Bill 25 instead of other choices, to debate it this afternoon, at the very time

when this government is absolutely ignoring the needs of municipalities, large and small, across the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

House Business

Madam Speaker: Prior to acknowledging members, I need to correct a date of an earlier announcement.

The Bill 232, The Election Financing Amendment Act, is one of the selected bills for the NDP. It will be debated on Thursday, April 4th; not April 9th, as was previously announced.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The—I did see an NDP member rise to speak to this and the order would be acknowledging an NDP member first but if they're wanting to give up their space to the Liberal member, that would be fine. No?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Very pleased to speak to Bill 25 today and I was getting quite excited to hear the minister try to explain the bill. Started seeing shades of the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) try to explain his way through. But, you know, this minister has tried to answer questions asked by the previous member on many different ways and just couldn't answer.

I mean, his—the government's own press release talks about how this bill is going to reduce red tape and when the member from Minto asked him, you know, two or three different times, he basically avoided, evaded the direct question.

So I don't know what kind of prep is going on here, as between the government and their ministers but he really could not, not explain and as just mentioned, he's certainly got to answer to the boss very quickly and then maybe some more room at the top or just below the top here because this was not a very good performance.

And I want to say that, you know, I had high hopes for this minister a year ago and we were getting along real well at that time and I know that I went and invited the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) out to 404 Desalaberry, which is a property leased by Centennial Columbus housing cooperative in the city of Winnipeg, and it's, you know, it's a seniors home on the riverbank by the La Salle Hotel.

And it's been—its bank has been falling into the river over the last couple of years—the last few years now, maybe 10 years. And in—it—matter of fact, the

minister, when he came out to see the property with me, you know, he—the situation was so bad that we thought we were going to have a by-election in St. Paul when he actually fell into the hole—fell into the crevice. And that was like a year ago. Today that crevice is much bigger. He could, like, walk in it now.

But, anyway, we came back from that. We came back to the Legislature and he was nice enough to put me in contact with the current minister. You know, the minister that just, you know, didn't do such a good job today. And he said, well you know, I'm sure we can do something about it.

Well, guess what? This is not a huge problem, Madam Speaker. This is like, maybe \$800,000. The problem is just going to get worse if nothing is done. And guess what? A year later, and absolutely nothing was done by this minister—or the Minister of Infrastructure for that matter—other than to appreciate the problem.

And the Minister of Infrastructure did point out to me that, you know, he understood riverbanks well enough to know; and the water effects, the rain effects, and flood effects on such a bank—that you know, all it was going to take was another big rainstorm and the whole bank is going to be—like, in the river.

So, you know, here we have one of the top ministers in the government, one of the more experienced ministers in the government, you know, coming out, taking a look at the problem, admitting that the problem is bad and is only going to get worse; puts me touch with the minister that he thinks is going to help, and absolutely nothing has happened.

So, you know, what we've done in the intervening year, Madam Speaker, is we do have now—the city councillor for the area has made an arrangement to put in, I think, \$200,000 out of his ward allowance, on the basis that the City will match the money. And then, of course, then the City will have to come to we-know-who here, the minister.

That's all going to end up back here, and then the minister from here is going to have to get in touch with the minister in Ottawa, and we all know how hopeless that is going to be, because we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who's not talking to anybody.

Like, I don't know what kind of meetings they have over there, but I'm assuming—from what I understand, is the caucus meetings are kind of dead

because the Premier's not even there, and he's holed up in some room somewhere—think 204—with walls are all covered, windows are covered over.

What he's doing up there, I don't know but I'm sure he's allowing, you know, one at a time to come in there, and probably got a whole—this—I can see his bookcase, his whole bookcase of wooden buffalo. I'm sure there's no book—any of the members—the members here probably haven't—maybe just heard stories about these wooden buffalo and, you know, maybe they haven't heard anything. I have no idea because I'm sure they're too afraid over there to even be talking about the wooden buffalo story.

But for those members, you know, who weren't around—well there's one or two that were around, and—they used to tell these stories about how terrorized they were. I mean, you know, talk about harassment and fear. I mean—and that's the kind of situation they were in after 2012, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) came back from wherever he came back from for that iteration and took over in the caucus.

And I'm not, you know, taking his side or their side on it. I'm just telling you what I heard, right, and

I heard that he gave them tasks to do. And they don't sound like they were that difficult of tasks. They were told like, well, sign up some members, right? Well how hard is that, right? Go out and get some money. Well, you know, how hard is that? I don't know, maybe the targets were too high, or I'm not sure what it is, right.

But, anyway, if they didn't perform their task, he would then give them a wooden buffalo.

And I think there was one or two members over there who had a whole herd of these things. Right, they were just kind of collecting them. I'm not sure—I'm sure it's nobody in the Cabinet currently that was, you know, collecting those wooden buffalo.

But, you know, I suspect that the wooden buffalo, you know, parade is going to start tomorrow with the minister who just spoke. And our—because he's probably up there, I mean, going to be—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 22 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Hip and Knee Replacement	
		B. Smith	990
		Friesen	991
Bill 232–The Election Financing Amendment Act		Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals	
Fontaine	983	B. Smith	991
Tabling of Reports		Friesen	991
Cullen	983	Federal Carbon Tax	
Ministerial Statements		Lamont	991
Sikh Heritage Month		Pallister	991
Cox	983	Communities Economic Development Fund	
Kinew	984	Lindsey	992
Lamoureux	984	Pedersen	993
Members' Statements		Commercial Truck Driving Industry	
Angela Eastman		Johnson	994
Clarke	984	Schuler	994
Northern Youth Mental Health Programming		Investing in Canada Fund	
Lathlin	985	Klassen	994
Ice Safety Awareness		Wharton	994
Lagimodiere	985	Remote Fly-In First Nations	
Flood Preparation		Klassen	994
T. Marcelino	986	Schuler	994
Sexual Assault Awareness		East-Side Road Construction	
Teitsma	986	Klassen	994
Oral Questions		Schuler	995
Child-Care Centres		CFS Newcomer Unit	
Kinew	986	Lathlin	995
Pallister	987	Stefanson	995
Child-Care Wait List		Institutional Safety Officers	
Kinew	987	Isleifson	996
Pallister	987	Cullen	996
Action on Climate Change		Speaker's Rulings	
Kinew	988	Driedger	997
Pallister	988	Petitions	
Methamphetamine Addiction		Addictions Services– Brandon and Western	
Fontaine	989	Manitoba	
Friesen	989	B. Smith	999
Ad Campaign–Nurses		Daylight Saving Time	
B. Smith	990	Graydon	1000
Friesen	990	Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services	
		Lindsey	1001

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Second Readings

Bill 25—The Municipal Amendment and City of
Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act
Wharton 1001

Questions

Swan 1003

Wharton 1003

Klassen 1003

Lamont 1003

Speaker's Statement

Driedger 1006

Second Readings

(Continued)

Bill 25—The Municipal Amendment and City of
Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act
(Continued)

Debate

Swan 1006

Maloway 1013

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