

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure today to rise in the Assembly of Manitoba to table the Manitoba Finance Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2019-20 Department Expenditure Estimates.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, Departmental Expenditure Estimates report for the fiscal year 2019-20.

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 rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Battle of Vimy Ridge

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to reflect on the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The bravery, courage and sacrifices made by our soldiers in this battle played a vital role in the freedom that all of us enjoy today and often take for granted.

Madam Speaker, on Easter Monday, April 9th, 1917, thousands of Canadians, many from our great province, stood tall at Vimy Ridge. Together, they captured more ground than any previous offensive in two and a half years of war.

And today, as we reflect on the Battle of Vimy Ridge, we remember those who gave their lives far from our shores. We pay tribute to the soldiers who fought a pivotal battle that has left an unforgettable mark on our history, and we thank every Canadian,

past and present, who has answered the call to serve our country with selflessness and sacrifice.

This event marked a turning point in the First World War and in the birth of our Canadian identity. Following Vimy Ridge, Canada was no longer a colony of the Commonwealth; it was a nation.

And, Madam Speaker, today at the Manitoba Legislature, from sunrise to sunset, the Canadian flag and the Manitoba flag are being flown at half-mast, marking the National Day of Remembrance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

And we extend our deepest gratitude and sympathy to the families of the 11,285 Canadian soldiers inscribed on the walls of the Vimy memorial. Our government will never forget—or, never forget our veterans who sacrificed so much for our country during that Great War.

And, Madam Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to rise for a moment of silence to recognize the national day of remembrance for the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Lest we forget.

Madam Speaker: Would there be leave to hold a moment of silence after all members have spoken to this? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Over 100 years ago, 100,000 Canadian soldiers advanced on Vimy Ridge, helping to bring Allied fighters to victory. More than 10,000 soldiers were killed or wounded in the battle, with over 60,000 Canadians lost in the First World War.

We take today to honour the triumphs and sacrifices of great soldiers who fought for our freedoms in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Over the course of four days in April of 1917, four Canadian divisions worked together for the first time to capture this key battlefield. To take the ridge, Canadian soldiers had to fight through unimaginable conditions, snow, rain, mud slowing their progress. But they pushed through to make their advance, charging nests of machine guns and dugouts filled with enemy soldiers.

Brigadier-General A. E. Ross declared after the war, and I quote: In those few moments—few

minutes, I witnessed the birth of a nation. End quote. It was this historic win by our united Canadian soldiers that convinced Prime Minister Robert Borden to step out of Britain's shadow and push for greater Canadian autonomy on the world stage.

Madam Speaker, the Canadian national Vimy Ridge memorial was erected in France in 1936 to commemorate the 11,285 Canadian soldiers who lost their lives. I want to take a moment to remember the sacrifice that these brave Canadians made on behalf of all of us across the country. They fought to protect the Canadian society that we have today.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Today we rise to mark the anniversary of the attack on Vimy Ridge. It was a turning point in the First World War.

I had two great uncles who fought there. One was Alfred Barrett, my grandfather's older brother on my mother's side. He was born in England, moved to Alberta where he worked as a butter-maker and signed up to fight with the Canadians. He died at Vimy, and for years his grave was unknown. His name is in the Book of Remembrance at Parliament Hill. The other was Frank Bastin, my father's uncle; he was part of the crack troops of Canadians who swept through France in the last months of the war, and he fought at the Somme and survived Vimy.

He wrote that, quote: The Canadian Corps moved to Vimy Ridge in October 1916 and remained there for over a year. We came to accept soldiering as a permanent way of life, which, since the war seemed likely to last forever, could only end for the individual by being carried out on a stretcher or wrapped in a blanket and buried. As April 9th approached, the drain on our transport to bring up ammunition for our guns affected our rations, so dry army biscuits and bully beef became acceptable fare.

The unit he fought with was successful at Vimy. He said: Our advance was made with few casualties and we reached our objective without any difficulty. Our casualties later—came later from German shellfire. My platoon reached Farbus wood, which was the most advanced point of the attack, and we were able to look down on the flat expanse of the Douai plain.

Shortly after arrival, a small troop of the Canadian Dragoons rode forward, but they were wiped out in minutes. Men and horses lay scattered over a small clearing beside the wood. All the

cavalrymen were dead except one, whom we carried to the dressing station.

The scale of the death and destruction of the two world wars seems unimaginable today.

We remember it, and in the midst of the horror of this war we need to recall the common humanity we all share, and we owe it to those who fought and died to ensure they did not fight and die in vain, but for a better world.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Riverbank Erosion Repair at Columbus House

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Riverbank erosion has been a serious issue along the Red River and in the Elmwood area. In the 1990s, the Elmwood Cemetery had been so badly damaged by erosion that caskets were actually exposed. The riverbank was restored with the City and provincial funding.

In 2011, the LaSalle Hotel shored up its property to stop the flood threat. Today, the residents of Columbus house at 404 Desalaberry, with their 70 co-operative housing units, continue their long battle to save their riverbank property and protect their building from structural damage as the bank continues to give way.

They are on City of Winnipeg-owned land, and although engineering studies have been done, we're now at a point where action is needed. The City is being asked to provide further funding to the city councillor's offer of \$200,000 to limit the damage.

There are 70 affordable-housing units at risk here, and although the project will cost about \$800,000 in total, \$200,000 of that is being brought forward to the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee for its approval by Councillor Jason Schreyer.

This project will need more partners, and residents are hopeful the Province can commit infrastructure funds do its part to help save these affordable-housing units, but the—but time is of the essence. Further serious damage can drive up the costs. The current Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) has himself pointed out to residents that one big rainstorm would result in the whole bank

falling into the river. Let's do our part to prevent that from happening.

Ron Helwer

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I rise today to recognize an outstanding business leader who has dedicated his life to improving Manitoba's agricultural sector.

* (13:40)

Ron Helwer was born and raised in Libau, Manitoba, and began his business career in 1952. He operated several tractor and bulk fuel dealerships until 1968, when he started Shur-Gro Farm Services in Brandon.

Shur-Gro is an independent agricultural retailer that provides fertilizer, seed and other agricultural products to farmers at 13 retail operations. As president of Shur-Gro, Ron has been an innovator and a staunch supporter of new agricultural technologies, and has helped improve productivity and profitability for farmers across our province. Last year marked the 50th anniversary of Shur-Gro Farm Services, and there is no indication that Ron is going to retire any time soon.

Ron's family includes his wife Vera, his son, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), and daughters Sherry and Gail.

Madam Speaker, Ron is a lifetime member of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, and I would like to congratulate him on his recent award as lifetime builder of the year in recognition of his extensive community and business activities.

Ron has served on various community, provincial and national organizations too numerous to mention. Ron was inducted into Manitoba's Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2014 and was recently recognized with an honorary diploma from the Assiniboine Community College. He also currently serves as chairman of fundraising for the Kidney Foundation of Manitoba.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Ron Helwer is an outstanding Manitoban who has done much to strengthen our economy and improve the lives of farm families in our province, and he has employed hundreds of people, including many summer students such as myself.

I ask all members of this House to wish Ron and the Helwer family all the best as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of Shur-Gro Farm Services.

Joshua and Matthew Verhoog

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, we all know the importance of agriculture to Manitoba. One in 10 jobs in Manitoba is directly related to or a spin off–agriculture. It contributes billions of dollars to Manitoba's economy.

In order to continue the legacy of farming in Manitoba, we need to encourage and recognize young farmers. One such way is with the Manitoba Outstanding Young Farmers award.

This year I was honoured to have two of my constituents make it to the finals: Joshua and Matthew Verhoog from St. Labre, Manitoba. They operate Moonshadow Holsteins, a thousand-cow dairy farm that combines cutting-edge technology with old fashioned values and environmental stewardship.

The farm was started by their parents, who quickly grew it to a three-hundred-cow operation. In 2008, their parents left the farm to begin a mission project in the Ukraine to teach orphans life and farming skills. Since then, Matthew and Josh have grown the farm to a thousand-cow operation.

Milk is the principal income but manure is reinvested into the land by drag-hose to limit runoff and atmospheric loss of nitrogen. This, paired with vertical tillage turn, allows them to improve soil organic matter and grow more feed for cows at a lower cost. They grow 85 per cent of everything their cows consume.

These cows are happy and comfortable in a tunnel-ventilated insulated barn and deep sand-bedded free stalls. Having toured the farm on several occasions, I know they are caring and responsible farmers. They also know how important their workers are to them and invest in each team member at the farm.

When they built their last shop, they also included a full-size gymnasium you would find in any new school, including a score board, for the community to use. This gym also serves as a hall for the community Christmas supper they co-sponsor. They are a part of the St. Labre 200. They are a great asset to their community.

Even though they placed second at the awards–

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to conclude his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Smook: To the community of St. Labre they are more than that. I would like to congratulate them for all they do for farming and the community of St. Labre.

Thank you.

Public Safety Meeting in St. Boniface

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, residents of St. Boniface are feeling a lot of fear as crime in our community grows. It has increased by 30 per cent as new crime statistics show.

Residents are rightly proud because there are many strong community groups who work hard to advocate for their neighbourhoods, but they're frustrated because of what they see as a lack of provincial action. It simply isn't happening because, while our streets become more dangerous, the government is cutting funding to municipalities and therefore cutting funding to police services and community programming.

When this government makes cuts to health care, they are making it harder to break the cycle of addiction and to get addicts off the street and into recovery.

St. Boniface is an extraordinary community, but I have been hearing, since my campaign there last summer, of concerns with meth, community safety and crime. We need a practical, effective strategy to deal with mental health, addictions and crime, and we haven't been seeing it from this government.

We know there are people camping in parks. We know that people are leaving needles in public places and we know that crime was up significantly.

I do want to recognize the good work being done by community members. Marion Willis of Morberg House and St. Boniface Street Links have been important advocates, and the Norwood biz has been phenomenal in understanding the problem and proposing progressive solutions to make our community safer.

There is a public safety meeting tonight at the Norwood Community Centre, 87 Walmer St., from 7 to 9 p.m. I hope members of the community will join us to voice their concerns and that the Province will step up to do its part.

St. Norbert Collegiate Celtics

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): I'm honoured today to recognize the St. Norbert Collegiate's junior varsity girls basketball team.

Just a few weeks ago, this team accomplished something amazing in any sport: they had a perfect season. They won 25 regular season and tournament games in their league this year.

Since they were assembled as a group last fall, each of these young women has developed her own individual skills through a lot of practice and commitment, and they all combined their own on- and off-court strengths to become a solid team.

On March 9th of this year, they won the 2018-2019 Manitoba High School Athletic Association's junior varsity girls provincial basketball championship. These grade 9 and 10 students successfully added just the fifth provincial basketball title to St. Norbert Collegiate's trophy case since the first one, which was earned nearly 50 years ago.

They also made history with this being St. Norbert's first junior varsity girls title, and not only did they have perfect season and win the championship, but they also won four other junior varsity girls tournaments along the way: the Elmwood Giants tournament; the Collège Lorette Collegiate Tournament; the Linden Christian School tournament; and their own Celtic Classic Tournament.

As the MLA for St. Norbert, I know the students, teachers and staff at St. Norbert Collegiate and all their families are very proud of the entire team, which was led by co-captains Hannah Olagbodi, Fatima Ibrahim and Mercy Lasu. Together with their teammates Ava, Brianne, Sophia, Tanesha, Rachael, Charlize, Sam, Posi and Katrina, and with the guidance of Coaches Barelli, Morris and Hocking, they have all been great inspirations amongst themselves and throughout their school community.

Be proud, Celtic nation.

I ask that my colleagues in the House today join me in congratulating this team of outstanding young women and their coaches on their history-making season.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Norbert.

Mr. Reyes: I ask to have the names of the team members, coaches and school principal present in the gallery today added to Hansard.

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

St. Norbert Collegiate Celtics: Fatima Ibrahim, Hannah Olagbodi, Mercy Lasu, co-captains; Ava Bernier, Sophia Johnston, Racheal Oni, Brianne Ouskun-Chornoby, Tanesha Ouskun, Samantha Shemeluk, Posi Sogeke, Charlize Stansel, Katrina Stefaniuk; Raffaele Borelli, Lisa Hocking, Quinn Morris, coaches. St. Norbert Collegiate principal Chris Zun.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the public gallery from Selkirk Junior High we have 60 grade 9 students under the direction of Joan Cooney, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere).

We also have in the public gallery the former MLA for Gimli, Mr. Ed Helwer.

And we welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Rate Increase

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, life is getting more expensive in Manitoba and the Premier is a big part of the reason why.

We know that the board that he appointed to Hydro initially—before, of course, they stormed out on him—were championing an 8 per cent increase to hydro rates in Manitoba and, of course, the Premier himself was cheerleading that 8 per cent rate increase.

Now, more recently, in November, Hydro asked for another 3 and a half per cent rate increase, Madam Speaker. They predicted that if they were awarded that 3 and a half per cent rate increase that they would generate a net income of \$31 million.

* (13:50)

However, Madam Speaker, according to these documents, which I will table for the Premier to review today—and ask that he not throw them on the floor—that 3 and a half per cent rate increase would now generate over \$115 million. So it seems, perhaps, there's not the need for quite such an aggressive rate increase schedule by Manitoba Hydro.

I would ask the Premier whether he agrees that Manitoba Hydro doesn't need to raise rates as quickly on Manitoba bill payers.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): First of all, I wouldn't want the member misunderstanding, Madam Speaker. I just like my space clear here so I can focus on the sometimes coherent questioning of members opposite, and I've done this for 20 years and I'm not going to stop. It means no disrespect to the work done to prepare the documents, but I would want that to be clear: I very often will peruse documents after, but that's where I store them in the question period.

On the question—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and I'll continue to.

On the question the member raises, Madam Speaker: where was the concern for Manitobans paying hydro rates when the NDP were making ridiculous investments without asking Manitobans for permission?

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

Mr. Kinew: See, this is the problem when the Premier doesn't care enough about a topic to read the document and he just throws them on the floor: on the one hand it shows that he doesn't care, but he actually does himself a disservice, because what the documents are talking about are Manitoba Hydro's current financial situation right now, as of this moment, and what those documents—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —show as—is that if Manitoba Hydro is allowed to raise the cost of people's bills right across the province by 3 and a half per cent this year, then they'll—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —make a profit of more than \$115 million. Just a few short months ago Hydro said they only needed to clear \$30 million.

Now that they're going to make \$115 million, doesn't the Premier agree that Manitobans should get a break on their hydro bills and that Hydro should propose a lower rate increase? [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

There is increasing heckling already and we're barely into oral questions.

I would call the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) to order, please.

Mr. Pallister: Thanks, Madam Speaker. I welcome any question from that member on caring.

The fact is that the NDP government that we inherited this mess from could care less about Manitobans when it came to hydro. They invested billions of dollars in boondoggle projects that had nothing to do with helping Manitobans pay lower rates and everything to do with causing Manitobans to pay higher rates.

Madam Speaker, they created a massive mess. We're committed to cleaning it up.

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

Mr. Kinew: Premier can get as mad as he wants, but the documents that he threw on the floor show that if Hydro increases rates by 3 and a half per cent this year, they will generate a net surplus of \$115 million. That's \$115 million just a few months after Hydro said they only need \$31 million in order to be sustainable this year.

Now, I know that the member—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) is raising his voice here in the Chamber, but will he raise his voice in caucus? But we know he speaks up in here because he doesn't have the courage to stand up against the Premier in the caucus room, Madam Speaker.

Indeed, somebody on the government side ought to stand up for Manitobans and demand that the Premier tell the House today: Does he agree that Manitoba Hydro should simply ask for less money from the people of—Manitobans so the average family can get some help getting by.

Mr. Pallister: Appreciate any question from the member on anger management, Madam Speaker, and as far as referencing members on our side of the House for their courage, I appreciate his use of the word. It's applicable to all the members on this side of the House who have the courage to clean up the massive mess he and his party created.

The fact of the matter is that this member has had the opportunity on several occasions to stand up and defend Manitobans' ability to afford to make progress in their lives, and he's failed at every occasion. He wants a higher PST on every householder in the province. He wants a carbon tax

to be applied to people who drive to work, commute to work, drive their kids to school, drive their kids to sports events and everyone else, Madam Speaker.

This member has one solution for every challenge: it's higher taxes, Madam Speaker.

We don't agree. We'll clean up the mess they've created, Madam Speaker. It's a massive mess; we're up to the challenge and we have the courage too.

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

City of Winnipeg Road Repair Request

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Okay, so several times I asked for the Premier to not increase hydro bills on the people of Manitoba, and he can take his answers in this direction or that direction, but, of course, it stands out very clearly—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —that not once did he commit that the people of Manitoba—hydro—should not have to pay unaffordable hydro bills, Madam Speaker, and so that is a very clear answer and we'll just leave that on the record.

We know that the Premier's approach to picking fights with other levels of government has also resulted in many, many potholes across the city of Winnipeg and now that the snow is melting—although we got a little bit more today—that we know that the pothole situation is getting worse.

Will the Premier stand up today, commit to renewing his relationship with the City of Winnipeg and investing in fixing roads in our fair city?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Again, the member refuses to apologize on behalf of the NDP for creating the massive Hydro mess, and the member failed to stand up against Ottawa when they tried to make things worse for Manitobans by raising taxes on small business, and the member failed to speak up when Ottawa tried to rush the legalization of cannabis, when Ottawa tried to threaten us here in this province, by removing funding for Low Carbon Economy Fund.

Frankly, Madam Speaker, until recent days the member's had a big bromance going with Justin Trudeau. Now he's trying to create a separation on that relationship. But we have a good relationship with the Prime Minister. We tell him the truth when

we disagree with him. We don't just acquiesce to everything he says, like the member opposite.

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

Mr. Kinew: Oh, quite an impressive list of topics that the Premier is able to rattle off, though, of course, he can't mention the one issue that I asked him about, which is fixing the streets in the city of Winnipeg, Madam Speaker. We all know that every member in here, whether they live in the city or whether they commute into the city, are being confronted with more and more potholes this year as the snow recedes.

You can drive down any street in the city of Winnipeg, whether it's Ness or St. James or Stafford or Pembina, and you will see that there are more and more potholes this year. We know the reason why, of course: because this Premier and his government are cutting funding to fix roads, both—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —inside the city and on highways across the province.

So it's a simple question: Will the Premier put aside his fights with the mayor, with the Prime Minister, and get down to business to fix roads for people in the city of Winnipeg and highways for all Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Course, our government has exceeded the NDP commitment to fixing roads that they made in 15 of 17 years they were in government. But I take it as a personal compliment and as a compliment to our government's hard work and to this caucus's hard work, the member has to come up with city issues to attack us on. Perhaps he's looking to apply for the mayor's job and the mayor for his. I'm not sure.

Madam Speaker, one thing I know for certain is that the City of Winnipeg has one of the most generous funding arrangements in Canada. They have the largest percentage of unencumbered, no-restricted, no-strings-attached opportunities to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —spend money, Madam Speaker. They can spend money on potholes if they like. They can spend money on funding Hooters sojourns, if they wish.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, there is one aspect of what the Premier is saying that makes sense, and that is that there's a lot more people in the city of Winnipeg who say that this side of the House is standing up for the issues that they care about.

Now, we know that there's very concrete examples of the Premier's cuts: when he cuts the budget for roads, when he cuts the budget for highways, when he cuts the transfers to the City of Winnipeg, that created a \$40-million pothole in the City of Winnipeg's budget and the impact is that the road repairs in our fair city are going to be falling further and further behind.

* (14:00)

It's pothole season and the Premier is failing to do the job. He's not getting the job done.

So I would ask him simply: Will the Premier commit to a reset in the relationship with the mayor of the city of Winnipeg, and will he commit to repairing more of Winnipeg's streets as well as highways across the province?

Mr. Pallister: Obvious to me the member wants to take over from the mayor, Madam Speaker. I will let the mayor take on his responsibilities, and I encourage him to do so.

The member spoke about doing the will of the people of Winnipeg, Madam Speaker. I see a poll just out today says that the majority of NDP supporters in the city of Winnipeg support a lower PST.

I also note, Madam Speaker, that we are united on this side of the House in another cause that is supported by a majority of Winnipeggers, which is a lower carbon tax as well.

So I would note that the member opposite seems to want to stand in a minority position, wants to gouge the people of Winnipeg with a higher PST, wants to gouge the people of Winnipeg with a higher carbon tax and wants to pretend that he's got unanimity with Ottawa on that one and that he agrees with the mayor on everything.

Madam Speaker, we'll stand up for Manitobans' best interests on this side of the House. The member can decide, maybe later, to correct his position of not doing so on every major issue.

Ad Campaign—Nurses Apology Request

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I've got up in this House a few times now and asked the

minister to apologize for the social media advertising campaign for so—for Manitoba nurses, one that was—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —demeaning and insulting to Manitoba women and Manitoba nurses.

The minister continues to dodge the question by referencing the removal of the ad campaign, and a hundred-character tweet to—is not an apology.

So I'll give the minister again another opportunity to stand up and apologize to Manitoba nurses and women in this province.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, the member needs to take her virtual reality goggles off and look in the real world. As soon as we saw those ads, took one look, knew it reflected in no way, shape or form the views of this government, apologized to every nurse without qualification if they took any offence to the ads.

The member needs to move on. I assure her Manitobans have.

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

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I'm actually asking on behalf of nurses who call us and ask us to get this minister to actually apologize in the House because they deserve it.

This morning in this House we had an hour of hearing how little priority this government has around health care. The member, actually, from Radisson, did not even stand up for his constituents of northeast Winnipeg who will face the consequences of Concordia's ER. When asked if he supported the closure of Seven Oaks and Concordia's ER, he simply dodged the question.

Will the minister today commit to keeping Seven Oaks and Concordia ERs open?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): This government remains focused on health care. We know it's important to Manitobans. It's important to this government. It's why we did things like add additional in-patient beds at Health Sciences Centre. It's why we hired new nurses at Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital recently. It's why

we just reinvested \$5.3 million to buy additional hip, knee and cataract surgeries for Manitobans who are on the wait-list. It's why we have the highest number of doctors retained, second highest number in 10 years in this province.

This government is focused on getting better health care sooner. They say go back to the olden days of being last. We say no way.

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

Mrs. Smith: All this government's actions are doing is creating a valley of despair and straight chaos in our front-line medical health-care system.

Front-line workers are already facing extreme demands of mandatory overtime and overcrowded ERs. We have already seen existing emergency rooms, including Seven Oaks', being forced to pull out overcapacity beds. Face it, patients are facing the highest ER wait times here in over two years.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) take his hand out of the—his head out of the Costa Rican sand and actually take a look and commit to keeping Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs open?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it's exactly that kind of preamble that has Manitobans understanding that that party is more and more irrelevant.

Madam Speaker, let's be clear. That member says that we need better results. The plan that this government is bringing for health-care transformation is one that is based on evidence and will get better results. And what do they do? They stall the bill that is the backbone of this transformation, the transformation—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I'm going to ask the member for Point Douglas and the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) to please come to order. There has been some heckling that has been going on today already, and I would ask both of them to please come to order.

The honourable minister, to please conclude his statement.

Mr. Friesen: That member and her party used procedural methods to block exactly the bill that is designed to get better results for Manitobans. The evidence says it. Manitobans have said it. We will get that better result. We will get better health care sooner. Why don't they get on board?

**Safe Consumption Site
Request for Government Support**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Nothing perfectly illustrates how little this Premier cares about the meth crisis and the families who are currently facing it than a tossed report that experts and concerned Manitobans took the time and effort to produce, Madam Speaker.

The Premier can't deny the findings of this study conducted by his own government departments and local organizations just because it doesn't feed into his archaic views.

I'm hoping the Premier got a chance to pick up the report he tossed and actually read it.

Will the Premier apologize for dismissing his own experts' report and finally listen to them, and will he support the creation of a safe consumption site today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I would believe that the member's preamble demonstrated clearly that she's never read this paper.

This paper reflects that there were 35 users of drugs who were canvassed in three separate meetings—three meetings—in which there was a café-approach to take qualitative measurements and ask them what they'd like to see. Some said recliners; some said couches; some said snacks. But one thing is clear: the report made clear this is no definitive report that would provide any basis to move forward.

Why doesn't the member read the report?

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

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I—it is mind-blowing how disrespectful and condescending the Minister of Health is to people who are actually living with the meth crisis and attempting to navigate it, including folks from Sunshine House who, I would suggest, he actually get down there and visit and talk with people in a real humble and genuine way, which, clearly, he does not know.

Experts, Madam Speaker, at the forefront of this crisis, including the Department of Health, the WRHA, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and local non-profits identified that a safe consumption site could help reduce the likelihood of overdose deaths and the spread of blood-borne illnesses.

Will the Premier apologize for dismissing—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, if the member had read the report she would know that it was a small group discussion survey. It was conversations drawing on imagined versus real experiences because they said there was no real experience to draw on in Winnipeg. So it was highly speculative.

Also, I notice that the publishers themselves said: overrepresentation of some organizations and no participation from others. This is no authoritative document from which forward trends and important policy can be implemented.

* (14:10)

Maybe the member should read the report before she reflects on the report.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Actually, Madam Speaker, I've actually lived through it with my mom, my own mother dying of a heroin overdose at the age of 42 on the streets of Downtown Eastside when there were no safe consumption sites. And not a day goes by that I don't look at my sons and think what it would have been like to have a grandmother for them had InSight been in place at that time, which is not far from what Manitobans are going through at this very second, trying to navigate their family members who are struggling with meth and who are dying and who—I remind this House again, we are talking about children in many cases.

And while they refuse to—ignore and continue to ignore report after report after report because of the Premier's archaic views, people are—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'm sorry for the member's poignant experience, Madam Speaker, sincerely.

She misrepresents my views. If anything is archaic it's ignoring the actual report she's citing from. The report doesn't recommend injection sites for meth at all. In fact, it shares the experiences of those who may be using opioids or meth. It says on page 25, for example, we need nicer furniture; on page 25: meet with friends, be high, engage in things that people like to do when they're high; on page 26 it recommends that there be a house doctor so that people can get safe drugs into their system. This is what the report says. It's not a report. It's a selection

of requests from people who want to get high using meth.

Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

I'd call the honourable—

Mr. Pallister: —Madam Speaker, if the member would like to consult with a half dozen other reports, she might find consistency in this: safe injection sites for fentanyl, perhaps; perhaps for the heroin she references; no one's recommending safe injection sites be set up for meth.

Now, we're doing everything we can to make this place safer, this community safer, and to work hard on this issue.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Meth and IV Drug Use Harm Reduction Policy

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I was in Brandon recently and visited the Seventh Street health access clinic. It's an amazing facility that provides community resources, everything from kitchen and laundry facilities to tax preparation, job search and public health, and one of the things they do very well is harm reduction.

Now, let's be clear: harm reduction is not about saying it's okay for somebody to use dangerous drugs. It's—because we all know that it's dangerous for people to be putting poison in their bodies, but that does not mean we should deny their humanity or do nothing to lessen their suffering. Harm reduction is about disease and death reduction.

And I spoke with a nurse at the clinic who told me she packed a metre of gauze into an infection in a user's arm because they'd used tap water to clean a needle. A nursing student told me a single harm reduction kit from the clinic costs about \$1.25 and it can prevent a case of endocarditis, which is an infection of the heart which can cost \$8 million to treat.

The fact that harm reduction saves lives should be enough. It can also present—prevent massive health-care costs.

Will the Premier and the Health Minister make Manitoba harm reduction a priority?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We have and we continue to, Madam Speaker, and the very site the member toured is one where a RAAM clinic is installed, so congratulations to our minister and our

government for actually acting to make sure that the appropriate facilities are there besides having munchies available.

The fact remains that we have doubled the number of women's treatment beds. We have made investments in RAAM clinics, significant investments. We're the first jurisdiction in Canada to sanction the use of olanzapine by paras to treat agitated patients. We're making major efforts and taking major steps.

So the member from St. Johns trying to make this into a partisan issue is just, frankly, despicable, Madam Speaker, and doesn't work to help achieve the results that we all want to achieve in this province. And we should be working together on this, not trying to score political points as the member opposite is committed to doing.

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

Public Awareness Campaign

Mr. Lamont: There's also been a huge spike in cases of STIs and blood-borne diseases associated with meth use.

I toured the J.C. Wilt laboratory last week where their Manitoba doctors and researchers are doing incredible work that's having impacts all around the world, especially in HIV which also has impacts in Canada. They're concerned because we're seeing an increase in STIs, and as they put it, those STIs can power HIV transmission, and there's also concern that people are contracting HIV because they are using meth.

The measures this government has put in place don't scratch the surface of what is actually required.

This government somehow found money to advertise the PST and for a Jets Whiteout party.

Will this government commit to immediately launching a public awareness campaign on the dangers of meth and IV drug use?

Mr. Pallister: That's in the curriculum right now in the high schools, but it's worth considering action, beefing it up, I suppose, Madam Speaker.

But the member, again, misses the point. The point is we're making millions of dollars of additional investment on this issue. We continue to. We're open—the ideas others present. We prefer they be presented in the spirit of co-operation and in a constructive manner, Madam Speaker. That doesn't

appear to be happening with some of the members here.

But I do appreciate the member's comments and suggestions, and we continue to act responsively and responsibly in respect of giving people the chance not just to get drugs, Madam Speaker, as some would advocate, but to get off drugs.

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

Stabilization Units

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, our constituents are telling us they're frightened by drug-fuelled violence in our communities. We're losing lives, we're losing souls to drugs in our communities across Manitoba. Some of the violence is being driven by gangs. Some of the property crime is being driven by people with addictions. But the waiting lists for treatment are—take months and, for many, treatment is catch and release.

Will this government use some of the \$40 million a year they're going to be getting from the federal government especially for mental health care and home care to create stabilization units in Winnipeg and Brandon to get people with addictions off the street and safe so they can get treatment and not be a danger to themselves and others?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, we've taken a number of progressive steps. We're working with a tripartite study group right now and look for even more ideas. We're—we believe very strongly that a warm hand and a warm cup of coffee is better than a cold needle. And we do believe that a road to recovery is what people deserve and what they want, not a treadmill to tragedy.

So I would say we'll continue to work very diligently on these issues, and I would encourage the member, if he has progressive and constructive ideas, to bring them forward.

Education System Funding Concerns

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Small class sizes matter; that's what parents think, that's what the experts say and that's what teachers told this Pallister government at the summit that they had on literacy and numeracy last year. Yet the Minister of Education is so eager to wield the scissors that he's not even waiting for his own K-to-12 review of the education system. He's already cutting funding for

dozens of school divisions by millions of dollars every year.

For many school divisions it means less teachers, less educational assistants and less support staff and it means larger class sizes.

Why is this minister so focused on cutting support in the classroom for Manitoba children?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member is patently wrong when he speaks about the funding for the class size initiative.

That class size initiative funding remains in place, but we've given the option to the school divisions to use it either to lower class sizes or in a way that they feel would be better to get results for their students.

We're trying to give autonomy to the school divisions. I don't know why he hates school divisions so much, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the minister knows that funding for K-to-12 schools isn't keeping up with inflation, let alone with the enrolment growth that we've seen in this province.

Dozens of school divisions have seen their funding cut year after year. It means hard choices for many. It means less teachers and less classroom supports.

Before the election, the Pallister government said it supported small class sizes, but apparently not now. And this is just the beginning.

Like all the reviews, the Pallister government intends to use the education review for further cuts.

Why is the minister focused on less support in the classroom for Manitoba children?

Mr. Goertzen: The member's patently wrong again, Madam Speaker. Of course, there is more funding in the K-to-12 system than there ever has been. There's \$26 million more than there ever was under the NDP, every year. So there is clearly more resources in the system.

When it comes to the class size initiative funding, that funding remains in place. We've just given the authority to the local school divisions to decide how they want to use it.

Do they want to use it to lower class sizes, or do they want to use it in some other way that they feel is

more appropriate? It's about giving them that choice, Madam Speaker.

* (14:20)

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, teachers, parents are all asking this government to just make the investment that it takes to make sure that our class sizes are not getting bigger, as they are now under this government. There are thousands of additional students that are coming into the Manitoba school system and yet this minister continues to cut funding. Inflation continues to rise and yet this minister continues to cut funding.

Why is this minister so solely focused on cuts to the education system rather than supporting students and parents in the education system in Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: Of course, the member is wrong. There is more funding in the K-to-12 system than there's every been before. There is more money per capita because we're building seven new schools. So there is certainly investment into the system.

But it's not just about that, Madam Speaker. When my son comes home from school, I don't ask him how much the government spent on him today. I ask him what he learnt in school. And that is what we're focused on: what our young people are learning in school, not how much money is being spent on them; because, ultimately, it's about results and that is what the K-to-12 review is about: getting results.

Economic Growth Action Plan New Economic Development Office

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Madam Speaker, our government was elected in 2016 with a mandate to rebuild our economy. This includes a commitment to making Manitoba a more attractive place for businesses to invest in and grow.

Last week the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade announced the next step in our focused approach to supporting economic development here in Manitoba.

Can the minister please share the details of this important announcement with the House?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I thank the member for the question.

Our government is listening to advice that we received from representatives of business, industry, economic development organizations, indigenous groups and academia as we work to build a stronger Manitoba.

Last week we announced that we are establishing a new Economic Development Office that will deliver on our mandate to grow the economy right across the province, and we're very happy to announce that Philip Houde will be the new chief executive officer whose experience in private industry will prove to be invaluable.

Manitobans entrusted our government to help rebuild the province's economy and that's exactly what we are doing.

Roseau River First Nation Flood Protection Inquiry

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Water is a huge issue in all our communities. Every time there's a major flood south of Winnipeg, Roseau River is flooded. That community always seems to be caught in a state of recovery.

However, they do have a great vision for their First Nation and are proactively planning for its realization. It's our job here to help them realize their vision.

Can the minister tell us what he is doing to protect Roseau River First Nation, or will he, again, deflect me to the federal government?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that timely question.

Yesterday, myself and the Department of Manitoba Infrastructure visited the Roseau River First Nation. We had very good conversations with them. They are very pleased with the help that they're getting from INAC, who they report to. There are some issues that have to be dealt with and we will support them in their approach to asking for the appropriate money from the federal government.

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

Little Grand Rapids Sewer-Water Supply Department Funding Commitment Inquiry

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Going door to door in Little Grand Rapids this past winter road season was awesome. It was nice to see the water treatment plant up and running, and it was especially

nice to hear that people will no longer be scared to drink their water.

It was also nice to see the work beginning for trenching to replace the old sewer pipes. I had asked the minister to address this issue. Residents had to live for over a decade knowing sewer water was leaking into their lake.

Can the minister tell us how much dollars did her department give to Little Grand Rapids to finally fix this issue?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I thank the member opposite for the question.

And I'd like to point out that our government is taking great strides in working not only with the First Nations in northern and all across Manitoba, but also northern affairs communities, and just recently a decision was made to work with water services board of Manitoba to ensure that our First Nations get clean drinking water, they get waste-water disposal and there's also great projects with solid waste.

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

Lake Winnipeg Fishery Request for Deadline Extension

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): We all know Lake Winnipeg is suffering, and oddly enough this government is pushing through with their own unknown real agenda regarding quotas and fishnet mesh sizes. We'd all like to know what their true intent is. But for now, a 30-day window for fishers to get together and talk is very upsetting. It is simply not enough time for such a big decision—discussions and decisions.

Will the minister extend this 30-day window for the fishers of our province?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): It is a real honour to work with the fishers in Manitoba with my colleagues from Gimli and Interlake on this very important issue.

And I would also like to remind the member for Kewatinook what her own colleague had said just a few short months ago. I'll read Hansard and then table it: It would be reasonable, as to—as some have suggested, to limit the size of smaller nets now to protect the younger walleye and sauger.

I'm wondering if the member opposite no longer agrees with the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Insurance Brokers of Manitoba Meeting Regarding Online Services

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The purpose of the lobbying registration act is clear. The law states clearly that it is desirable that the public be able to know who is attempting to influence government. On important questions regarding the future of Manitoba Public Insurance and the services they offer, Manitobans deserve to know who's attempting to influence government.

Has the Minister of Crown Services met with representatives of the insurance brokers of Manitoba regarding online services and, if so, how many times?

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): I—in regards to this question, I can tell the House that many individuals come and talk to me on a time basis about their concerns across the province, whether that is their Autopac insurance, whether that's their Liquor & Lotteries concerns, whether that's their MCCC–NCCC concerns as well, Madam Speaker.

My door is open. Us on this side of the House are open to listen, like we always have, to Manitobans.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Media reports have indicated that the Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba have the ear of senior levels of government, including the Premier. The purpose of the lobbying—Lobbyists Registration Act is to ensure that the public, the people of Manitoba are aware who is attempting to influence the government. Manitobans deserve to know who is the Premier listening to.

Has the Premier met with representatives of the insurance brokers of Manitoba regarding online services and, if so, how many times?

Mrs. Mayer: I can assure the member that we listen to all Manitobans regardless of whether they're small-business owners, the—my neighbour down the street, a business owner that's either in rural or urban Manitoba. We are listening. We have—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Mayer: I might suggest, Madam Speaker, that members opposite actually start listening today.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Listening, eh?

We need to move to online and some of the key decisions with our government friends have been on our ability to move more of our transactions online, and our customers are demanding it. That, Madam Speaker, is the president and CEO of MPI, who said that on October 15th, 2018.

Does the Minister of Crown Services agree with the president of MPI?

* (14:30)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Finally, a question from the member I really enjoy, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is the member is now attacking this government for listening; guilty as charged, I guess, Madam Speaker. Yes, we're listening.

The NDP government that we took over from that created such an incredible mess, failed to listen. They failed to listen to Manitobans who were opposed to billions of dollars of money being wasted with Hydro boondoggles. They failed to listen to Manitobans when they shut down, without any consultation or forewarning, a third—a full third—of Manitoba's municipalities. They failed to listen to Manitobans when they raised the PST. They failed to listen to Manitobans when they took away the right for Manitobans to vote on it. Madam Speaker, they even failed to listen to each other and staged a rebellion so they could all not listen to each other together.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Daylight Saving Time

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) According to a Manitoba Public Insurance news release, collision data collected in 2014 showed that there was a 20 per cent increase in collisions on the 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 in the day after clocks are turned forward with corresponding increase in—with no corresponding increase in productivity when 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.

And this petition has been signed by Warren Giesbrecht, Jeremy Giesbrecht, Mark Harder and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Before we proceed with all these petitions, I would remind all members that when reading out the end part of the petition it is not allowed to add a whole bunch of extra words in there, as the member just did. It's fine to say many Manitobans, but to add in many, many more fine Manitobans, I would ask that that practice please stop because that's been going on for a while now and I've reminded members numerous times. So I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

The honourable—in accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

Early learning—(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility

of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Manitoba Legislature.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by Dennis Hunt, Bob Cey, Travis Mosset and many others.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And, Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by Laurie Bleeks, Deborah Jones, Danielle Carriere and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Yes, Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is

a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Madam Speaker, this petition was signed by Eden Metnik, Arturo Scrotur [*phonetic*] and Kurt Bhullar and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained, early childhood educators has continued to increase. Quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by Jennifer Dennis, Parker Suth, Charlene McGlinchey and many other Manitobans.

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The 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.

(7) The people of Flin Flon are concerned for safety of mothers-to-be, including the extra physical and financial stress that this government is expecting them to take on.

(8) There has been no commitment from this 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 Saskatchewan border.

(10) Because this 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 caused 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 services continue to be available.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Jessie H. Campbell, Linda Asmus and Sandra Simms, and many other Manitobans.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs are in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by: (1) Stacey Woods, (2) Kathy Chow [*phonetic*], (3) Marion DeJong and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

And the petition—the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition was signed by Gaylene Guilbault, Ian McLeod and Cherry Custodio and many more.

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Addictions are a health and social problem that requires 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 use of methamphetamine and opioids, two highly addictive and very destructive drugs.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

(3) To request that the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living consider establishing a

publicly available inventory of all 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.'

And this is signed by Andrea Allingham, Cindy Maher, Debbie Barklay and many, many other Manitobans.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated—remunerated—we'll leave it at that. *[interjection]* I should start again.

No. 6—my apologies, Madam Speaker.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this petition, Madam Speaker is signed by Justin Dyck, Richard Genie *[phonetic]*, Adam Olson and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed Nathalia Polischuk, Nicole Welwood, Michelle Clark and many others.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by Anthony Foster, Priscilla Jobrun [*phonetic*] and Nicole Armstrong, with many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business.

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Goertzen: Pursuant to rule 33(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski). The title of the resolution is Livestock Education.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 33(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward

by the honourable member for Dauphin. The title of the resolution is Livestock Education.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, will you please call for debate The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, Bill 16?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will resume second reading debate of Bill 16 this afternoon.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 16—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

Madam Speaker: So, Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019, standing in the name of honourable member for Elmwood, who has four minutes remaining.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I think, you know, we have seen governments come and go in this province, and there's certain things that governments do and certain things they don't do, and I have to say that this has got to be one of the strangest governments that I have ever experienced just in a number of ways, but certainly with their proposal to close three of the six ERs in Winnipeg.

And people in the constituency don't seem to understand it either. As a matter of fact, it's been an issue, now, in my area for two years—coming up two years now. And people are wondering why this is happening, and they think it's a very hare-brained idea just to start with. I mean, people just find it unbelievable that government would do this.

And now we find the government is running headlong into an early election call which will be roughly one and a half years before their mandate—actually, the real mandate, it's like five years, but they have the fixed election date, and that would give them somewhat less than that. So people are wondering why they're doing this, right?

And so, obviously, there's a plan here. I mean, this government certainly just are not—I hope they're just not making it up as they go along, although I wonder. But there has to be a plan here, and so the suggestion that's being made by people in the know as far as the health care is concerned is that this government is looking at closing down rural hospitals. We're not talking about just ERs in the rural areas, but they're talking about shutting down entire hospitals, where you have situations like—without mentioning names, but there's a number of

hospitals that are within 10 miles, 20 miles of one another, and it would be political dynamite for them to do these things without—they'd have to do—you have to do it at the beginning of a mandate, I guess that would be the argument.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So what I'm being told is they have to rush this election through right now while the economy is still okay, because it's getting worse, and they have to—they have numbers that are presentable, and so they have to get it done now because with a new mandate they can proceed to close these hospitals and do further draconian health-care cuts, and they will have enough time to recover.

Right now, with only one and a half years to go before—18 months to go before the mandate runs out, they start cutting down—shutting these rural hospitals today, they don't have enough time to recover. So they have to go for a new mandate now, try to save as many of their 40 seats as they have now, and then immediately start cutting down—executing the plan to cut these rural hospitals and have these big cuts to the health-care system so that, after a year or two, people will start to forget. They've got—we'll have a four-year—the four-year cycle to try to recover.

And that's what I think is really behind all this current election speculation that's going on here, because I just don't—they're planning to—Concordia ER's going to close in June—you know, June 6th—now they say the end of June. But they're trying to get the election out of the way before that—actually, before that closure happens, but certainly, to hide the fact that all these—

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

* (15:20)

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I just wanted to read a couple of the articles from the MHCA article that we were all emailed, just in case it ended up on the floors in the PC offices.

So this one is by Chris, and it's titled City's Budget Culture of Dependency: Relying on provincial funding priorities takes toll on critical street repairs. And we can all still vividly recall that picture of the Handi-Transit bus there and how it looked when it was first in that pothole. You know, it was quite unfortunate, and we were quite fortunate that there wasn't a serious injury resulting from that. And it is micro-printed, so bear with me.

So, "two weeks ago, a handi-transit bus bottomed out big time just off Point Drive. It was a sad scene." The bus nose-dived in 'wight' have been a pothole, clearly now a sinkhole.

"Sadder still was the irony: the van was owned by Vital Transit. For 30 years, the company's website says, it 'has brought'—and I quote—'safe, reliable and affordable transportation options to the people in Manitoba.'" End quote.

"Could there have been a more poignant, maddening metaphor for Winnipeg's street repair woes this year?"

"Safe. Reliable.

"Our transportation choices should all be safe and reliable. But that also depends on our streets being safe and reliable.

"We know how to do the 'affordable' part. Council in 2013 and '14 implemented a tax hike to raise rates 2% every year to increase local and regional street repair budgets annually. The tax hikes funded the strategy to get out of the \$3-billion infrastructure investment hole we are in.

"But that, too, came to a halt in the proverbial pothole this year.

"Why? The City of Winnipeg overly dependent on other levels of government for financial help to repair or build infrastructure learned weeks before it released its 2019 budget the province would not renew a five-year roads funding agreement. That agreement committed to flow \$250 million from 2014 to '18.

"Further, the city says the province owes it \$40 million still from the last year of the five-year deal. The province says it's all paid up.

"Winnipeggers know what happened next: City Council chose to whack \$40 million from 2019's street budget and a stunning \$174 million from planned street work, 2019-24.

"We argue it is the wrong way to deal with the dilemma. We said find that 0.788% out of the total \$2.5-billion revenues—reserves, surpluses, external authorities and operations—to restore" some of that cut—"some of the cut this year."

Instead, 'myer'—"Mayor Brian Bowman and Council opted to 'accept the new reality' and to cancel all planned significant repairs—53 neighbourhood streets and 11 lanes.

Accept this as a new—as the new reality? "That should be unacceptable to every Winnipegger.

"It should also be unacceptable that the province walk away from a \$40-million liability (unless it factually demonstrates otherwise) and decline to renew a multi-year funding agreement.

"As columnist Carl DeGurse, in this newspaper, so pointedly stated: 'none of the current provincial and municipal politicians campaigned on a promise to make roads worse. Not one said: 'Vote for me and I'll eliminate the budget for residential road repair. That will ensure roads in dire need of repair will crumble even more. Can I count on your support?'

"Further, DeGurse pointed out, every budget has elasticity—city expenditures overall rose." The City gave a generous increase to other programs; the Pallister government cut the PST, taking \$30 million out of the—taking \$30 million out of annual tax revenues. It's about choices.

"All Winnipeg MLAs and city councillors should be held to account.

"Let's Make a Deal!' is a dysfunctional and ultimately 'disappointing' way to maintaining public infrastructure.

"There will always be a need for cost-share infrastructure agreements between governments—major, multimillion-dollar projects like the Waverley underpass exceed municipal financing capacity.

"But an overdependence on the agendas of other levels of government for basic maintenance of streets and roads simply sets the city up for more 'new reality' thinking.

"This is the monumental frustration: Winnipeg is home to 750,000 people, and more than 54% of Manitoba's registered voters. That should mean something.

"As some have said, we should be tired of the 'Oliver Twist' scenario playing out every year: Winnipeg, cap in hand, on the steps of Broadway.

"There's got to be a better way for Manitoba's biggest city, the heart of its economy, to provide the standard of services expected of a major, modern Canadian metropolis.

"Crumbling streets hurt economic growth because everything rides on a road, eventually. People to jobs, goods to market.

"All citizens, whether they cycle, walk or use a walker or a wheelchair, need their lanes, paths, sidewalks and Active Transportation routes working for them. (The AT budget, too, was cut.) Handi-vans should not have to be equipped with an off-road drive train and roll bars.

"Winnipeg and all municipalities need a structural change to the way they raise revenues, and to the way cost-shared funding agreements for major infrastructure projects are scoped.

"That 'new deal' needs to be open for municipalities new sources of raising revenues, and to recognize expenses not now reflected" in cost-sharing agreements, "such as the life-cycle maintenance of major projects.

"Municipalities draw only 8 cents of every tax dollar raised, but they own 80% of public infrastructure. Provincial and federal governments have more 'muscle' to raise revenues. Cost-sharing should recognize that fact.

"And it is NOT an option to not fund critical repairs to neighbourhood streets.

"Winnipeggers can't continue to be metaphorical casualties in political wars over how we fix our roads."

That article was by Cliff—Chris, who is the president of the Manitoba heavy construction.

The next one is by Scott Gillingham, and it's titled: Winnipeg's Infrastructure Needs Strategic, Long-Term Funding for Manitoba.

"It has been 15 months since Winnipeg City Council adopted its 2018 capital budget and yet a dispute over \$40 million in outstanding provincial roads funding for the year drags on.

"The funding shortfall stems from a decision made by the provincial government to not honour the final year of a five-year, \$250-million roads commitment to the city. Not only is the ongoing back and forth between the city and province sapping time and resources on both Main Street and Broadway, it appears the public is growing increasingly indifferent to the fight.

"Notwithstanding the waning public interest, I remain steadfast in my position that the province still owes the City of Winnipeg \$40 million. At the time of this writing, the provincial government has not provided the City with a reconciliation that supports its position that the \$250-million commitment

has been fulfilled completely. As a city councillor elected to serve the residents of Winnipeg," I'm reluctant to 'acqeeze' "to the province on this matter without evidence to substantiate their claim.

* (15:30)

"At this point however, Winnipeg taxpayers are being forced to cover the province's outstanding bill." Council faced a difficult decision—"difficult choice in how to address this \$40-million provincial roads funding shortfall. During the preparation of the City of Winnipeg's 2019 budget, council could have chosen to increase property taxes by 7 per cent or to fill the gap with long-term debt. Instead, City Council sought a balanced approach that will cover the \$40 million by spreading the costs over the 2019 and 2020 budget years.

"Unfortunately, this results in a substantial reduction to the local street renewal program. And that means all 2019 expenditures in the local streets program will go only to industrial road reconstructions and the thin bituminous overlay (TBO)"—for short—"projects, plus the engineering for the residential streets the department had been preparing for reconstruction this year.

"However, the situation does not end at this point." The table—"the recently tabled federal budget contains a commitment to double the gas tax funding available to municipalities in 2019. This funding would flow directly from Ottawa to the City of Winnipeg," and that could mean "just over \$40 million may be available this year for roads and other infrastructure projects."

Due to the budget timing and political unrest in Ottawa, it would be premature to presume the federal dollar—these federal dollars and to amend the City's 2019 budget at this time. "However, subject to the passing of the federal budget and a review of funding details, council and city administration will work diligently to administer any funds made available. I want these federal funds used to restore the 2019 local street renewal program.

"In the meantime, the city will continue to press the province to provide an irrefutable reconciliation to substantiate its claim that it has honoured that \$250-million funding commitment." And, if unwilling to provide that information, it should pay the City the \$40 million outstanding.

"The province recently unveiled its 2019 Budget. As part of any budget package, the government tables supplementary documents which contain the

statements and charts that expand upon the thinking of the government and help explain the choices it made when producing the budget being presented.

"The opening sentence under the heading on 'Funding of Municipalities' labels grants to municipalities as a 'material expense' for the Province of Manitoba. The descriptor, while factual, is very telling in its placement and should not be glossed over. It appears to signal the way the present provincial governmental views the City of Winnipeg and all other Manitoba municipalities. To a government sprinting to balance its budget, eliminate the deficit and reduce the PST (all laudable and important goals), it would seem that the financial support of municipalities is primarily a hurdle to be cleared or expense line to be manipulated.

"But when the day arrives that the province's trio of fiscal goals is finally achieved, what comes next? Citizens will wake up the following morning in municipalities that are still struggling under growing infrastructure deficits, with limited options to raise revenues and no long-term plan that provides provincial funding certainty.

"It is time for a pivot in the relationship between the provincial government and its municipalities. It is time for a strategic, long-term, predictable, growth-oriented funding model to be developed. This would benefit the province, municipalities, industry stakeholders and taxpayers by providing greater fiscal certainty and the opportunity for increased collaboration. And such a model could help the province avoid future—further disputes with its municipalities like the one going on with the City of Winnipeg over \$40 million."

So that was by Scott Gillingham, who is a chair of the Finance Committee from St. James.

So these couple of articles that I've read point out—have some good points to it, Deputy Speaker; No. 1 is that Winnipeg is the hub of our province, and we do need that infrastructure spending within the community.

And I've repeatedly heard the PC government saying, oh, we're trying to save money now for our children's future, but nope. Any pothole that exists today will only be more expensive to fix and fill in the upcoming years. And so that's where I take offence, because it is—it will be our children that are going to be fixing those infrastructure spending deficits.

The other part is, you know, every time the federal government says they are going to commit to our province with some extra dollars, you know, the first thing that goes is—that's how they make their cuts. That's what they base their cuts on.

And so it's always hard to brag about things that are going on in the province, knowing that as soon as the PCs get wind of it, the first thing they're going to do is slash those budgets to those good hard-working groups that are actually making change in our communities.

You know, it's so unveiled that the Province, the current provincial government, really wants to keep us within the status quo, and never—it seems to not want our province to succeed, doesn't want our people to succeed.

So the other issue I have with the BITSA bill isn't just the removal of the, you know—it's regarding the election rebate. So, when—with the removal of that election rebate, paired together with the per-vote subsidy removal, the increased requirements for voting, along with the increased amount of donation limits, as well as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) toying with the idea of calling an election—an early election—which, you know, the 'manitoberals'—Manitoba Liberals are very excited about.

We're getting some great responses at our doors. They're—people are excited because they're tired of all the cuts to the province and, you know, we can't wait to get the PCs out, so bring it on.

You're seeing a very clear effort, though, from the government, to exclude people from being able to participate in democracy. You know, they've been talking about earning people's support. I would argue that the per-vote subsidy was exactly that.

While Manitobans may not have the money to donate directly to parties, they did have the ability to support those parties at the polls. Now, Pallister government has made those votes count for less and less, which really limits the ability for everyone to participate meaningfully.

The problem is that the parties that—like, the—Pallister's support in the interests of the concentration of wealth often at the expense of everyone else. So, when they increase donation limits, they're making it so that smaller numbers of people who have the disposable income to give \$5,000 donations to political parties support their interests can have much more—who support their interests can have much more influence in our systems, while the

majority of Manitobans are only able to participate at the polls.

They've made these votes count for less and less every year since taking power. One of the ideas is—one of the major threats to democracy is the perception, and far too often the reality, that politicians can be bought, particularly by wealthy donors to parties and candidates. One way to address that is to ban political donations. This would be very effective at ensuring that no party has a leg up over the other—another.

* (15:40)

I want to also take a moment to talk about the 2016 campaign, and how I got elected. You know, it was me and a couple of my community members driving around in my vehicle going through ice—on melting ice roads. I was able to connect with voters in our North because I had worked hard and got that 10 per cent that I would be reimbursed for. You know, without that kind of support, I may have not been able to run.

The people in my community also don't have \$5,000 to donate to a political party. That's completely unrealistic for a lot of the struggling people in my riding. Federally, it came out recently that Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, the federal riding, which my provincial riding directly sits in Keewatinook, is the poorest of the poor of all ridings. And so it's really difficult to try and get financial support. And, you know, I don't ask for financial support from my people because I know that they're not in a position to do it when I'm sitting at their kitchen table, if they even have a kitchen table, or even if they have chairs or even if they have space to put a kitchen, never mind, because we're so overcrowded. You know, we transform our kitchens, our living rooms into bedrooms just to accommodate families.

It seems that every time we manage to break through some glass ceilings, there's always policies that are enacted that literally prevent us from being at that table. We would like to take part. We would like the knowledge of what the political system to be—what it means to be taught in our education system. Similarly to financial literacy—we would like for that to be part of Manitoba curriculum so that many more indigenous people—and, indeed, anyone in Manitoba—would be able to participate in this supposedly democratic system. You know, we've got to keep it democratic.

Our northern students deserve the same access to education as any other Manitobans. And for many years, this has not been the case. From our early child care and on to kindergarten to grade 12 and onward to university, students are continuously being left behind—systems that don't consider their need. So I always hear the ministers talk about improving results, improving results, but what does he mean by that? The results are still getting worse? So, you know, where's the plan? Where's the plan to back this up?

And that's another good point about the councillor's article. We need to make sure that there's a strategic plan. You can't just say, oh, I want a hospital and I want my people to work in it. You know, that doesn't really mean anything. So are you actively helping people become those nurses, doctors—and not just those big title jobs but, you know, I have a lot of respect for every person that holds a job, and—including the—our staff here that have to, you know, pick up things off the floor when we're too immature to respectfully leave them on the desk where they could also pick it up from.

So it's very frustrating. This government continues to ignore the North, and particularly our northern reserves. I haven't even addressed the issue of infrastructure on our First Nations. I keep asking this government to authorize or to give us the list of the infrastructure projects under Canada's strategic infrastructure program. You know, they would have only had to pay 25 cents to every dollar; Canada was willing to pay 75 for every dollar that they spent and—75 per cent—and a quarter—sorry, excuse me. And still we're hearing nothing. You know, we need that infrastructure in our communities. So this BITSA bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we won't allow it to stand.

I know the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has only one thing on his mind: calling an early election, which we're—we'll be very grateful for. A lot of Manitobans will be. At least Manitobans will be given the opportunity to get rid of this government in the same fashion as the last. It's interesting, though; they have only taken three years to get Manitobans as equally mad as them as the last guys in government took 17.

So, with that, I'd like to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

Megwetch.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to this bill.

This is the same bill that the government did not introduce until August of last year. So, I congratulate the government for at least introducing the bill in regular session. But it does show and demonstrate that the last year was a—the extension was a farce. The government was less than forthright in the reasons why they didn't bring forward the bill, and that is, unfortunately, a theme that we will see time and time again as we discuss this legislation.

First of all, I want to—I'm a bit loath to say this, but it is true: the opposition parties have done a very good job in critiquing the budget this year. They are outnumbered, outgunned, outresourced, but they were able to bring to the attention of Manitobans the style that this government has: threats, bullying, falsehoods.

They try to say, oh, the government is going to shut down, Trump style. The president of Manitoba declares government shutdown. Unfortunately for the government, and more unfortunately for Manitobans, and especially for the people who work hard and—every day and don't know the 'intercracies' of parliamentary process, they were scared because they were bullied, threatened. When the president of Manitoba makes a Trump-like threat, people take—some people take it seriously.

Unfortunately, the government has been watching too much American TV. They should watch more CBC rather than Fox or CNN. CBC, Fox—very different. But at least with Canadian content you would know you're in a parliamentary system. You—there aren't any presidents. You're—you have a caucus, a civil service and the entire political system is designed so there cannot be an American-type shutdown.

No, either the government doesn't know that, or they believe that they are in some sort of republic, the Spence republic perhaps. That's a great Canadian film board skit about the Spence republic.

* (15:50)

Mr. Chair, let's talk about the content of this legislation.

The government—the centrepiece is the—a reduction in the PST, which is fine. However, nothing has been done on the structural deficit. The government has borrowed at least \$5 billion in this budget. The budget documents reveal that there's a \$53-billion liability line. Some of it is offset through assets and payments and pension funds, but the pension funds are underfunded by billions. The

Hydro—there's \$23 billion still to come on to the books. This is not a good situation. The government hasn't done anything to make it better, unfortunately.

Real Conservatives would have dealt with the structural deficit, deal with the assets the government has, maybe liquidate them. But, no, what they do is—in my own riding, they transfer land worth millions of dollars for \$1 for 99 years. To who? Well, to the guy who did an excellent job fundraising at the PC Party fundraising dinner not once, but twice, and once was from Nashville during a hockey game—playoff hockey game. It was—*[interjection]*—yes. And then there's a sweetheart land deal with the same group, same individual. That's how the government treats your assets.

And what about all the other places in Manitoba, like the Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent—empty, valuable, empty. Or how about the facility where the addiction centre—or, addiction foundation on Magnus? The previous government put it in, renovated it. There's 160-odd beds. They say it's full. Okay, well, then why is there 130 beds empty? Well, there's no funding. Oh, there's no funding for—oh, that's the addiction—all we hear about in Winnipeg are issues around housing and addiction. And the government has a whole facility—previous government built it—good to go, no money. We have—I'll come back to that later.

We have—the government, with Hydro, not only do they fight with the board and end up having the entire Manitoba Hydro board resign, they have let go of the—their own picks for Hydro. Let's see here, the—Liquor & Lotteries and Manitoba Public Insurance sees the wrecking ball coming, so they got legal advice to see if they can be protected from the Premier's office—or president's office, Premier's office. Oh, Trump? No, we're in Canada. Yes, the Crown corporation boards matter. Because the government doesn't recognize that, it causes huge grief.

We have sole-source contracting; the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) and his predecessor were caught red-handed with a sole source contract. They say that is not what Conservatives do. It's against a partnership agreement, the New West Partnership, it's against the internal trade arrangements in Canada, but they did it. They denied it. Then they said, oh, it was a departmental decision. And then, no, it was our—oh, we just forgot about Treasury Board. What's Treasury Board?

Well, we told them that at committee. You didn't go through the process, buddy; got to go through the process. No, we did. No, you didn't. You got caught. Just say you made a mistake, but no, and they refused to even admit that.

So how can we have any faith in the government on contracting anything when they do exactly the opposite of what they say and they award sole-source contracting? It wasn't for—like they said. Well, first it was for indigenous reasons. Well, no, it turned out. Then they used, well, it was an emergency. Oh, really? No. Eventually the minister—not in here, but out in the hallway—admitted that it was a big fiasco of their own.

Election financing is in the bill. Now, this is a bit rich: r-i-c-h. The government increases the limit to \$5,000. Who has \$5,000 to donate?

An Honourable Member: The rich Conservatives.

Mr. Fletcher: The—to donate. Well, somebody suggests it is the rich Conservatives. Well, I don't know about that, and I don't think there are a lot of rich Conservatives.

However, one person who's done very well, and we have to congratulate—there's nothing wrong with this. Our president—Premier—president—Premier—president—I—he has done well in life, but he donated \$1,688 in 2016. That wasn't even the \$3,000 limit. In 2017—wait for it—no, \$2,250.

So if the president—Premier—president—Premier of the province can't afford to pay the max—or now the new max, not even half the new maximum—who can afford to contribute \$5,000? It's not the Premier (Mr. Pallister). Who is it, and who would?

Maybe the Premier doesn't believe in his cause. That's possible. Maybe the Premier's disillusioned with himself. That might be possible.

Or maybe he wants to use other people's money to advance his own agenda. Other people's money: that's the taxpayer when you're the president—Premier—president—Premier.

And, Madam Speaker—or, Mr. Speaker, we have a Conservative government creating a corporation called Efficiency Manitoba.

Now, I went and wasn't able to dispute or debate this when I was in the Conservative caucus, so I took the first opportunity and brought it up at a Legislative committee on a dreary summer evening, saying—pointing out the inefficiencies of the new

Crown corporation, including the demand-side management, which is just as bad as supply-side management in this context.

* (16:00)

And I find myself outside the caucus. Okay, that's fine. Because the job of an MLA, who's not in the executive, is to critique the government, in government or in opposition. That's the job. I wish all MLAs would do their job. There was a flicker of 'oh' when the opposition did stand up to the super-majority government on interim supply, to hold them to account and to demonstrate what kind of government this is. Not the people—actually, the MLAs are pretty good, as individuals.

But the president—Premier has issues. We have the issue of—so with Efficiency Manitoba, so this is going to add more cost to natural gas, electricity, transportation and drinkable water. So, aquifers, lakes, rivers. Maybe they're planning to put a price on water. But it was over-the-top, last week, when everyone in Winnipeg got a 12-page insert introducing Efficiency Manitoba. And this insert just talked about electric light bulbs. Light bulbs. Twelve pages of light bulbs. That is Efficiency Manitoba; and I thought, wow, what a waste of time and money, and what a stupid thing to do.

And they did it publicly. And I—it doesn't matter where you are on the political spectrum. You look at that and you think, wow, that is a waste. There's no question it's—no, if you want to advertise light bulbs, let the light bulb companies do it. But here's an idea—light bulb over the head—just cut your losses and don't do the creation of the new Crown corporation.

So I thought that was—now, I thought that was really bad. But I will table tomorrow what I got—my office showed me yesterday; they—we got a letter and maybe you got a letter from Efficiency Manitoba, got it at the office, and in it was a sticker, saying, Efficiency Manitoba. There was no letter. There was an envelope. So they mailed a letter with a circle-sized sticker. That is their idea of efficiency. Oh, gee. The fact that the government has undermined and—Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that people have to communicate. And I'm glad to see the government caucus communicate. But can they communicate in a way that doesn't interrupt the debate? Fact is, this is probably the most communication I've seen in a government caucus. I hope they don't get into trouble for talking to each other.

Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax. What a classic story of hypocrisy. Instead of letting the federal government do what the federal government does: they have the taxing power. I don't think it's a good public policy. But no, rather than stand on principle, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said, no, we're going to introduce our own carbon tax. And we're going to introduce it at 250 times what even Ottawa wants.

And he lists off all the benefits of a carbon tax, and then he introduces a piece of legislation where a legal—pardon me—a legal opinion saying that Ottawa has the ability to introduce the tax, which is probably correct.

But he didn't stand on principle; he tried to have it both ways and he failed. He flip-flopped on the first day of this session. He criticized me and, quite frankly, I was the only one in this place to speak out against the carbon tax and, in fact, the only politician in Manitoba to speak out against the carbon tax—the made-in-Manitoba plan. Even the Conservative MPs, they didn't say anything on the record. They had—they said nothing on the record against the Pallister carbon tax, so where's their principle? But the point is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind the member that if you're going to—member of the Pallister government but not to go to a Pallister carbon tax, so just distinguish between the—like, actually, as a government, Pallister government, but not to put the Premier's name in front of anything else.

Mr. Fletcher: The president's carbon tax is something that was bad public policy when it was introduced in the Manitoba context for all sorts of reasons, but the Premier, for 18 months—*[interjection]* Yes, and by the way, that person who spoke out on Efficiency Manitoba, we're going to kick him out—we're going to kick him out of the caucus, okay.

And I'd like to thank the president of Manitoba for doing that because the freedom it has allowed me has been tremendous. The—so when we have this issue of a Premier—president—really a Premier but thinks he's president—flip-flop on a public policy issue like this, it demonstrates that there is no principle—just saw the train coming down the tracks from the left and right and from his provincial colleagues in Ontario, Saskatchewan, soon to be Alberta, New Brunswick.

So, in the budget planning, all of a sudden the government has a huge hole—\$350 million that they had planned to receive from the carbon tax, but then they flip-flopped and then where did—like, what goes on—like, what's next?

Well, the government decided to borrow a lot of money to cover it up, and then they decide to just pretend it never happened and take exactly the opposite point of view on everything dealing with that tax.

So now they've undermined all the Conservative provinces. They've undermined the people who support a carbon tax; they've undermined the people who are against the carbon tax, and they've lost complete credibility on the environment in the process. No matter where they are, they seem to screw it up.

* (16:10)

We've talked about the sole-source contracting, the Vimy Arena. You know, you can't just use the assets of Manitoba as a piggy bank or in—or for quid pro pro or for whatever. You need—you're—we're here for the taxpayer, for the people. So when the government just flips a property for a dollar for 99 years, using Manitoba Housing renewal corporation as the agency to do it—it's not even in their mandate. That's why the Auditor General's investigating it. That whole thing should be stopped until at least we hear from the Auditor General.

But we have a Finance Minister who is contributing \$86 million to the football stadium fiasco. Now, the government blames the City for that. Okay, well, who was responsible at the City at the time? Oh, it was when the Finance Minister was a city councillor. So now, in the provincial realm, he's just covering up his screw-ups at the City.

And now we have the extraordinary situation of the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Fielding) saying that the City of Winnipeg has not done its accounting or whatever, and the City of Winnipeg saying, well, no, this is our situation. And there's two people in finance: one, the chair of the Finance Committee, City Council; another, the Finance Minister, from the same area, pointing at each other, saying: it's your fault.

Well, just—the obvious solution is transparency. Sunshine is the best disinfectant. So let's see what the arrangement is. Let's see who's correct. Or is this another example of the current Finance Minister

trying to hide the screw-ups from earlier in his career in public life? It all comes around.

Then we have what—the conflict of interest legislation. I've been trying to bring this forward, even when I was in the Conservative caucus: 35 pages based on Saskatchewan. Our hopeless legislation in Manitoba does nothing. The government refuses to bring it forward, and why? Well, could it be that there are members in the government that are in a conflict of interest by any reasonable person's interpretation of conflict of interest?

Why is the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in a fight with Manitoba Public Insurance? Does it have anything to do with the background of being in the insurance industry? And that would be an interesting explanation.

Or how is it possible that a government is able to function as if it was in a republic system? You know, I don't blame my former colleagues in the Conservative caucus. There's one person that makes all the decisions. It's not the MLAs. It's not the Cabinet. It's the president. Our Trump-like president threatens government shutdowns. I'm waiting for him to surround anyone who criticizes him with a wall.

Mr. Chair, there's a lot of talk and hypocrisy about team players and so on. Making a criticism, doing one's job as an MLA is one thing, and I'm proud to say I've done that. I did that with the government when I was in the government. And when I had the opportunity to critique, I did, at committee. And then I'm gone.

Now, we look at—turn our eyes to Ottawa, which the president—Premier—president—has referred to—says, well, these—you know, what goes on in Ottawa, you know, those people are great people standing up for whatever. And it's this—you know, for far less, he kicked out people who disagree with him.

It's time for change.

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

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): It's always hard to follow from—follow the member from Assiniboia, who has become such a trenchant critic of the very government that he aspired to be a part of. It's part ironic, but it's also partly entertaining. But I will say that he seems to have a very good focus—laser-like focus—on all of the difficulties presented by the current government.

Today, we're debating BITSA. Tomorrow, who knows what it'll be. And, after yesterday's event of debating interim supply for 2020, which was really odd—and the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), in his final four minutes, said this is the—as about as strange a era in Manitoba politics that he's ever witnessed, and yesterday, certainly, was an example of that. I mean, by gosh, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the House leader for the government doesn't even seem to know what year it is when he's putting—introducing legislation into this House.

And then it was a kind of an odd debate that we had. I know that members from our side were trying to ask, like, what's this all about? Why are we debating this now? Why are we interrupting BITSA legislation to talk about Interim Supply for a year from now?

And the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) tried their very best desperation Hail Mary to try to defend the very odd, odd introduction of that piece of legislation yesterday, and in fact to the point where the Minister of Finance objected to us reading petitions on behalf of the people of Manitoba. And that was actually kind of a sad commentary about what he thinks of the people of Manitoba. And in our case, we were reading petitions signed by no less than 26,000 Manitobans on the terrible state of child care under the Pallister government.

And I can appreciate that the Minister of Finance, who was also responsible for child care not so long ago in his previous role as minister of Families, would be sensitive to that, that he wouldn't want to hear what 26,000 Manitobans have to say about the state of child care in this province.

But it was an unusual day, and it's been a kind of a surreal experience in the House since we came back into session because you never know what's coming next with this government. One day it's this; the next day it's that. Some days we're on BITSA; some days we're on something else. It was—I mean, what government interrupts their own budget debate to get on with a budget implementation bill and then gets back to the budget debate and then goes off somewhere else, and then we're back on BITSA?

It's a bit of a moving target, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not unlike the budget implementation bills have been with this government from the get-go. Members will all remember the—I think it was the first budget BITSA bill of this government; it might have been

the second. But it was about—ran about 90 pages long.

* (16:20)

And it was one of those omnibus BITSA pieces of legislation that have—became famous under the Harper government and now have been imitated by the Pallister government, which is not so surprising because they're not so far apart as all that—but in that particular BITSA legislation, there were a couple of poison pills in the people—for the people of Manitoba buried deep inside of it.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

The first of those, of course, was the decision by the Pallister government not to give fully 1 percentage point of the PST to investments in infrastructure in this province, and we see now what the consequence of that action was.

It's a government that is failing, quite dramatically, to invest in infrastructure of any kind, be the roads, bridges, highways, health-care facilities, schools, capital expenditures on campuses, child-care centres. I mean, the list really goes on and on.

And so we see in that very instance, Madam Speaker, a government that was already on its way toward not only being not transparent with the people of Manitoba by burying that provision into, like, section 80 of a 90-page bill, and then of course, there's the legalese around it that you kind of do have to be a lawyer or have a lawyer close by, as we do in my friend for Minto, to help us to understand some of this language.

But, on top of that, the second poison pill in the original BITSA legislation was the decision to eliminate the 50-50 funding provision for public transit in this province. And that, Madam Speaker, was a total betrayal of transit riders and commuters, of families in many parts of our city and in other cities in Manitoba who rely on transit, not only to get to work, but to get to places of wellness and health care, to really try to—it makes life a little bit easier.

And what ended up happening as a result of that was a 30 cent, 35-cent increase in fares. And so we saw in the original piece of BITSA legislation introduced by this government a real failure to address real needs, be it infrastructure or public transit in this province. And it turned out to be harbinger of things to come.

As I said last week in a speech on a different bill, because government keeps throwing different

bills up here with no sort of rational, logical order, what we have seen time and again is the government saying one thing, doing another, and the results have been crystal clear for the people of Manitoba.

And then I think it was just last year, in the second BITSA legislation, where it wasn't going to appear at all at the normal time of the year, sometime in the spring toward, usually in May or early June, or late-early May, toward the middle of May, somewhere in that, toward the end of a spring session, in any event.

And suddenly it wasn't going to be introduced at all at that point, and was likely going to not be introduced for sometime in the near future.

And I remember—I don't think it was this Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), but it was the former minister of Finance, now the Health Minister, who picked up the draft BITSA bill and he took off with it, and we only tackled him somewhere around Morden-Winkler, as I remember, in order to try to get it back.

And it was by the middle of August where we finally forced—and it was, frankly, forcing—the government to introduce the BITSA piece of legislation that really was supposed to have been introduced earlier than it was.

So in the first one, we get the poisoned pills of reneging on investments in public transit and on infrastructure. Last year, it was an unprovoked and illogical delay that made no sense, and by the time we got it, it was pretty clear that the poisoned pills that were in it, that the minister ran off with, had all been taken out of it. So that was good, and good work, on behalf of the official opposition, in that case.

But then we come to this year, and suddenly, here it is, early April, and now we're debating BITSA. Like, the absence of consistency, the absence of a rational approach to governing, the absence of any sense of stability within this government quite clearly doesn't exist if we just take budget implementation bills on their own, stack them together: one in late May, one in August, one in April.

I mean, it's really—it would be funny in some ways, Madam Speaker, if the costs and consequences to the people of Manitoba weren't so severe.

So why—why—are we debating BITSA so early when last year we had to beg them and force them to

give it to us in August? Well, of course, we know this to be a prelude to an election, which the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has hinted about in any number of ways over the course of the last several months. And I don't believe for a moment that any member of the government knew that the Premier was thinking like that. I don't blame them for not knowing what the Premier's thinking. We don't know what he's thinking on a day-to-day basis.

But, as usual with the government, there are always the insertion of poison pills into their legislation because they have proven themselves to be quite easily the most hyper-partisan government ever in the history of Manitoba politics. It's really quite a remarkable feature. I get it that we come in here and we do battle, and I've done my share of it over time, but never quite so in the hyper-partisan way in which this government operates.

And what is an example of that? Well, we see with the final provision in the BITSA legislation dealing with the elimination of the rebate, which I think everyone recognizes this is not just a tilting of the playing field. This is a huge imbalance that is it going to exist in Manitoba politics if this particular provision is approved by this Legislature. And what's really discouraging and really disappointing for those of us who, I think, really value democracy and the diverse and multiple voices that exist in our province, it's only going to hurt those who have the least, a provision like that.

And so quite wisely and quite elegantly, I might say, Madam Speaker, we introduced a bill into this Legislature just last week, I think, it—I'm not sure which member of our great caucus introduced it. It might've been the leader or the House leader or any number of folks who might've done it because all of us are capable of doing great things on this side of the House, and yet it was summarily dismissed and ignored by the government when all we were trying to do is ensure that everybody has a fair opportunity to run in an election and for that election to be done fairly for all involved and that there be a reasonable, level playing field for those who don't have the financial resources to be involved.

And so what's the government's solution, really, to a problem that doesn't exist? Well, let's just eliminate the rebate for everybody. They'll go over to the Manitoba Club, they'll collect all the donations that we need. But if you're a New Democrat, coming from a different place in life, if you are from the Green Party, the Communist Party, if you're

interested in being an independent, even if you're a Liberal—who as we know always campaigned from the left but governed from the right and they do have access to great financial wealth. It's just in this case nobody wants to give it to the Manitoba Liberal Party, but they do have that access. But for the rest of us, Madam Speaker, it's been—it's something quite different, and the absence of public investment and democracy by this government is—it's really not right. It's one of those great wrongs.

And the government's under the impression that, you know, a flower can blossom without sunlight and without water, and if you just, you know, keep the water off of it and put a lamp shade over it, oh, yes, it's going to—you're going to be able to sustain it or conserve it for time. Well, that's not going to happen. What's going to happen, of course, Madam Speaker, is that flower's going to wither.

And the same is true for democracy. If you don't invest in the key elements of democracy and promote participation by the various and diverse voices in a province, in a city, in a country, democracy itself will begin to wither.

And that's the point at which we're on the verge of right now, I would say, in Manitoba, is the consistent 'intack'—attack on the democratic process by the Pallister government is really promoting a circumstance in which democracy in Manitoba will begin to wither. You have to invest in it. You have to water it. You have to give it sunlight. You have to talk nicely to it. You have to give it a little TLC from time to time.

*(16:30)

But, of course, the government doesn't want to do that. Instead it wants to do quite—something quite different. It wants democracy to wither so that we become a one-party state, leading to a one-leader state. We don't need that kind of tinpot dictator in our province. We don't need that kind of democracy in our province. And I call on members of the backbench of the government to come to their senses about what investment actually does. It makes things grow and develop. And if you don't water it, if you don't put sunshine on it, if you don't give it a little TLC from time to time, it's not going to blossom; it's going to wither. I beg them: don't let that happen, on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Now, I have to say that the other element of the budget implementation bill relates to the PST. And I just want to say what I said last week: we're getting

ourselves into such a difficult proposition here—I think all across the Western world, but certainly, here in Manitoba—that if you support a tax, whether it's income taxes, whether it's corporate income taxes, whether it's the PST, whether it's property taxes, whether it's education taxes. If you support the proposition that at some time, in some way, those have to increase, you're guilty of some kind of venal sin. But if you lower any of those things, you're somehow morally virtuous. That's a real terrible place, as I said last week, and I don't want to repeat myself too much. The first time was plenty.

But that's not a good place for a democracy to be. It's not a good place for building strong, sustainable, healthy communities and neighbourhoods, and cities, and regions that make for a strong, sustainable, healthy province, and a strong, sustainable, healthy country. We can't have that kind of debate. I get the politics of it, you know, and so—but I really think we're putting ourselves in a very difficult situation as a community with mutual interests, if we're not allowed to have a reasoned, logical debate about the nature of taxes.

So, by all means, come up with a different tax package, if you need one. Assuming that you have a plan for economic growth and you have a jobs plan, both of which the government doesn't have. But don't put us into the box of saying, you're either 'fer' or 'agin', because we're not going to actually be able to do the kinds of things that we need to do in Manitoba to address the colossal needs in our communities, in our neighbourhoods and in our province, all along the way.

I talked about the deficit last week, a little bit. And that, like BITSAs itself has been a shifting target right from the get-go. We know that the government 'tworke'd' it when they came in. They added everything they could think of, to make it look as bad as possible and I get it, that's how politics works, you know. Well, who can forget that, in fact, in the original deficit that the government talked about, they actually added in about \$150 million that the federal government owed them? I don't know how that constitutes part of a deficit. In my little simple bookkeeping, I do—if somebody owes me money, that's going to help lower my personal deficit.

So, but, not this government. No, they threw everything but the kitchen sink in there, tried to get it up as high as they possibly could, and in fact, it was never that way. It was never that way. It never has been that way and it got to the point where the

Auditor General took a strip off the Finance Minister just last year; rendered an opinion which said that the government's cooking the books and asked them to step back from that kind of way of doing accounting. And what did the Finance Minister do? He didn't take the Auditor General at his word. He did not recognize the very valued opinion being given by the Auditor General. Oh, no, Madam Speaker. The Finance Minister argued with the Auditor General in a public forum, at standing committee. It was, quite frankly, an embarrassing spectacle.

And then, as my friend from Minto pointed out in one of the number of speeches that he's given, he talked about federal transfers. And you know, let's face it, having Justin Trudeau—and it was kind of like winning the lottery, compared to having Stephen Harper—the same austerity agenda that was followed—being followed by the Pallister government right now, is the very same one that was followed by Stephen Harper. The flower of Canada, writ large across the country, began to wither under that austerity attack and Harper was given the heave-ho. And as a result of commitments made by the Liberals during the federal election, federal transfers have increased quite dramatically outside of the formulas related to equalization—in fact, somewhere in the order of about \$800 million, I believe.

And so compounded—jeez, if you can't budget a balance a budget with an extra \$800 million without doing anything else, and I mean they're not doing anything else, then what's wrong with you? And they still can't even get that right.

But, Madam Speaker, it's symptomatic of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of this Province's approach to federalism, which I just can't get my head around. They've left something in the order of about 1.4, 1.5 billion dollars on the table for important initiatives relating to health care, relating to child care, relating to climate change, and of course they just left it on there. It's the most bizarre approach to federalism I've seen in quite some time, but it's consistent with the Premier's MO, his modus operandi, to try to achieve victory through dividing and conquering.

I'm happy to say and I'm pleased to say that on this side of the House for our four election victories totalling 17 years, because I think that's an important thing that's often missed—*[interjection]*—yes, the 17 glorious years, but four election victories. Every time you talk about the 17 years you offend the people of Manitoba who elected us to government. I

don't know if you realize that, but it's just a talking point.

But on this side of the House we embraced a kind of make-it-work federalism. We wanted to ensure that we got the best deal possible for the people of Manitoba working with, of all people, Stephen Harper, during the vast majority of the time. It was very, very difficult but you didn't see us, you know, grandstanding over the federal government in the way that the—no, you certainly didn't, not in the way that the Premier does, and I have to say, Madam Speaker, when the Premier goes on his anti-Ottawa—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —when the—thank you, Madam Speaker—when the Premier goes on his anti-Ottawa rant, I take that—I'm personally offended by that. My parents were both born and raised in Ottawa. I spent my summers as a kid in the Ottawa Valley. I love that part of the country. I'm from southern Ontario to begin with, and the Minister of Education says that explains it and he's probably right about that, but what that means is I've actually moved around a bit. I've lived in different places, but each place—I might have been a proud Ontarian, and I might be a proud Manitoban, but every day I'm a proud Canadian of this country, warts and all that exist in this country, because there's plenty of warts. I'm still a proud Canadian.

And yet the Premier's MO is to divide and conquer and tear this country apart, and I'm proud to say, on this side of the House in the NDP, we're not only province-builders but we're also nation-builders, proud Canadians trying to build a better country for every single one of us.

And so, you know, the Premier has this way about him of dividing and conquering and he likes to take the Leader of the Liberal Party to task for his—I don't know—I suppose—what's the term he used—I think something, I think it's called bromance—I'm not sure what that is but I think that that's what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) describes about the Leader of the Liberal Party and their federal friends in Ottawa. And so he slaps the Leader of the Liberal Party around. He's like, the worst thing you could do is have anything to do with Justin Trudeau and it's all bad, bad, bad, and then when it comes to talking about the government's climate change, the Premier puts his hands in his pocket as he normally does and he says, you know who really likes that plan? Justin Trudeau.

Like, it's completely, completely irrational for the Premier, on the one hand, to badmouth the Prime Minister who earns it, in my estimation, but, on the other hand, to turn around and say, yes, but he really loves my climate change plan, so that's really good.

The odd thing about the climate change plan, Madam Speaker, is that we haven't seen one initiative come out of it. I have not seen one press release, one thing that they can celebrate about the so-called 70-page climate change plan that the Premier talks about.

I also saw him on Power & Politics last week. I had to mute him halfway through because I've heard those lines so many times before, I couldn't stand listening to it anymore—[*interjection*]

An Honourable Member: Just turn off the TV.

* (16:40)

Mr. Allum: —well, I should have done that but, you know, you want to see how it goes and the interviewer kept asking him about the plan. He said, oh, we've got 70 pages. Nobody talks about that. He did not talk about one initiative that was aimed at mitigating—to mitigating GHGs, nor one initiative that would help us to adapt, which is the other side of the climate-changing equation, and increasingly the more important side. He couldn't name one thing that they have done, and that's a colossal failure on the part of the government.

We've heard about him flip-flopping on carbon pricing, and that's been entertaining in its own way, as our leader says, to see him flip-flopping like a pickerel on the dock on it. But first he's for it; in fact, I believe they campaigned for it in the last election. They were going to put a price on carbon, they were green. And then he comes up with this—his first approach at it because he had somebody else whisper in his ear, he told him it was a good idea. But then he doesn't go ahead with that. We ask him if he's going to join these other premiers in a court case with the federal government over carbon pricing, he says no, but the next thing you know, there he is in court.

And one of the more remarkable things in that is that I don't think this Minister of Sustainable Development's (Ms. Squires) had any input into any of this stuff. This is just the Premier of Manitoba doing what he wants when he feels like it to satisfy his own ego, notwithstanding the needs and the desires and the issues that actually need to be tackled here in Manitoba.

And it gets me back to, I guess, sort of saying what I tried to say last week, that all that's been achieved by this government could have been done with a pencil and an eraser. Whether it's an org chart, we'll erase this and pencil in something else; whether it's Cabinet portfolios, erase them, pencil in something else; whether it's a budget where you put a line in and say this is what it is, but then you actually underspend it, as they have in Health, as they have in Education, as they have in Families, as they have done in every portfolio.

It's the oldest play in the Tory book—playbook, in case you didn't know that, is to budget this number and then underspend it by this number. And it's the same thing we've seen historically over and over again so that they can go out and talk about how much they've budgeted, never actually talking about how much they spend, because that's always a different number and it's always intended to muddy the waters and ensure that the people of Manitoba don't really have a good sense of what the government is actually doing, and I think that's the critical feature.

And, if we are heading on to a new election, Madam Speaker, the critical feature will be the Premier's credibility as an individual able to actually say something that's honest and forthright. I said last week that I simply don't believe a word that comes out of his mouth. And there are countless examples of that, but I'll give you a few.

The Peachey report: I mean, this is a 'repeatam' ad nauseam by government members. Yes, the Peachey report was commissioned by our government but, in fact, it didn't arrive until after the April election. We never saw it, and then we didn't just cherry-pick from it. They did that. So that's a—frankly, Madam Speaker, that's an example.

Here's another example: the Premier gets up in this House all the time and talks about his standing up against the PST and how we took him to—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —court—and how we took him to court. You know yourself, Madam Speaker, that's not the way that happened. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) got—went—took the PST issue to court, got slapped around by the judge in there—got slapped around so bad he didn't even go back on an appeal. But does he tell that story that way?

And now, it might be just an example, it might just be an example of a fisher who says they caught a fish this big instead of this big, but it's not that, Madam Speaker. It's not that. In fact, it's—it goes right to the heart of the Premier's own credibility and his ability to actually speak honestly, truthfully, forthrightly on the actual things that his government is doing because, if he did that, he wouldn't have much to say—but not to twist the truth in the ways in which he does.

This is a Premier who said that he paid his taxes in Costa Rica and then we found out that he didn't do that, Madam Speaker. And we still don't know what the upshot of that particularly painful affair. I mean, he gets up and he says, oh, I've always paid my taxes. It doesn't make you special to always have paid your taxes, because we all do that. What makes you special is when you don't pay your taxes, and that's why he's under the gun on that particular issue.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, as we've said—I've tried to say in this House on more than a few occasions, the women and men of this party are born out of a movement around resistance and struggle. And that's from the creation of this party, frankly, preceding the CCF with working class movements, of feminist movements, of inclusive movements, all the time—it's not because anybody gives you that. It's because you fight, through resistance and struggle, for the very kind of equality and the very kind of rights that all of us, as citizens of this province and citizens of this country, ought to have.

And so I want to assure the members office-opposite that whatever happens in an electoral thing—and I actually think things are turning around quite nicely for New Democrats—whatever happens, though, in the election, the women and men on this side of the House, my brothers and sisters, are never going to roll over for these folks. We're never going to give up the struggle. We're never going to surrender at the foot of class politics coming across the other way. We're always going to battle for a more equitable, a fairer, more just, more inclusive society for all Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Madam Speaker, here we are debating a very important piece of legislation, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, Bill 16. Why is it that only members of the opposition and the independent members are participating in this debate?

This Chamber should be a place where wholesome discourses should take place, especially when critical pieces of legislation such as BITSA is under consideration. All sides to the issues surrounding BITSA should be heard. Why are the members of government not speaking up and making their views known to Manitobans? If this bill is so good for all Manitobans, even a few of them should be engaging the opposition and independent members in a healthy debate and let Manitobans decide which side provides the most balanced, well-informed and compelling arguments.

Have the members of this government become so arrogant, complacent, or simply do not care? Why are they not participating and expending precious time and effort sharing their side? Is it because, after all, at the end of the day, everything the BITSA bill—everything in the BITSA bill will pass because they have the majority of numbers, or the tyranny of the majority?

Or is it—or is the non-participation of the government members in this important debate stems from the fact that they are—that there are several egregious provisions in BITSA and they are ashamed of it, or will find it hard to defend it, as it goes against the grain of fairness, charity and good citizenship?

Such an important bill tabled for debate, and no vigorous exchange of ideas are taking place—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —Why so? Manitobans are getting short-changed—*[interjection]* They're hearing us as we speak.

Madam Speaker, there are many atrocious provisions in BITSA, and 30 minutes is not enough to point out each and every one of them. However, let me tackle just two of them. First, this bill will eliminate the tax rebate that candidates of political parties garnering 10 per cent of the votes cast are eligible to receive. Second, this bill will raise the allowed campaign contribution to \$5,000 a year per eligible citizen.

* (16:50)

What's wrong with those two provisions? The answer—tons and tons of them.

When only wealthy individuals or people endorsed by rich individuals and powerful interest groups can participate in a democratic political exercise, something is grievously wrong with that.

When only rich members of established political parties can be allowed to run because they have sufficient means to finance their candidacy, something is terribly wrong with that. When women, members of visible minorities, members of the working class, members with physical disabilities who have the qualifications and, above all, have the heart—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —to serve their communities are handicapped by lack of funds and thus hesitant to participate in a democratic process called election, something is patently wrong with that.

What's an ideal set-up, then, for balanced, respectful, peaceful and progressive society? I believe the participation of women and men from diverse backgrounds and walks of life, the rich, the working class, those with physical handicaps, those from different professions and vocations, the young and the old—that is the ideal situation that we should all aspire to attain. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Marcelino: When these men and women, regardless of religious beliefs, gender and sexual orientation are present and actively engaged around the decision-making table or in this revered Chamber to discuss, debate and then legislate laws of the land and brainstorm on policies and programs, then the end product of all those distilled, collective thinking will ensure safety, equality, welfare, opportunity and prosperity for all. That situation is certainly very near—or, are very—or, very close to living in utopia.

Madam Speaker, history is of great—is a great teacher. We should all be students of history, and we should listen to our history teachers. What is one of the lessons to be learned from history? We know from history that during the 1700s, one of the 27 grievances of the American colonists in the Thirteen Colonies—and it proved to be one of the major causes of the American Revolution—was the lack of representation of these people in the British Parliament. Yet they were asked to pay taxes. What ensued was the powerful slogan: No taxation without representation.

What is the application of this history lesson for us today? I believe the clear application it gives us is to welcome the representation and contributions of manifold members of our society, not just allow those with deep pockets and fat cheques—chequebooks. By extension, the election financing

rebate, now in place federally and provincially, should remain. We want our elected officials to—representing us to come from varied walks of life, bringing their lived experience in making sound laws and instituting fair policies to guide everyday life in society. There's much to be learned and good legislations will be crafted when a good mix of minds take a crack at solving societal problems.

We should aspire to elect men and women from varied walks, varied life backgrounds and income levels to ensure all Manitobans are adequately represented in the Manitoba Legislature. As we know, the political process and elections in many countries—some are from third world countries—leave so much to be desired. There are election financing laws in place, but, sadly, toothless. Election spending is unfettered in those places. Only those with millions to spend can win an election, so honest, qualified, poor candidates do not have a chance to win.

Not too far from where we are, our neighbour south of the border, they are in similar boat. There, to be a serious candidate requires millions of dollars to be raised to have a fighting chance of winning. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, but they are few and far between.

In my old country, Philippines, the situation is even worse. To be ensured—to be assured of winning the election, the candidate needs to employ three Gs: guns, goons and gold.

The salary for the elected position—for elected positions are so small, yet several millions are being spent to run an election campaign. Why are there so many candidates in any given position in election season, a thriving industry? For the rich or their surrogates, it is to protect families' wealth, businesses and take full control of opportunities to amass more wealth.

Once in a while some brave, qualified and deserving candidates defy conventional wisdom and insurmountable odds because of their desire to serve and make a difference. Buoyed by eternal faith, strong hope and burning desire to making a difference in the midst of a system mired in unbridled corruption and human rights abuses, they bravely put their names on the ballot and hope for the best. May the Creator and God Almighty bless and keep them safe.

Madam Speaker, Canada has an enviable record of being a strong champion of democratic principles,

one of which is representative government elected freely by informed citizens. Thus, welcoming the active participation of diverse citizens makes the society equitable and truly representative of myriad voices in the citizenry. Sadly, the provision in this BITSA bill which seeks to eliminate the election rebate for political parties runs counter to the principle of representative government. It is exceedingly clear the Pallister Conservative government wants to ensure only those coming from the high-income population group will venture to put their names on the ballot.

In last year's BITSA, the per-vote subsidy was eliminated. This year, the party rebate, the political party rebate, is being eliminated. Another provision is the increase in allowable annual personal contribution from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

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