

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXII No. 9 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, December 3, 2018

ISSN 0542-5492

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

Monday, December 3, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Volunteer George Ames and His Dog Rusty

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge one of your constituents, George Ames and his dog, Rusty. Rusty, who is 15 years old, is a long-term volunteer dog at St. Boniface Hospital, where he visits three times a week. You may have seen him there. He's a big fluffy dog wearing glasses. He's a very gentle, calm and easygoing dog.

George chose St. Boniface Hospital because he has a long history with the hospital. His son and grandchildren were born there, and his—he has had surgery there.

When George first started bringing Rusty to the hospital, they worked with palliative patients. Now, because they are less mobile, they spend their day in the Everett Atrium. Patients still come by to visit them.

George and Rusty were recently honoured with a Senate 150th anniversary award. George is thankful that bringing Rusty to the hospital allows him the reward of bringing pleasure into an environment where people are usually experiencing pain and anxiety. George has been touched by his conversations with patients, and it has helped give him a different perspective of life.

Now a group of young doctors have commissioned a portrait of Rusty to show their appreciation for him and the difference he's made in their lives and those of

their patients. Two of these doctors, Jordyn Lerner and Stephen Cashman, are with us here today in the Speaker's Gallery, along with George and Linda Ames and, of course, Rusty.

After a difficult day, it's definitely a morale boost to see a cheerful dog wagging his tail. The hospital environment for patients and staff alike can be very stressful. There are a lot of long days dealing with demanding scenarios for staff. The portrait will be hung in St. Boniface Hospital and will be unveiled this December.

I would like to offer a huge thank you to Rusty and his owners, George and Linda Ames, for the dedication they have shown to make life a little easier for hospital patients and staff.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Heidi Wright

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Some people despair that the recognition of Remembrance Day will become less and less meaningful over time. However, anyone who visits Tec Voc High School in the West End will know there is nothing to worry about.

Heidi Wright is a grade 11 student at Tec Voc. She was inspired by a large mural along Valour Road dedicated to the three Victoria Cross awardees, one of many local murals commissioned by the West End BIZ.

Heidi researched the story of Valour Road, and she was moved both by the tremendous sacrifices the heroes of Valour Road made and the incredible coincidence of three Victoria Cross awardees living on the same street.

She decided to write a song in their honour, The Boys of Valour Road, to remind people about the importance of Remembrance Day.

Heidi was part of a very meaningful and moving Remembrance Day assembly at Tec Voc that I was honoured to attend. She performed her song as part of a ceremony that included students serving in cadet corps, as well as spoken word, dance and musical performances. Heidi also performed her song several times for local media during Veterans' Week.

Heidi has always enjoyed music, but her interest really took off when her father bought her a guitar for

her 12th birthday. She says that she's very grateful for her amazing teachers at Tec Voc, who've supported her and have helped her to develop as a musician. She recorded and released a CD earlier this year. Heidi plans to make the most of her studies at Tec Voc and hopes to study music at university.

Heidi tells us she hopes to be discovered by the music industry. I think her chances are good.

I ask my colleagues to recognize the value of quality music education, and to join me in congratulating 15-year-old Heidi Wright and wishing her all the best in her musical career.

I'd ask leave to include the names of our guests in Hansard.

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

Heidi Wright and guests: Pier Chalifoux, Ron Gilfillan, Michelle Sacco, Jerry Semchyshyn, Joyce Wong.

Madam Speaker: Further member's statements?

New Amish Families in Vita

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): When you drive through my home community of Vita these days, it is not unusual to see a horse-drawn buggy or two or three or, as I saw this weekend, a horse-drawn sleigh travelling through town or hitched to a hitching post.

Earlier this spring, Vita had the privilege of welcoming 11 Amish families with 45 new residents to our community.

Throughout the summer I have watched the flurry of activity as these new residents have been busy clearing land, building fences, building homes, barns and other buildings they need to start their new lives in our community.

One of the first things they started was selling their great baked goods at special events, the local farmers' market and now at two yard sites.

The dynamics of their lifestyle has been a positive asset to Vita. We welcome their hard-work ethic and entrepreneurial abilities. We look forward to the successful integration of the Amish into our community, as this would mean more families moving here next spring.

I would like to thank the Amish for taking a chance on Vita and wish them all the best as they start a new chapter in their lives.

Thank you.

Leila Castro

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I would like to honour in my member's statement today a great young soul of Manitoba, a youth icon in my constituency who is considered a vanguard for change and a youth of influence. Her name is Leila Castro. I welcome Leila, who is with us in the gallery today.

Leila Castro is the founder of 204 Neighbourhood Watch Inc. and a regular columnist for the Manitoba Filipino Journal. She was honoured as one of the Manitoba heroes. She was also honoured with the newcomer volunteer award during the Pasasalamat gala organized by Dalagita, a non-profit organization in Manitoba. Her community activities are so impactful and inspiring that most Manitoba media featured her works and contributions with due importance.

Her group, 204 Neighbourhood Watch Inc., volunteers safety work by responding to calls for help in the community. For the past one and a half years, it has engaged more than 2,500 volunteers and continued to receive requests for patrolling from residents of many areas in the city. Her social media group connects half of the Filipinos in Manitoba.

* (13:40)

Leila began community volunteering at the age of 12, for the entire high school year, together with friends, to visit public hospitals every Saturday to talk to impoverished parents—patients, entertain senior folks in charity-run aging facilities and teach young kids in poorer neighbourhoods in the Philippines.

She earned a degree in—a bachelor of science in computer science from the De La Salle University in Manila. During her university years, she was a volunteer for the Center for Social Concern and Action. She was active in advocacy works for women's issues, education, ecology, urban and rural poor and street children. On her graduation day, she received the community development leadership award.

Prior to migrating to Winnipeg in two—20—

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. Saran: Prior to migrating to Winnipeg in 2013, Leila worked as a project manager for information technology projects for 11 years. She practised project management during her last two years in Winnipeg. Later she repurposed to foster parenting for abused and neglected children.

We are proud of you, Leila Castro. Thank you for everything you are doing for the Manitobans.

Thank you.

CP Holiday Train

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Madam Speaker, 2018 marks the 20th year of the Canadian Pacific Holiday Train, which is North America's largest rolling fundraiser. The CP Holiday Train travels across the continent, spreading the spirit of giving at each and every stop.

Each year, the train brings family-friendly holiday entertainment to communities across Canada while drawing attention to the hunger needs of their fellow citizens. At each stop, local food banks are on hand to accept monetary and food donations in an effort to ensure that no Canadians go hungry this holiday season. Over the past 20 years, the CP Holiday Train has raised over \$14.5 million and collected 4.3 million pounds of food.

This year, the train will begin its journey in Montreal on November 27th and continue west until it reaches British Columbia on December 18th. The train will be making a stop in Winnipeg this evening at 9 p.m. before continuing to Portage la Prairie, Carberry, Brandon and Virden.

I invite all my colleagues to join me at grade rail crossing at Panet Road and Molson Street as we welcome the holiday train to Winnipeg. Performers Terri Clark, Sierra Noble and Kelly Prescott will be there to get everyone in the holiday spirit while we are all enjoying—sorry, while we all enjoy this exciting opportunity to give back to our community.

Madam Speaker, the CP Holiday Train reminds us what the holidays are all about: kindness, giving and being with friends and family. Please join me in congratulating Canadian Pacific on 20 wonderful years of the Holiday Train. Their presence is truly a gift to all Manitobans this holiday season.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today His Excellency, Mr. Maeng-Ho Shin, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, and joining him is Mr. Woojin Hur, Economic and Government Policy Adviser, Korean Embassy, and Mr. Barry Rempel, Honourary Consul General for Korea in Manitoba. On

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

And I would just like to personally thank my constituents, George and Linda Ames, for bringing Rusty here today. And if you haven't noticed, Rusty wears big red glasses. I'm not sure you can all see it, but I want to just say I appreciate the work you are doing and thank you for bringing Rusty here today. And thank you to the two young doctors who have made this happen and are creating a portrait that will be hung in St. Boniface Hospital. So thank you again for being here.

Another guest in the gallery today is Arnaud Guillemard, who is celebrating his 45th birthday today, and he is the guest of the honourable member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard). It wasn't my idea to put the birthday date in there, by the way.

And also seated in the public gallery, from Henry G. Izatt Middle School, we have 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Orloff, and this group is located in the constituency of the First Minister.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lifelight Air Ambulance Privatization Quality of Service Provision

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, front-line services provide care that families rely on, and they need to be protected, not privatized.

We're joined today by Terrance Mobberley. He knows the value of Lifelight. It's the care of Terry's son, Ryan, decades ago that helped lead to the establishment of the public Lifelight Air Ambulance system that we enjoy today. Now, at birth, the withdrawal of service by a private air carrier meant there was no flight for Terry's son, Ryan. Last-minute action luckily secured a plane, but the situation was so dangerous that doctors referred to Ryan as a miracle baby. Ryan lives with some challenges today, but he has lived a very fulfilling life and overcome some very long odds, in part thanks to his being able to access the air ambulance service.

Now, Terry's pragmatic, but he has real concerns with the privatization of air ambulances. Will the Premier and his ministers commit to meeting Terry today and guarantee that no Manitoban will suffer a loss of quality of their health care because of the privatization agenda that they're pursuing?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, the safety of Manitobans is paramount to this government. And, of course, we should know, the member opposite should know, of course, that this isn't an issue of old ideologies, but rather an issue of better services and better results for the people of Manitoba when they need them.

The previous administration increased, by a tremendous percentage, the amount of private use of airlines. It wasn't a question of ideology. I—at least, I don't believe it was a question of ideology at the time that they did that, increasing of private Lifeflight use, Madam Speaker. And it's not a question of ideology now, either.

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

Privatization of Water Bomber Services Request to Table Contract

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's a question of guaranteeing the quality of health care for people in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Now, this Premier has already privatized water bombers, and it appears as though air ambulances are next. They'd rather listen to high-priced consultants like WPS Global than listening to the families themselves who have seen the benefit of the public guarantee of such health-care services.

Now, we know that the Premier was not willing to release the details of this private contract for water bombers. However, the recipient of this contract, Babcock International, bragged about this contract to their shareholders over the weekend, telling them that they won a \$170-million, 10-year contract from this Premier. So \$17 million a year.

Of course, water bombers only cost \$14.8 million to operate in Manitoba last year. So which is the greater number there, Madam Speaker: \$17 million that they're paying to a private operator overseas, or 14.8, which they were able to do under the public option?

Will the Premier commit to making the contract and all the details public?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, there you go; the member again mistakenly tries to make it about ideology when the NDP increased the amount of private sector use. And so, Madam Speaker, I'd have to ask the member opposite to reconsider his arguments.

If he wants to have an ideological debate, maybe he needs to ask himself why seven other provinces use—solely use private providers? Is it, in the NDP government of Alberta or the NDP government of British Columbia, an ideological issue, or is it an issue of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —actually getting better services, Madam Speaker, more reliable services?

The member asks us to make something public which he never made public previously because, you see, there were no contracts; there were no tenders; there was nothing. There were no safety standards; there were no safety requirements; there were no standing orders. There was no guarantee and no protection for Manitobans using those flights, Madam Speaker, none whatsoever. No consequences for failure, no penalties for cancellation at the last minute, nothing. No value-for-money concerns at all, and it certainly wasn't an ideological debate; it was just sloppy shopping.

Manitoba Hydro Affordable Bills

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

* (13:50)

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, there goes our Premier, unable to confirm that \$17 million a year is greater than \$14.8 million—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: Well, that's sloppy math, Madam Speaker.

I'll go ahead and table the press release where the private contractor from overseas did release the terms of their contract, at least on the dollar side, but there's a lot more that needs to be explained by this government.

Of course, we know that they're also planning to privatize Manitoba Hydro, and we see another step to that direction over the course of this weekend when their hand-picked board comes back within the same year for another—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —rate increase.

We've seen that this government is unable and unwilling to stand up for affordable bills for people

when it comes to Hydro, so we'll do that on this side of the House, Madam Speaker.

Will this Premier come back with a real plan to keep Manitoba Hydro bills affordable?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the Auditor General's report from just three or four years ago pointed out to the previous administration—and this member might like to take the time to read it—that they were relying far too much on untendered shopping, that they were relying far too much on sole-source contracting, that they had done this when they purchased, just before an election, a little shiny red helicopter and paid five times as much as Saskatchewan for it, that they had done this when they bought orange garbage bags and pretended that they were good for flood fighting, but they weren't, because we learned that from a report that was covered up by the previous government, that they bought them from a donor, that they failed to disclose the contracts.

Madam Speaker, this—I don't need a lecture from the member opposite on shopping smart. That's what we do here on this side of the House, and we're going to continue to do it with the first priority being the safety of Manitobans.

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

Ontario French Language University Cancellation of Project

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I, the Leader of the Second Opposition (Mr. Lamont) and many others joined people from the Franco-Manitoban community this weekend to show our opposition to the Doug Ford government's attacks on the Franco-Ontarian community.

Les Francophones ont lutté tout partout au Canada pour une des—pour que leurs droits linguistiques soient reconnus et respectés par le gouvernement.

Translation

Francophones fought throughout Canada to have their language rights recognized and respected by government.

English

However, I don't believe there was a representative of the Pallister government at the rally there in St. Boniface, which is certainly of great concern, given the actions that this government has taken.

Tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes devraient lutter ensemble pour s'assurer que les droits des minorités linguistiques soient respectés.

Est-ce que le premier ministre va nous joindre en condamnant la décision de Doug Ford d'annuler la création d'une université francophone à l'Ontario?

Translation

All Canadians should fight together to ensure that minority language rights are respected.

Will the First Minister join us in condemning the decision made by Doug Ford to cancel the creation of a francophone university in Ontario?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): It is a compliment to this government and a sign when opposition parties cannot protest what we're doing, so they go to protest what other provinces are doing instead.

Madam Speaker, we've expanded our bilingual capacity in this government just last year from—to 805 positions from 744 the year before. Our commitment to the French language and to the people who speak it in this province is second to none. We've amended The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act. That's the most significant commitment to the French community in over 20 years in this province.

Madam Speaker, the members can continue to protest the actions of other governments because, frankly, they can't find anything to protest with our record on the French community.

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

Bureau de l'éducation française Assistant Deputy Minister Position

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, the Premier ran out to pose for a magazine cover with Doug Ford, so forgive us if we're a little concerned that he's not trying to copy all of Ford's other maneuvers as well, Madam Speaker.

But there is plenty to criticize when it comes to this government's approach to the francophone community. We know that they cancelled a number of translation positions, and we know they still haven't addressed the greatest single issue that the francophone community is bringing forward: the cancellation of the AD—or the deputy ADM for the Bureau de l'éducation française.

C'est presque 2019 et le premier ministre doit prendre la responsabilité pour faire certain que les provisions de la loi 5 sont respectées, et une des commandes de la communauté pendant utiliser la consultation sur le projet de la loi 5, c'est de rajouter le poste du sous-ministre adjoint pour le BEF.

Alors finalement, pour la fin de l'année, est-ce que le premier ministre va rajouter un poste de sous-ministre adjoint pour le Bureau de l'éducation française?

Translation

It's almost 2019 and the First Minister must take responsibility to ensure that the provisions of Bill 5 are respected, and one of the demands of the community while using the Bill 5 consultation mechanism was to reinstate the ADM position for the Bureau de l'éducation française.

So, finally, for the end of the year, will the First Minister reinstate the ADM position for the Bureau de l'éducation française?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I don't know, Madam Speaker. I'm being criticized for being photoshopped into a Maclean's cover by a guy who couldn't get a picture taken with him and any other NDPer in the country because they wouldn't want that.

So, frankly, Madam Speaker, our commitment to French language is something I'll restate. It's sincere, genuine and real. The member is choosing to criticize us for flattening the organization at the top and strengthening at the front-line. Keep criticizing us.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, of course, it's not just the words of Premier that invite criticism, Madam Speaker, it's his actions as well.

And again, he wants to raise bill 5, but one of the provisions under bill 5 is that this government table an annual report about the progress made on the provision of French language services. They've failed to table that in the Assembly again this year.

So, again, we know that they've also refused to re-establish the ADM deputy position in the Bureau de l'éducation française, which is a consistent and persistent demand on behalf of the francophone community.

So I'd ask the Premier: Will he commit to re-establishing a deputy ADM position for the Bureau de l'éducation française?

Mr. Pallister: L'histoire de la francophonie manitobaine est fortement celle de notre province.

Translation

The history of Manitoba's French-speaking community is very much the history of our province.

English

And, Madam Speaker, I'm tremendously pleased to say we are very supportive of providing stronger services than ever before for the French language and the French—and the francophone population of our province, and we're not going to do that at the head office up top. We're going to do it on the front lines.

In terms of the member saying I'm held accountable for my actions, I believe that's fair enough. I don't mind. I hope he doesn't either.

**Methamphetamine Addiction
Government Response**

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, Madam Speaker, there is a methamphetamine crisis gripping our province. There's a huge increase in meth-related hospital visits. We know that meth-related crime is rapidly climbing. We know that the number of Manitobans seeking treatment for drug addiction has climbed greatly, and in fact, more women are now seeking treatment for meth addiction than for alcohol addiction.

Those are startling facts, but it's also information that this government and this minister must have known for a long time now. But the minister's response is much too little, much too late.

Manitobans want to know: Why is the minister only now waking up to the serious meth crisis in our province?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, on the contrary, Madam Speaker. This government is only too aware of the scourge of methamphetamines that is gripping our province.

We are very concerned. It's why we continue to talk to other leaders, why we continue to talk to the federal government, our partnering provinces in other jurisdictions. It's why we've made new investments like new women's treatment beds in Winnipeg, new beds in Health Sciences Centre. It's why we've opened five Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine—treatment capacity for people, and there's still more to come.

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

Treatment Options for Women

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, at the House of Commons health committee in Ottawa last week, Ginette Poulin from the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba testified, as we already know, that their funding has been cut by this government and that their services are—and I quote directly—grossly unmatched to the problem we now face.

She further testified the meth crisis is disproportionately affecting women. And that's consistent with what we've found out through a freedom of information request, that more women are now seeking treatment for meth than for alcohol. Unfortunately, this government's inaction means there's a mismatch, with nowhere near enough treatment beds and options for women.

Why's the government done nothing to meet the need for a significant increase in the number of treatment beds and options for Manitoba women who've become addicted to meth in the last two and a half years?

Mr. Friesen: I'm glad that the member invokes the name of Dr. Ginette Poulin because it gives me an opportunity to indicate to all members that Dr. Poulin was able to join us at the most recent Rapid Access for Addictions Medicine release when we did that in Selkirk.

* (14:00)

The member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) was there. The member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton) was there as well. And here's what she said: that this will have a very significant effect in this community and around the province, that this was a very demonstrable form of help for people suffering with methamphetamines. And Madam Speaker, that is coming from the very same Ginette Poulin that he quotes.

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

Addiction Treatment Services Federal Funding Inquiry

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, Madam Speaker, if the Minister of Health truly respects what she has to say, he will have a look at those comments and he will start taking real action to deal with meth—the meth crisis in this province.

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba board chairman, Damon Johnston, also testified at the same committee last week and he says that, given the crisis, downtown Winnipeg is absolutely not safe and he says you can see it every day: people on the streets struggling to survive, some dying. And he says there's no indication how the Pallister government is actually spending the additional money they've received from the federal government for mental health and addictions.

For the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the people suffering from this crisis, for the families and communities being affected: Will this minister today provide a full accounting for where the funding for addictions has gone?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, the Province, the government of Manitoba is fully engaged with the federal government it—on the issue of helping them to understand the extent to which methamphetamines eclipses the challenges of opioids when it comes here to the prairies and Winnipeg and Manitoba. It is that engagement positively that has gotten the acquiescence of the federal government and their acknowledgement that certain monies for opiates could be reprofiled to more effectively direct the challenges of methamphetamines. That is the nature of our discussions with the feds and there will still be more investments coming as we continue to grapple, all of us together, with this challenge that is facing all Canadians.

B & L Foster Care Agency Interviews with Children in Care

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Standing up again in this House on behalf of families who are asking for answers from this government about what happened at B & L agencies, and they are getting nothing from this minister or this government. Instead this minister's refused to answer important questions. When did she first find out about the abuse at B & L and how many children are in care?

This minister ordered a review after media exposed the issue, but, of course, we have no information about the kids that are still in their care.

Will the minister today confirm that every single child in the B & L agency has been spoken to?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I believe these questions were asked last week and very capable answers were given last week, Madam Speaker.

We—and I will just tell the member opposite that the safety of children in Manitoba is paramount for our government. We are continuing to work with the agencies and authorities and I want to thank them and their staff for the dedication and hard work over the last—it's just been a week, Madam Speaker, and to ensure the safety of children in care we will continue to work with them to ensure the safety of those children in care with B & L.

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

Mrs. Smith: So, again, shirking the question. The question was: has every single child in BL and—B & L agency been spoken to? She did not answer it again.

I'll continue to stand up in this House for Manitoba children where they failed.

The minister ordered a stop on new placements of children in B & L last week, but we want to know: have every single child been spoken to by a social worker? I realize that there's agencies that are under this B & L agency, but can she ensure that every single child, and she can stand up today and give us an answer.

Have every single child been spoken to in B & L agency's care?

Mrs. Stefanson: And I do want to thank my department for their quick response to dealing with allegations made about this CFS service provider, B & L, and I also want to thank those agencies and authorities for acting quickly to ensure the safety of all children in care.

We are working together with them to ensure that they have the tools that they need to conduct that review. We will continue to work them—with them to ensure the safety of all children under the care of B & L.

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

Mrs. Smith: I wish this minister would stand up and actually say that she cares about these children, that she's going to ensure that every single one of them have taken—been listened to.

She's not saying that, so we want to know: Are there any new kids being placed today or tomorrow or the next day while this review is taking place, and when did she first learn about these allegations?

Mrs. Stefanson: I can assure the member opposite that I care very deeply about these children, as well as all

children in our province, Madam Speaker, and that's where—that's why we acted immediately upon receiving various allegations with respect to B & L. The department moved on it very quickly, spoke with the agencies and authorities, and their staffs are right now in the process of continuing to ensure that all of those children are safe.

I can tell the member opposite that, as of today, we have been able—we have been embarking on being able to get right in front of those children. That does take time. Sometimes they're not available. They have other things that they're doing. We have ensured that we have been able to—been in touch, in one week—over 95 per cent of those children.

There's still a little bit more work to do, Madam Speaker, and we will continue to work with the agencies and authorities to ensuring that.

Disability Support Workers Training and Wages

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Today is the international day for persons with disabilities, which we marked this morning with a ceremony at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

This PC government has promised to protect the most vulnerable and to make Manitoba the most improved province. Yet for years under the NDP, the workers who—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —care for people with disabilities in Manitoba have required only a grade 10 education and no training. Their difficult work involves helping people with basic needs and dispensing medication. Under this government, nothing has changed. The wrong medication in the hands of an untrained worker can and has led to dangerous mistakes.

I ask the Premier: Is this government going to maintain the status quo from the NDP, or are they going to step up and protect vulnerable people by requiring a minimum of 40 hours of training for workers who are caring for people with disabilities?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, an essential aspect of standing up for vulnerable people, Madam Speaker, is to be willing to stand up when things are not done to protect them. For example, when a federal Liberal government decides to reduce the support for health care, we stand up on this side of the House and say that's wrong.

And I'd encourage the member to stand up, join us and say it's wrong as well.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, there is an incredible turnover and lack of stability in the care of people with disabilities, who may have over 700 workers caring for them in a lifetime. The work is challenging and the pay is low.

I understand that this government has said that this is an area they have increased funding, but the result has only been a pay increase of 11 cents an hour from \$12.06 to \$12.15. This is a subsistence wage. Advocates have been asking for this to be addressed for years. There are people in the system doing the same doing the same work for government at a more reasonable wage. Will this government keep the NDP status quo on wages?

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to closing the gap between workers so that people with disabilities who depend on that care can get better, more stable quality care?

Mr. Pallister: Again, Madam Speaker, I'd encourage the member to understand that his party federally has decided that it's going to reduce the supports for health care across Canada. This was not something that they asked the Canadian people to approve in the last election. They proceeded on this willy-nilly after opposing it previously. They adopted it, and in spite of that fact they're finding ways to spend billions of dollars on other things besides health care.

So again, I encourage the member. The members of the NDP, to their credit, have stood up and said that this is wrong, and they've now taken up the position as a party that they will join us in opposing federal cuts to health care. I'd encourage the member to do the same.

We can speak with one voice here, and very likely that would result in greater support for health care if we were to take that unified position, and only the member stands in the way.

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

Mr. Lamont: I will remind the Premier he voted for those changes in 2007 and—when he was a Conservative MP, to change the formula that would reduce funds to Manitoba.

* (14:10)

This government needs to do more than just pay lip service to care and—of the—to the care of vulnerable and people with disabilities. Rights matter, but they need to be actively practised, and we need to put energy and resources into making rights a reality.

Day after day, this Premier and this government calls out the government for 17 years of failure. Yet, on this issue, on protecting the most vulnerable, on improving the care of people with disabilities, this government is doing what it does best, which is nothing.

This government can find the money to bail out stadiums—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —or cut taxes for the people at the top.

I ask the Premier: When is this government going to make vulnerable people a priority by investing meaningfully in their care?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, just a bit of clarification. The member may have missed this prior to his new job here, but the fact is that I opposed the reductions proposed by the previous administration, federally, and this one, and lead a government which has been steadfast in supporting health care and a partnership with Ottawa. So he's wrong on that assertion. Secondly, the federal government just decided to increase benefits to the wealthy in our country; that was the Liberal government, not us. So he's got those two mixed up.

Now, Madam Speaker, in respect of our support for health care—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —it is steadfast. We have increased our investments in health care by almost three quarters of a billion dollars per year over anything the NDP ever invested in health care, in spite of the absence of any federal support, of any significant growth.

So I encourage the member to get with the reality of the situation. Health care is the top priority for Manitobans. We know that, and we're acting like it. He needs to, too.

Gimli High School Music Room Expansion

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, when students from Gimli High School came to the Legislature to protest the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) decision to cancel the construction of a badly needed

band room, the government didn't listen. In fact, instead, what they did was they laughed at the students' advocacy, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) patronizingly said, there's only so many dollars.

But these kids don't want money. They want the government to get out of the way and to let them build their own band room.

So will the Premier let the community go ahead and build a badly needed band room for Gimli students?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Well, Madam Speaker, it's recycle Monday already, as the member opposite recycles a question, but a question that I think is important.

We certainly appreciate students when they bring forward their ideas and their concerns or have that opportunity themselves as part of a review that's going to happen next year.

But there's no doubt that this government was handed a number of different problems when it comes to infrastructure in education. I've listed, and I can continue to list, for the member opposite roofs that were leaking in libraries, Madam Speaker, schools that didn't have fresh air; the ventilation wasn't up to code.

We have a lot of catching up to do because of the mess that was left by the NDP in 17 years. We're on the way, we're catching up, but there's certainly more work to do, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, a freedom of information request shows just how much this matters to students. One student wrote to the minister, quote: Band throughout school has helped me so much on becoming a young adult and is crucial in developing a good attitude.

Another mom who wrote the minister was a little more direct. She wrote: to express my absolute disgust with this government. That was her message to this minister.

The kids of this community need to access better music facilities. They raised the funds to do it after the Premier cancelled his support for the project.

Will he stop getting in the way of this important project for this community?

Mr. Goertzen: No question, Madam Speaker, that music and band are all important aspects of the

learning environment for students. Of course, fresh air is also an important part of the learning environment for students, and a roof that doesn't leak on your head while you're sitting in the library is also important. Those are all things that were left by the former NDP government.

Students came, whether it was to this Legislature or through letters or through their divisions, and they asked the NDP for many years, more than a decade, to fix that infrastructure. It was never done by the NP-NDP, never done by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) before he quit Cabinet.

They've asked for those things to be fixed. We're fixing them, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the fact is that the government's own advisers know that this Premier's decisions make no sense. FIPPA requests show—and I'll table them here—on October 25th, quote, it is recommended that the school division be allowed to proceed with the project. It's important to students, Madam Speaker. It would make the music room actually accessible for students and mean that students don't have to practise in washrooms or closets anymore.

The government's own staff recognized the Premier's decision didn't make any sense, and that's contained in those documents there. It's nearly a month and a half later, and still the government hasn't moved on this. It's not going to cost the government a cent.

Why aren't they moving forward and supporting the kids in Gimli?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, it was recommended for over a decade that students in certain schools get clean air, that the ventilation system be fixed. It was recommended for more than 15 years that libraries that had leaky roofs would be fixed.

The NDP ignored that. They had all sorts of time, all sorts of money for other things. They built a Hydro waste line for billions of dollars on the wrong side of the province, Madam Speaker, nearly destroying Manitoba Hydro. They had all sorts of money for a vote tax so they could line their political party's pockets. But they had no money for students.

And now they stand up and say they care about students. They did nothing when they were in government, Madam Speaker.

24-Hour Giving Challenge Financial Support Extension

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Madam Speaker, Manitoba is home to the most community foundations per capita in this great country of ours.

November 17th was the Endow Manitoba 24-Hour Giving Challenge, which helps community foundations receive extra support from the Manitoba government and The Winnipeg Foundation.

Can the Minister of Municipal Relations tell the House about the importance of community foundations and the Endow challenge, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, Manitoba's 55 community foundations help today, tomorrow and for generations to come. Our government understands the need to plan for the long term, and that's why we extended the financial support to the 24-Hour Giving Challenge until 2020.

This year's 24-hour challenge raised more than \$1 million, Madam Speaker, four times the amount raised in 2014. The gifts donated to local communities will ensure permanent support for communities for years to come.

Manitoba's once again demonstrated that we are the most generous province in Canada, Madam Speaker. Thank you to all who participated in this year's 24-Hour Giving Challenge.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Lifelight Air Ambulance Privatization Cost of New Service Contract

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Health: I understand that the government is spending large amounts of money to contract out air ambulance flights instead of having the flights done at lower cost by our in-house air-Lifelight Air Ambulance service. Such contracts can now be for as many as 15 days a month.

For a government which is obsessed with every dollar spent to make sure it's done in the most efficient and effective way, why is the government spending such large amounts of money for private contractors when the services could be performed better and at lower cost by Lifelight?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I actually—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —take some encouragement from the member's question because he seems to be implying that he's willing to take a value-for-money approach in order to ensure a high level of service provision for Manitobans while keeping the service safe.

If that is indeed what he's saying, I would say to him he seems to be on the right track, because this is exactly what the government is doing: looking at how to sustain this service, keep it strong and ask the questions that the former NDP government refused to ask, spending more but getting less service and less value for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, it is the problem of the government that it doesn't consider value for money. Indeed, the government is the cause of the problem, as it has been slow to authorize funds to recruit, hire and train pilots.

I understand the cost of contracting out the services is adding up to about \$360,000 a month, which is a large extra cost when the cost to train an additional pilot is only \$26,000.

* (14:20)

Why is the government spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a month when it could be spending much less bringing new pilots on board and have a higher quality and lower—and more cost-effective service for the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I want to be clear that, under the NDP, every year for the last five years of their time in office, they were procuring more and more of these flights from private carriers, more every year than the year previous.

So we inherited this system that is very much, right now, a hybrid of direct carrier and procured carrier in order to get this service.

Now, what is important is this: we take a value-for-money approach. We stand on the side of safety. For years, money was wasted. We will make sure that we are able to sustain the service and reinvest in it to keep it strong, because let's understand, this is about Manitobans who live in the North and live in remote locations, and we want to make sure this service is provided to them for years to come.

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

Death of Patient Using Air Ambulance Service Request to Release Critical Incident Report

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, this NDP-PC hybrid is just not working. There is a quality issue as well as a cost issue. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: The in-house Lifeflight service uses jet airplanes, which are faster than the turboprop planes used by contracted air services.

The use of the jet airplanes is really important for safety and for timeliness of flights into many communities as the turboprop planes may take up to two hours longer for the round trip to some northern communities, and in such instances, time is life.

I understand there was a critical incident—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —last year in which a person died when—because a flight wasn't quick enough.

Will the government release today the full critical incident report?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Not accepting any of the preamble of the member, I have to ask him, if he has such instant gratification answers, Madam Speaker, that would solve the problem so well, why doesn't he share them with the Liberal government in Nova Scotia, which uses totally private sector LifeFlight services, or the former premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, who moved totally, 100 per cent, to private services, or the former Liberal government in New Brunswick, which was 100 per cent private provision?

Madam Speaker, for critical air ambulance, the BC government, the Yukon territory, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario, New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories, all of them do the opposite of what the member's recommending. There must be a reason why. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Privatization of Water Bomber Services Request to Table Contract

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): When the Premier said he was looking to privatize our water bomber fleet, we knew the result was a foregone conclusion. The Premier isn't concerned about the quality of services that are delivered. That's why he has refused

to release the contract the government signed with Babcock International.

Will the Premier table the document today so that Manitobans will know firefighting services are guaranteed no matter what?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, it's been mentioned before, Madam Speaker, but for the member's knowledge, the previous administration, of which I believe he was at times a part, increased its reliance on privatized air services steadily over its last number of years.

Madam Speaker, what they did was they increased the reliance on private sector providers without shopping intelligently, without a tender of any kind. A tender would've been a valuable thing. What a tender could've done is it could've assured better service standards. For example, when the member speaks about safety, safety's a priority for this government.

That's why in the development of our tender documents, when we shop using the hard-earned money that Manitobans must give us in tax contributions, we do it intelligently and we make sure that the safety and service standards are established while we're shopping.

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

Mr. Maloway: I think we have to check the Premier's math. Babcock International, in a press release, boasted they signed a 10-year, \$170-million contract with the government. That would be \$17 million a year for a decade, but the government's own annual report shows they budgeted less than that and they actually spent only \$14.8 million on the program in 2017-18. That's more than \$2 million less that they're giving the multinational company.

Now, that is not smart shopping, Madam Speaker. The Premier's indicated he's going to save \$1 million a year on the contract, and the figures show he's actually not saving a million, he's spending two million more.

Will the Premier release the contract with Babcock today?

Mr. Pallister: Faster response times, enhanced safety, superior aircraft maintenance program—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —availability of bombers to help other provinces when they need our help—which hasn't been the case under the NDP—and Madam Speaker, the member wants to argue math with me?

This is—he's part of a government that—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—doubled our debt provincially, Madam Speaker, in six years, and did it by overspending in every department except Infrastructure every single year. This is the previous government that actually told Manitobans—they walked, they went to the doors, knocked—they told Manitobans that their math was so good that they wouldn't raise their taxes, and then they went ahead and did it anyway.

Madam Speaker, any time that an NDP member wants to talk with me about math, I'm ready to add it up with them.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Crown Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): I stand today on a point of order. And I understand that points of order are strict in their parameters, however I stand today to correct the record.

On November 28th, I presented a ministerial statement in honour and support of Operation Red Nose. In the statement, I indicated that Manitoba Public Insurance, as well as Bell MTS, City Press, Great-West Life, Intact Insurance and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries assist Operation Red Nose from a financial perspective.

Although these groups have supported Operation Red Nose historically, I wish to correct the record related to this year's sponsors. For this year, Operation Red Nose is sponsored by the following organizations: Safety Services Manitoba, Manitoba Public Insurance, Rogers, Shaw, Red River College, Prairie Mobile Communications, mantra swim club, Cell Mechanics, CAA Manitoba, Great-West Life, Intact Insurance, City Press, the Winnipeg Police Service, Tim Hortons, Telecom Options, Noble Locksmith Ltd., WinnipegREALTORS, Fleet Profit Centre, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, the Manitoba Restaurant and Foodservices Association, Bridgeport Office Solutions, Van Houtte Coffee Services—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mayer: I want to thank all of those, past and present, that have come together to better the lives of

Manitobans, and thank them deeply for the good work that they do every day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I would like to thank the minister for correcting the record, but I would also indicate that she does not have a point of order.

PETITIONS

Vimy Arena

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the provincial government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial sites such as the St. Boniface industrial park, the—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fletcher:—20,000 acres at CentrePort or existing properties such as the Shriners Hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

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

* (14:30)

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Further petitions?

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

(4) To request that the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living consider providing supports for the families of people struggling with addiction, including

counselling, patient navigation and advocacy, and direct access to free naloxone.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by David Allingham, Leo Lalonde, Myrna Lalonde 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—*[interjection]*—(3) The budget of the northern health regional—excuse me—(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.

* (14:40)

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Sydni Souter *[phonetic]*, Trina Bear, Logan Church and many other Manitobans.

Preventative Health Services Plan

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Preventive health services are an integral part of the health-care system, are essential to creating a healthy community.

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

Increasing evidence now supports the fact that well-designed investments in prevention can improve health and decrease health-care costs, starting in the first year. In the long term, effective preventive measures can continue to improve population health while reducing downstream costs.

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

The recent provincial government proposal regarding clinical services does not mention any mention—does not include any mention of developing a comprehensive preventative health services plan.

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

The need to dedicate and focus resources used in prevention requires comprehensive, stand-alone, preventive health-services plan.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Sean Gander, April Buchanan, Tomas Ponzilius and many others.

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request that the provincial government consider establishing a cross-departmental team to

provide leadership on a culturally appropriate, co-ordinated response to the growing addictions crisis in our province that includes an aggressive, widespread education campaign on the dangers of using methamphetamine and opiates, along with addictions education for front-line medical staff in health-care facilities.

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

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

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

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by Teresa Lockhart, Karen Noakes, Misti Bertrand and many other Manitobans.

Concordia Hospital Emergency Room

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced the closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Concordia Hospital.

(2) The closures come on the heels of the closing of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services and will result in them having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface Hospital's emergency room for emergency care.

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in northeast Winnipeg and visit

the emergency room frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or who are low-income.

* (14:50)

(5) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg or—sorry—northeast Winnipeg regarding the closing of their emergency room or to consult with health officials and health-care workers at Concordia to discuss how this closure would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Concordia Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

This petition, Madam Speaker, was signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, December 10th, 2018, at 1 p.m. to consider the following report: the Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy, All Aboard, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, December 10th, 2018, at 1 p.m. to consider the following report: Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy, All Aboard, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: It is with great optimism that I ask you to call Bill 4, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act, for second reading.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 4 this afternoon. The honourable Minister for Growth,

Enterprise and Trade, second reading on Bill 4, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 4—The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the Minister for Sustainable Development, that Bill 4, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: I am pleased to rise again to speak and provide some comments on Bill 4.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

This legislation would fulfil our government's commitment to end forced unionization on major infrastructure projects by ensuring that public sector entities' tendering processes are unbiased with respect to the unionization status of bidders and their employees.

Among the public sector entities covered by the bill are provincial government departments, crown corporations, regional health authorities, universities and school divisions. When such entities tender for construction work, they will have to do so in accordance with the bill's provisions.

By prohibiting certain tendering practices that have been used in the past which require contractors to sign a collective agreement and hire only members of specific unions, this bill would increase competition in the bidding process and help ensure that the best value for money is obtained on provincially funded construction projects.

In addition, this legislation would prevent provincial public sector entities that have awarded work on a construction project to an open-shop contractor from requiring that the contractor or the employees pay dues or fees to a union in respect to their work on the project. Public sector entities themselves would also be prohibited from paying fees to a union in respect of a construction work having been awarded to an open-shop contractor.

By preventing these past practices from being used again in the future, this legislation will provide a level playing field for all bidders regarding of the labour relations model they use and ensure that they are

evaluated on the criteria that Manitobans would expect—their ability to provide quality work on time and on budget.

This bill is all about fairness and equal opportunity for businesses and workers in Manitoba and across the country and aligns with other governments' commitments to reduce barriers to trade. By opening up contracts to greater competition, we can expect more competitive pricing and savings for our taxpayers. This bill also respects workers' rights to choose whether they want to be represented by a union in their relations with their employer.

Where workers have chosen not to be represented by a union, they should not be required to join a union or pay dues to a union in order to continue being able to work for their employer on a provincially funded project. It should be noted that this bill would not affect existing project labour agreements entered into prior to its coming into force. It respects previously entered-into contracts and will only apply on a go-forward basis.

We believe that Bill 4 has strong support from a wide range of employers and workers, including both unionized and open-shop companies. Many stakeholders have recognized that opening up projects to greater competition will benefit both taxpayers and the construction industry as a whole.

As a final comment, I would like to thank all of those who participate in the consultations on this bill and I look forward to the opportunity to hear from Manitobans when the bill is referred to a committee of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed by—to the minister by any member of the following sequence: the first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions be asked by the critic or designate from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member. Remaining questions may be asked by any opposition members, and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to ask the minister: Who has the member consulted with before putting this bill forward?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, I'd like to thank the member for that question.

And, as he would know from when he got his briefing that we consulted not just with companies of—that had a unionized status but also companies who didn't. And we also consulted with a lot of individuals and stakeholders across the province.

Mr. Maloway: Can the member explain how the workforce development needs of this industry will be met without union investments?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, we have a very healthy labour force here in Manitoba. We've got a very dynamic province, with a lot of very, very strong construction companies, both unionized and unionized, and we are very pleased to be moving forward with this legislation, if members opposite would only actually get to debating it and send it on to committee.

Mr. Maloway: Without project labour agreements, how does the government plan to give priority to northern indigenous workers in the affected areas and Manitobans before hiring out-of-province workers?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, there was a process in place when he was a member of a government. There are certain criteria that can be put into requests for proposal, just like his government did, and that will be on a go-forward basis. He would know that, having been in government for 17 years.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister: How does the minister and his government plan on investing in a skilled workforce required to build essential infrastructure in Manitoba?

* (15:00)

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, we have a very, very healthy and robust construction industry here in Manitoba. We look forward to continuing to spend, as a minimum, \$350 million just in infrastructure, a very stable and predictable funding, something that never existed under the NDP, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask: Why does the Premier (Mr. Pallister) want to undermine worker protections that were originally introduced by one of his PC predecessors, the Duff Roblin government in the 1960s?

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam—well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to suggest to this House that the member for Elmwood has it all wrong. We will continue to support all workers. We are going to continue to support all companies as they bid on projects, and one of the things we won't be doing is

looking at their unionization status when we make decisions.

Mr. Maloway: The fact of the matter is that this practice has been long-established by Conservative Premier Duff Roblin in the 1960s when we were building the floodway. It's been—

An Honourable Member: Mike Harris.

Mr. Maloway: Well, and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) said Mike Harris used them. We've got, you know, Disney, Toyota, like, many, many, many big projects across—in fact, across the world have been approached in this way.

And even the Filmon government—the Gary Filmon government—Conservative government had 11 years in government, and I'm told they did not move in this fashion.

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

Mr. Schuler: Well, and I'd like to point out to the member that a company can still put a project labour agreement on a project. However, we will not be using the unionite status or the non-union status of a company as one of the prerequisites for issuing a tender, Madam Speaker. And we look forward to continuing to build in—a very strong economy here in Manitoba.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): You know, two different ministers have stood up with two different stories when it comes to project labour agreements. So I'd ask this minister: Has he discussed his story with the previous minister, who stood up in this very Chamber and said there is no forced unionization? Accuracy, he said, is important.

So can the minister perhaps stand up and explain why the previous minister thought there was no forced unionization, but this minister, in his warped way of looking at the world, in his ideological—

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

Mr. Schuler: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to tell the member that I always am willing and prepared to talk about what a team looks like. As compared to what existed under the NDP, we do talk to each other on this side. Unlike when his government was the power—in power, that the only thing they seemed to do was fight each other.

Mr. Lindsey: Clearly, they're not talking or they're not listening, which is probably the case, because they don't listen to anybody else, right?

So the previous minister stood up in this House and said there is no forced unionization, and yet this minister continues to stand up and say there is.

So which minister are we to believe?

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, when it comes to listening, a debate on that issue, I'd like to point out to the member it was his government that did the forced amalgamation of rural municipalities. And, when it didn't go their way, I think they referred to the municipalities as howling coyotes and petulant children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do listen to Manitobans, and more importantly, we do it respectfully.

Mr. Lindsey: I think we're beginning to get a picture of maybe which minister was right and which one was wrong, because now this minister won't stand up and clarify his statement, which was completely opposite to what the previous minister had to say.

So which minister's correct: the one that says there was no forced unionization or the one that claims there is? Could the minister clarify that, please?

Mr. Schuler: Well, I think we should be really clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that what our government is prepared to do is put forward legislation that we ran on, that we've introduced.

The only problem seems to be that the NDP doesn't want to debate this, nor do they want to send it on to committee. So I would suggest to the member, why doesn't he allow members to have a debate? And let's send it on to committee today and let's listen to the public.

Mr. Lindsey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we still don't have an answer to the question as to which minister we should believe. It's a pretty simple question—
[interjection]

Well, somebody points out maybe neither, but I wouldn't want to be so bold as to suggest that myself.

Would the minister please answer the question that's asked: Is the former minister right when he said there was no forced unionization, or is this minister right with his claim that somehow there is?

Mr. Schuler: Well, clearly, the member is very confused because one of the things that he has done is—
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —is he's talked about that the previous predecessor bill to this and now Bill 4, and that he wants to have all kinds of answers on it. I would suggest to him that he allows the debate to continue, allow members to debate it. And, at the end of the day, why don't we send it on to committee and listen to the public?

Mr. Lindsey: You know, I guess the problem with going on to any debate is generally in a debate there's back and forth and you come to some conclusion. Generally, in questions and answers, there's an answer to a question, so I'll ask the question again, and maybe this minister doesn't understand how question and answer works because he clearly doesn't understand what the previous minister said about there being no forced unionization.

So will the minister, please: Is there forced unionization? Isn't there? Was the former minister right or is this one right? Clear up the mystery.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, perhaps I should clarify a mystery for the member. The way this Chamber works is that government introduces legislation. If the opposition chooses so, they debate it. Then it goes on to committee.

Why is this NDP government filibustering this important piece of legislation?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm going to tread very carefully here, hopefully.

When this minister stands up and talks about how this Chamber works, I'm pretty sure that truth is part of how this Chamber works.

So, when one minister of this government says one thing and the next minister says something completely different, which one is right?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to caution everybody for the language that's being used here in the Chamber, so I just want to—we'll go back to question period and the honourable Minister for Infrastructure.

Mr. Schuler: You know, Madam Speaker, I'm not too sure who that question was addressed to, if it was addressed to myself or the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who seemed to struggle very much with

his former leader, the former premier, Greg Selinger, when he said to him that there was a lack of truth, what came out of his former leader, and mounted a rebellion against his own premier. So perhaps he'd like to speak to the member for Minto.

Mr. Lindsey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am actually speaking to the current Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) and I'm asking him a very direct question and I would like an answer.

Was the previous minister wrong when he said there was no forced unionization or is this minister wrong when he says there is? It's a pretty simple question to answer and, yet, how many questions is this? Six questions I've asked and haven't got an answer yet.

Minister, please give us an answer.

Mr. Schuler: Well, actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member has gotten answers. He just doesn't like them. So, for instance, he's wondering about who's right between the member for Minto and his former boss, the Premier Selinger, and who was right in truth and all the rest of it. He'd have to speak to the member for Minto.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to again remind the Chamber here, that the members here, about the talking about truth and lies and stuff like that, so I just caution everybody about the language in this Chamber.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, certainly I thank the Deputy Speaker for that direction and truth is very important in this Chamber.

* (15:10)

So a previous minister stood up and very clearly, very eloquently and very forcefully said there is no forced unionization, and he went on to say that accuracy is important.

So now we have a different minister saying something completely different.

So I would like the minister to clarify once and for all which is the correct response: there is forced unionization, there isn't forced unionization. Because accuracy is very important.

Mr. Schuler: Oh, yes. Accuracy is very important. In fact, two elections ago, this member and all members of the NDP went out and knocked on doors and said read our lips: there will be no increase in the PST. And as soon as the ink had dried on those ballots, they were already raising the PST.

My question to him: which one was accurate, which one was the truth? Read my lips, no new taxes; or the tax increase?

Mr. Lindsey: Next election when they're knocking on doors and somebody says, well, which one of the ministers is going to give us the right answer? Maybe then, this minister will actually answer the question that's asked because no doubt members of the public that listen to this process—and there are a growing number that do actually listen to it—are going to want to know which minister gave the right answer. Because both answers are completely 180 degrees different from the other answer.

So, once again, will the minister answer the question, will he apologize for what he's put on the record, or will he ask the former minister of Infrastructure to apologize—

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

Mr. Schuler: The member opposite finally got something accurate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the next election, there will be 57 Progressive Conservative candidates. We will go door to door and we'll talk about the good work our government has done.

We are prepared to go door to door and meet with the public, unlike the NDP who didn't have the courage to do it in the last election.

Mr. Lindsey: I look forward to any member of that government coming to Flin Flon and tell us what good things they've done, because there's a growing number of people in Flin Flon that say this government is on the wrong track.

But one of the things that they really want to do know is which minister gave the correct answer. So I'll ask again: previous minister said in this House, quoted in Hansard, there's no forced unionizations. This minister says, well, yes there is. Which answer is the correct answer? Because I already know what the correct answer is.

Will the minister finally stand up and give us the correct answer?

Mr. Schuler: Well—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's very interesting that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) wasted 15 minutes asking a question which he admitted he already knows the answer to. I'd like to point out to members what Manitobans really want for

this Legislature to do is debate legislation, send it to committee and move it on.

Why are they stalling this bill?

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired. The debate is open. Any speakers?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): You know, when you do the research and when you realize how long this practice—project labour agreements—has been implemented, you know, since the 1960s with Duff Roblin, former premier—Conservative Premier Duff Roblin in construction of the floodway, and many, many, many huge projects—megaprojects across the country—and, in fact, around the world—and you—and that is now practice over successive governments.

In Manitoba, Conservative governments, NDP governments, back to Conservative governments again—and when you look at the Filmon government, which was in power in Manitoba for 11 years, you know, they had the—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —option of doing what this government is doing right now. But, at the end of the day, common sense prevailed and they did not eliminate them.

There's other differences between the Filmon government in the past and the current Pallister government. You know, just with Concordia Hospital ER is an example, where the Filmon government back in the 1990s were going to close the ER just overnight. They were going to do overnight closures. And this group are going to eliminate the ER completely.

And in—at that time, one of their ministers, Bonnie Mitchelson, you know, intervened with the premier and told him how ridiculous this idea was, to close the ER overnight, and they rescinded it. Premier Filmon rescinded the decision within a couple of months of having made it and announced it.

And this government is way more ideological than the Filmon government obviously was, in the sense that they are actually closing the ER completely. In the case of the project labour agreements, which the Filmon government backed off on, this government is full speed ahead, moving ahead to eliminate them. And so that's the—to me, just two examples of major differences between these two Conservative governments.

And it just seems to me that, you know, perhaps the previous Filmon government, you know, paid more

attention to its members. Now, admittedly, it didn't have as many seats in the Legislature as this government does, so perhaps that was a moderating effect on them on the time. Perhaps it was more sensitive to public opinion at the time, too.

But perhaps it—the difference is that that government was maybe a little more collaborative, in the sense that there was more information coming up from the public that was being passed on to the premier, who was taking it into account when making these decisions.

This government, on the other hand, seems to have no information flow going up. It seems like there's one decision-maker in the whole government; that's the Premier (Mr. Pallister). And really nothing is moving. Like, you know, why this government would even have a Cabinet of 10 is a mystery to me.

I know that, you know, previous governments have had, you know, 17, 18 ministers. And this Premier comes in and upon taking office, he announces there's going to be 10? Well, that's happened before. We've had 10 ministers before, but it doesn't usually stay that way. After a year of sorting things out, the numbers start to creep up.

And, in this case, has not happened. They're been there almost three years now, the end of three years in a few months. And they had one minister, I think, that took the number over to 11, and they got rid of this minister to bring that number down. I guess the Premier can't count past 10; it's an odd number for him.

And—but the issue really—I guess the question that nobody's been asking so far is why does he even need 10? Because, pretty clearly, he's not listening. He doesn't listen to these 10. From what we hear, it's just a one-man show.

You have members, you know, you have members in my area of the—of Winnipeg: member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), new member, really a keener and, you know, interested in helping out; you got the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma); you've got the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski); and you've got the member for River East (Mrs. Cox). And these members have—you know, they didn't sign on—I—there's no way they signed on to close the Concordia ER.

But, yet, out of the blue, this announcement gets made that they're going to close the ER, and just total silence. It's been a year and a half now. It'll be two years, I think, in April, that the announcement was made, and we've not heard a peep out of any of these members. And we know they're feeling the heat from

the—from their residents and from their constituents, and they're probably—perhaps even going to lose their seats in the next election because of this issue.
[interjection]

But this is not the way the Conservative government functioned under Gary Filmon. It didn't work—

An Honourable Member: Love Gary Filmon now?

Mr. Maloway: Well, you know, he's starting look a lot better, as time goes by, than what I see—*[interjection]*

* (15:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —here in front of me now, you know. And, you know, the members opposite cannot be having a good time in these jobs because no matter who they complain to, they—doesn't to be anybody listening, and, if anything, if you complain, you lose whatever little goodies you've got from the government.

You know, you were a House leader one day and a minister the next, and the next thing you know, you're moving your furniture down to—from the second floor down to the first floor, you know, and the message is very clear: If you keep causing trouble, if you're not happy here, well, you know, we'll move you out into the parking lot, right? So, like, to me, that is—that would be one terrible life, the life of a member over there has not—cannot be good; cannot be good at all because you would think that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —the government would want to—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —be a little more collaborative.

So, you know, so I'm just saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's probably many aspects to the difference between these two governments, and there's probably reasons, and a lot of them are—be personality, I'm sure, as to this Premier being a very, you know, determined individual to get things done his way; you know, it's my way or the highway.

Now, you know, we got information on project labour agreements from other areas, other jurisdictions. I mean, you would think that members of the caucus over there would be talking to the Premier about this, would be saying, well, you know, let's see how project labour agreements work around the world.

You know, Duff Roblin was a premier at a time, and by the way, when Duff Roblin decided to embark on building the floodway, I don't believe there was sales tax in Manitoba. And Duff Roblin brought in, if my memory is correct, a 6 per cent sales tax to pay for the floodway.

He also had project labour agreements in force, and, you know, at the end of the day, of course, the Conservatives ended up not winning—well, Duff Roblin had already left, by that point, to run federally. But the fact of the matter is that he accomplished a great feat by getting this floodway built, and he did what had to be done to get it built, including the project labour agreements.

So, you know, if it was good enough for him at that time and Manitobans at that time, it was good enough for the recent floodway expansion that Gary Doer embarked on in the early 1990s—it worked well at that time—you know, why accept—you know, I guess the reason why would be this purely ideological bent of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that they want to remove this legislation. The large—

An Honourable Member: What about Sterling Lyon?

Mr. Maloway: Well, member wants to know about Sterling Lyon.

First of all, Sterling wasn't here very long. He was only here four years.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: He didn't win with as big a majority as the current group of Conservatives, and he basically made a spectacle of firing people. And, you know, he didn't really fire that many people, but when he did fire somebody—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Maloway: When he did fire somebody he had a press conference to announce it, and he—you know, the Premier—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Maloway: The Premier is—the current Premier—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: The current Premier is learning, has learned, from that experience, and he is hoping that, you know, people don't connect him to the Sterling Lyon experience. But Sterling Lyon did make a virtue

out of firing people. And, you know, and he embarked on, you know, of megaprojects. They were announcing megaprojects at the time. They were going to bring an aluminum smelter here. It was very interesting how the aluminum smelter got announced, and all of a sudden there was some conservative MLAs who had taken options out on land that just happened to be where this smelter was going to be and when the press went to the MLAs involved and asked them how it was so coincidental that they had taken out options on land when their farms were, like, at the Saskatchewan border, and I remember this MLA explaining to the media that he was trucking his cows all the way from, you know, Waskada, around in that area, to graze them up here where this smelter was going to be.

And, at the end of the day, the smelter never proceeded, but certainly the scandal did erupt out of it, and it, you know, at the end of the day, the public just turned on Sterling Lyon.

Sterling Lyon, when he went into the election, you know he thought he was going to win. He was well ahead in the polls at that time, but he—there was things that he missed, obviously, and he ended up being the only one-term government in Manitoba history, Sterling Lyon.

And, of course, this Premier is trying to avoid that fate, and so he's trying to do things, you know, a different way, but he has other weaknesses that are, you know, could, in fact, cause a huge deterioration in his support base in the upcoming, you know, year and a half that he's got left.

But, you know, there are other large companies that have used project labour agreements as well. Disney, Toyota—these are huge companies. In Canada there's the Rio Tinto Alcan in BC, the expansion of the Endako mine, the John Hart Generating Station Replacement in Campbell River.

They've been used in BC for hydro dams in the 1960s, and so this starts to look like an ideological move on the part of the government.

You know, when you have a process that works well, has produced good results for many, many projects, to change that, you know, doesn't make a lot of sense.

There's another, you know, major reason why you would have these project labour agreements, and that is that you want to have a high-quality project. You do not want to—what this government is doing, or attempting to do, is start a race to the bottom so that you would get all the lowest bidders, you know,

possible on a project that will end up having components of the project done in a substandard way, and that will, in fact—[interjection]—you know, the member wants to talk about the stadium. You know, that—you know, when you do projects, there's a bonding regime that is in effect. There's all kinds of checks and balances that are designed to make sure that these projects are done correctly, but still things go wrong.

You know, let's take the Conservatives and what they're doing with the highways budget right now. They have pretty much cut the highways budget in half. They're down to \$350 million. They've got the Manitoba Heavy Construction news. This leaflet that comes out weekly is so hot I can hardly even touch it because they are just furious at this government for, basically, what they feel they've been led down the garden path here. They've been—they're now—they thought they were going to be having, you know, double the construction of road projects, and now they're down to, like, \$350 million.

There was a recent addition of the Manitoba Heavy Construction news that talked about the bonding industry, and the bonding industry reporting because you really—it's unfair to expect that a private company is going to divulge their financial information to anybody that they don't have to, you know, other than their bankers, but the bonding company, the bonding industry, because bonding is not really insurance; it's an insurance company that does it, but is more like banking.

But, basically, before they give their seal of approval on a project, they demand financial information to know that your company has the capacity, the financial capacity, and experience to complete the projects, okay.

* (15:30)

And, if you don't, they won't approve the bond. Because, at the end of the day, they are guaranteeing that for the premium that you pay on the bond, that if you don't fulfill the requirements of that bond, they—the insurance company—will have to pay to remedy the problem, okay? And that's how the bonding system works.

So they do not like a situation where companies are on the verge of going bankrupt. So you tell me what happens when you are spending, you know, a—say, \$600 million on road construction, which we were doing just two or three years ago, and all of a sudden you have a new government in that starts ratcheting it

down. And now they're sitting at \$350 million and they say they're going to stay there for another year.

So what does that do to the companies that are here? Well, that bonding report and that report in the heavy construction weekly—and the members can certainly get their copies of it if they like—basically points—paints a very negative projection going forward for the viability of a lot of these construction companies. They're saying, well, now, what's going to happen here? The construction companies are—were operating before spending, say, \$600 million; now, within two years, we're—only got \$300 million worth of business.

Well, something's got to happen. You know, the employees have to be laid off or the company has to downsize somehow or it has to go to other provinces to get work.

It's a lot of upheaval when you—the government's responsibility is to get your construction projects done, get done—you know, quality projects. But don't overheat—don't overdo it where you do, you know, a huge amount of construction one year and then nothing the next year. That is not the way to run. And that's what they've done. They've cut the construction budget for the highways in half. And so, now, you have companies having to retrench, having to restrain themselves, lay off employees.

Then what is another activity or—that these companies are going to do is they're going to start low bidding on projects. So, basically, it becomes a cash flow issue. They will bid on a project not knowing that there's no money in it. They're just doing it to keep afloat, to keep their employees, to pay their payments on their construction equipment. So that's what they do, they start lowballing the—you know.

And then what happens is that increases the potential for the company to not be able to fulfill its requirements. Or starts using, like, I don't know, not as good a—you know, components. [interjection] Yes. And then what happens is all of a sudden you have what happened with Trident construction on the overpass—an Erin highway overpass a few years ago where they stopped the construction because Trident went bankrupt.

And, lo and behold, what happened? Well, the bonding company have to start paying the bills to bring that project back to acceptable standards so that the City, when they had their project done, they had a completed overpass. Right? Why should the taxpayers have to fork out the difference? And they didn't have

to, I don't believe, because the bonding company did it, okay?

So the bonding company are one of the ways to tell what sort of financial strength the whole industry is in. And they have already, you know, they have already sounded the horn that the Manitoba construction industry for road construction—highway construction is a bad, bad development.

And it's hurting the financial position of the construction companies in this province. Okay? And that message has been delivered to the heavy construction industry and, I believe, delivered to this government, as well.

So, if the government wants to see itself, you know, embroiled in more messes and more stresses and more bankruptcies and problems, then you're headed in the right direction. You're headed in the right direction by doing all of these things.

And, you know, you got to ask yourself, what kind of a government that, you know, is—what projects are they talking about doing? They're not going to do anything. Like, here we are, going to be talking about introducing this—debating this legislation now. It's going to pass in June. If it doesn't pass in June, if we hold it over as one of the five, it's going to pass in November anyway, and the government's going to get its way.

Well, at the end of the day, it's going to win the big battle, but what's going on? There's nothing going on in the province. There aren't any workers left. There aren't any companies left. They're all drawing on their bonding companies to finish the projects that they couldn't complete.

You know, it's just basically a—and the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) will be talking about this. I'm sure he is the member who has unlimited time here, and he will be certainly getting across the message that the members obviously have to hear over and over again, that this is the wrong way to go.

You know, BC—you know, hydro dams in BC had project labour agreements. Alberta has them. Saskatchewan has them. I thought James Bay developments in Quebec—right? Quebec hydro—I believe they had them too. I don't—and this is just in my mind. I just haven't been able to get the written word on this. But I'm sure that our research department is working really hard. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) will have all this research that I don't currently have. But then, once again, he has many more days of speaking on this bill than I do.

So, you know, I hope that I, you know, made the point—several points here that there is a—certainly an ideological bent to this government that we haven't seen even in Sterling Lyon's day, we didn't see in Gary Filmon's day. We just see a—basically, a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who's essentially out of control, you know, in his drive, his desire, to, you know, race to the bottom.

He is involved in a lot of different files in this government, and I'm sure that we're going to be hearing about more of them. You know, we know that they have—they're planning to close the ER in Concordia, and they're going to turn Seven Oaks into a urgent care.

And then they announce that they're going to do similar treatment in the rural areas. But we've noticed a bit of a pause on that. I haven't been hearing much about all that list of hospitals they're planning to close. And I'm sure the urban members here in the PC caucus are wondering about that.

You know, like, okay, you've whacked all the ERs in Winnipeg, and, you know—and now you've announced you're going to be doing something—similar action in the rural areas. But they're very quiet about that now. That doesn't seem to be happening.

So, you know, perhaps they're clearing the decks here for an earlier election, earlier than 2010. I'm not really certain—*[interjection]*—2020. Two thousand and twenty. I'm just—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: You know, I want to test the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). He's been busy hoarding all those hospital ER signs that he—you know, he's going to have to send the pickers—that TV program, the pickers—over to his property there and see if they could pick up some memorabilia.

But—so, I mean, he's done all these—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —things. They have to know at some level that they can just—they cannot keep up the pace of activities that they have been. And so far, they—you know, so far, their polling numbers, I guess, are holding up good enough that they think, oh, well.

* (15:40)

But, you see, there's the—you know, there's the mistake in that thinking. You know, you can tiptoe along, you know, for a certain amount of time, you know, and not break any of the glass that's in the

cabinet. But, you know, it just takes that one last piece in the puzzle that is going to have the whole thing come tumbling down.

That is essentially what happened with Sterling Lyon, right? And as much as they—as much as they have studied and—well, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) anyway—has studied the Sterling Lyon situation and has done all he can to avoid it, he may, in fact, just end up walking in the same shoes, the same trap at the end of the day as Sterling did.

And so they may be some false sense of security here that, oh, yes, we got 40 seats and our polling's good, and we've whacked all those city hospital ERs, and now we're going to go into the rural areas. And we're going to wipe some of them out too, and, you know, and our numbers, we got lots to lose out there, so we're not going to worry about it.

You know something? They're just going to close one ER too many and they're going to find that all of a sudden, hey, there's nobody behind them; the numbers just aren't there anymore, and they are gone in one term. And that's, you know—well, and that's, you know—we'll only—*[interjection]* And they could help matters out by going early too, so, it'll be a really—a really—short one term.

But, you know, this is just another example of why, you know, any—and I don't know why I'm giving these guys good advice here because, you know, I mean, reality is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: We—you know, the—yes, we don't—they won't listen.

But, I mean, you know, if you've got something that's working, it's working properly—

An Honourable Member: If it ain't broke—

Mr. Maloway: You know, it's ain't broke, as the member says. You know, if it's not broke, why would you want to subject the province and the different industry, the construction industry, to all the uncertainty, the upheaval that is going to come about because of this?

You know, I would think the government would be, you know, better spend its time, you know, thinking up some big megaprojects that it could do, right? Like, rather than trying to, you know, race to the bottom on all these pretend projects that they don't even have, you know, why don't you spend your time

coming up with projects that need to be done and just get them done the way, you know—and let's have quality projects. And these project labour agreements have shown in the past that that is how you develop quality projects with the least upheaval possible.

So, you know, if it's not broken, then why in the world do we have to try to fix something that is not broken?

So thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am very pleased to end my speech on this bill.

An Honourable Member: So are we.

Mr. Maloway: You are, too.

An Honourable Member: That was good.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Well—

An Honourable Member: It's going to get better from here.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is quite an act to follow, and I think the emphasis is on that word act. There was a lot of righteous indignation from the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), but like most of the words and rhetoric from the NDP opposite, lots of huff and not too much puff.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to start by acknowledging today that it is International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I think it's an important reason to pause and comment and reflect on the efforts of government and individuals and non-profits, not just here in the province of Manitoba, but across our great country, to make sure that persons with disabilities are accommodated so that they can have not only access to the services that they desire and need, but also the buildings that form part of our community. And as someone who used to run a not-for-profit that worked with people for disabilities and despite the multitude of years of cuts and cuts and cuts under the former NDP government, we still managed to do our very best to provide those services.

So it was interesting, listening to the members—member opposite, and he talked about how he was sharing with the government members, how he put it, good advice. Well, I'm not sure if it was either good or—nor advice, but it was something, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, I was a little bit—I did my best to follow, because I think this Chamber is all about listening, and listening to members opposite on both sides, so that we can understand where they're coming from and perhaps look at ways at—of working together.

And so it is in that spirit that I'm hoping that the members opposite and their 12-person caucus hears the member—the words of the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) and, more importantly, allows this legislation to go forward and hear from Manitobans as to their view on the public sector construction projects act.

Which—I don't actually believe the member actually wants—the member for Elmwood wants, actually, referenced that he spent most of his speech talking about the glory days under Gary Filmon, which I thought was a passing—strange, because the members opposite literally spent 17 years disparaging the Filmon government. I think their—one of their catchphrases was the dark days.

In fact, actually, I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was an article in one of the Winnipeg dailies that noted that the NDP, I think they referenced Filmon government 187 times during the course of a two-week sitting, so.

But it is good that upon reflection, in hindsight, that the NDP are now seeing the value that the Filmon government brought to Manitobans. I know I just actually—just recently, we were actually celebrating one of those milestones and one of those anniversaries, the 20th anniversary of the Provincial Nominee Program.

Which I—thanks to one of my former colleagues, Bonnie Mitchelson, laid the framework and—for a number of other provinces to imitate and initiate their own similar programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think Manitobans are richer for the Provincial Nominee Program, richer in terms of culture, richer in terms of economics, and richer, just in terms of the people.

But the—Bill 4, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which, again, I would hope that members opposite, you know, try to bring their comments around to during their brief messaging on this legislation. The bill is really about choice. And I always find it interesting that the NDP like to portray themselves as the party of choice, but, actually, when push comes to shove—and that's not a shot at their leader, despite what they may think—that this legislation is really about choice.

It is about—you know, and we only looked—need to look at the definition of what is choice. And choice is an act of selecting or make a decision when presented with two or more possibilities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And members opposite, under the NDP, they did not like allowing construction workers and businesses that worked on government projects to have that choice.

They did not want them to have the choice whether or not to belong to a union, or, more importantly, to pay or be forced to pay union dues. See, it's always interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the NDP and their lifting up of unions and the roles that they play in our society.

And, yes, they do play a role, but instead of unions out there and essentially, you know, legitimately working with workers and selling them on the idea of the benefits of belonging to a union, we'll just take the shortcut and we'll force people to earn—or, pay union dues. And I think that's really telling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that's essentially what the NDP did under their government.

They weren't actually interested in unions representing workers. They weren't actually interested in union memberships, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were simply interested in union dues, and I think that spells and says a lot as to, again, the priorities of members opposite when they were in government.

It was all about the—you know, the kickbacks, whether it was to their own party members, whether it was their own caucus or ministers, in terms of, you know, Jets tickets and such, or whether it was Tiger Dams. Mr. Deputy Speaker, during 17 years, they made sure that they feathered their nest and the nest of their supporters.

* (15:50)

Now, we all know that at the end of their mandate, things severely went off the rails. And, I mean, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway)—it was interesting—talked about using, you know, a path of least upheaval. And I wonder if that path that the rebel five and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) chose, of mass resignations and throwing their own government under the bus, was the pass—a path of least upheaval. I can only imagine what the alternatives were that the members opposite discussed during that time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the role of an elected official and an MLA when they're speaking on legislation, whether it's The Public Sector Construction Projects Act or any legislation, is to hear from Manitobans. And we are very unique in that way that Manitobans in—have that opportunity to come here and enjoy the Legislature and, more importantly, offer their advice and their input on legislation. We are one of the very few legislators that allow and honour that tradition.

So, while the New Democratic Party may not want to hear from Manitobans, I will share with them some of the thoughts that Manitobans have on this particular bill that we're debating today, Bill 4.

So I'm quoting: The notion that government has a right to be prescriptive of whether or not workers are part of a bargaining unit is undemocratic. The purpose of labour legislation is to give choices. End quote. And who said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well, Chris Lorenc, Manitoba Heavy Construction Association president.

So, again, passing strange that the member for Elmwood gets up and he likes to talk about Mr. Lorenc and quote Mr. Lorenc. He fails to acknowledge that Mr. Lorenc believes that their—that the NDP's prescriptive measure is undemocratic, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Here's another comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So: We applaud the Pallister government for doing the right thing and levelling the playing field so the majority of the industry is not discouraged from competing for government work. End quote. And again, that was Yvette Milner, Merit Manitoba president. Darrel Reid, the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada vice-president of public affairs, said, and I quote: The PCA have been advocates for open tendering and that all qualified companies and workers should have access to public works projects. The Pallister government promised this and delivered. It's a good deal for taxpayers. End quote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, quote: We're delighted that hard-working Manitobans are finally getting the fairness they deserve. End quote. And that was Paul De Jong, president of the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is worth noting that the bill does provide more opportunities for more contractors because you're not discouraging a large segment of the industry from bidding on government work, which is pretty significant component of the construction industry here in Manitoba. And who said that? That was a manager of policy, Colin Fast, for the Winnipeg Construction Association.

So, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many individuals, many advocates, who are, unlike members opposite, willing to embrace the idea that Manitobans do deserve that ability to choose, that the fundamental issue of choice is a part of the Manitoba heritage. I mean, you can almost tie it into the issue of secret

ballots, and that we know members opposite in the NDP are not fans of secret ballots. But again, there is a certain irony.

And for some of my newer colleagues who weren't around during that time frame, during the height—or, during one component of the NDP rebellion, they were holding a meeting at their offices on Portage across from the MEC business, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And in that, they were holding a vote as to some rules and parameters for the upcoming NDP leadership vote that was spurred on by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) and his colleagues' rebellion.

And there was the call that there should be a secret ballot vote instead of just simple raising hands. And so that individual who asked for that speaker—secret ballot, I believe, was one of the premier's own staff who had joined Theresa Oswald and her rebels and said that the intimidation and repercussions of somebody knowing their vote was a real threat to them: a threat to their employment, a threat to their ability to provide for their families and for their careers.

And so a secret ballot was the only option to protect their anonymity and yet allow them to have that democratic choice.

So I always find it interesting that, you know, when, again, when push comes to shove and, again, not a shot at their leader, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that their own membership saw the value of a secret ballot vote when it came to protecting their own interests. But the NDP as a party doesn't believe in passing on that same protections to Manitobans as a whole.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I won't go into my own DeLorean and travel back in the Wayback Machine as the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) did and talk about the Pawley government and the Doer government and so on and so forth, because we are in the here and now.

And so, with that goal and with that observation that we are in the here and now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I urge the NDP to get with the times, bring this legislation forward, hear from Manitobans, and let's get down to the business of working to make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): And, you know, it's always a pleasure to follow the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) in this House, even if his speeches are rather tiresome. We sort of hoped, I guess, from hearing another member—we already have two different

versions of what this bill's all about; I thought we'd hear some kind of justification from the member for Morris (Mr. Martin). I was listening carefully and I still didn't hear it, so I guess we'll have to hear for some other government members to try to learn, really, why they believe this is a good thing for Manitoba.

I am always, though, happy to see the member for Morris stand up and debate a bill because when he gets to stand up, it means the government has acknowledged they really have no justification for the bill. They don't usually signal it quite that early, and that's kind of an interesting point this afternoon.

There's a couple of things the member for Morris raised that I want to talk about before I go on to the main debate on the bill. You know it is true that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) referenced Gary Filmon a couple of times. It is interesting now, of course, as Canadians, that we almost feel nostalgic for the days of George W. Bush, right.

George W. Bush was not a President that I particularly supported, but, you know, when we see what's going on now, I think I can actually say I'd be happier to see George W. Bush in the American White House than who we have now, and that was, of course, the point that the member for Elmwood was making, which was lost on the member for Morris, but, you know, we'll provide subtitles, I guess, next time, with the member for Morris if we know he's up speaking.

And, you know, we are really glad that we are able to actually make the Provincial Nominee Program work. Of course, that program came about when the economic situation in Manitoba, thanks to the Filmon government, was so bad that young people were leaving this province in droves. And it wasn't just that we were losing the out-migration battle; we were actually losing the overall population battle, and Manitoba actually wasn't growing its population.

At the time that we took office in 1999, the Provincial Nominee Program welcomed about 3,000 people to the province. We took that program, we actually made it work, and I was very pleased when the number of nominee folks got up to about 16,000 each year within about a dozen years, and that has played a big role in the success that Manitoba enjoyed over 17 years.

And it's always interesting when I hear the member for Morris supposedly a big democrat, wanting to lecture us about choice. Of course, he's a member of the government which is now forcing

members of health-care unions in Manitoba to vote to see who's going to represent them. They already have union representation, and this government has decided they are going to ignore the wishes of those employees and they're going to force votes in health-care facilities across the province, which has nothing to do with improving the way that health care is delivered in Manitoba, which has nothing to do with accomplishing anything except for the very cynical and pathetic effort by this government to try to have working people turn against each other rather than turn against the policies of this government.

* (16:00)

And it's also interesting, of course, the member for Morris will tell you he's all about choice. He conveniently ignores the fact that employees in the past in Manitoba were able to exercise their choice to be recognized, to have a bargaining unit in their workplace by signing a union card.

This member for Morris—who, of course, we knew from previous movies with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business when he promoted every possible anti-worker policy you could imagine—does not like employees being able to speak. He wants employers to have the chance to intimidate employees. He wants employers to have the chance to try and threaten employees to try to get them to change their mind from when they sign their union card.

So, when the member for Morris tries to present himself as the bastion of choice, he needs to take a good look in the mirror because he's part of a government that is doing the exact opposite.

Now, this bill concerns tenders or calls for bids issued by government and other public sector bodies in relation to construction projects, and it prohibits the issuing of a tender that require the successful bidder to enter into a project labour agreement for the employment of both unionized and non-unionized employees for work on the project.

This is a bill which has absolutely no merit, and I think it's probably pretty clear from the member for Elmwood's speech, but we will not be supporting this bill. This bill is not just bad for workers; it's bad for the economy in general; and it's bad for the development of our province, which has been successful over so many years.

And, you know, it's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is true that governments can become arrogant over time. I've never seen a government get arrogant so quickly than the one that we're now forced

to contend with. It is also true that governments can tend to lose energy over time—five years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years. I've never seen the air go out of the balloon as quickly as it has as with this government.

And, you know, we mentioned in the Throne Speech debate—on the Throne Speech debate, they couldn't even fill the gallery on Throne Speech day. The gallery was half full.

An Honourable Member: Like an Argo game.

Mr. Swan: As one of my colleagues says, it was like watching the Argos play at BMO Field. They almost had to close the upper deck to make it look like there were people that were interested. And, you know, you could have fired a cannon through the Rotunda. There was no support down there. There was no excitement. *[interjection]* All there were—well, as the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) says, there was just the security that this government now needs because they're afraid somebody might actually approach them and talk to them about things that they believe are important.

You know, this is a government that I quite frankly—I actually will disagree with something the member for Elmwood said. I think this government is actually confronting their own mortality. And now this government is looking at the next election, now happening in less than two years. We know full well how badly they have botched health-care reforms. And now, rather than back away, they're now going to move ahead. They're going to close two more emergency rooms in the city. I expect at some point, we're going to hear about all the emergency rooms they're going to close in rural Manitoba. I expect we're going to hear a lot more about all the things that they're going to be doing.

It is apparent to anybody that they're actually getting nervous about their future beyond October 2020, because that is the only reason you would come forward with this bill and make this bill your top priority.

Of course, it wasn't their top priority last year. Even though they have a majority, they couldn't actually get their act together in time to bring this bill in before the deadline to get it passed. They couldn't do that, so bill 28 has now magically re-emerged as Bill 4 with, of course, no changes to it, without them giving any thought to how the bill could be improved, without them having done any further consultation with working people or unions who represent working people on how this bill could actually do better.

So, frankly, I see this more as not a government that is just blindly moving ahead; this is a government which is now trying to bind the hands of future governments because they know that there's a really good chance that the jig is up in less than two years.

And, you know, you look again at who this bill would impact. Well, government tendering. Of course, they're the ones that issue the tenders, which I'm not sure they understand. If they really don't want a particular project to have a project labour agreement, then they just wouldn't ask for there to be a project labour agreement as part of the tender. I don't know if the minister understands that. I don't know if the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) understands that. I don't know if any of the members of the PC caucus actually understand that. Perhaps they'll update their speaking points and put that on the record. But I'm not sure they do.

If the government—this particular government doesn't like project labour agreements, well, I suppose they could just not make that part of the tender. But that's not what this government's all about. Under the guise of providing choice, they're actually taking that choice away not just from their government but from other public bodies: Crown corporations, hospitals, universities and colleges.

So they're actually saying now to a university, if they're going to do a capital project, I know that may be an inappropriate example right now because with this government there are no capital projects taking place at university. The only capital projects at colleges are the ones that, thankfully, our government was able to start and they realized they couldn't back out of.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

But, if there is to be a capital project of some type, this government, of course, is now imposing its ideology. They are now saying to that organization, you don't have the choice to decide whether a project labour agreement would be a good thing for your organization for getting this project built on time and on budget. We're the government and we're going to take that right away from you. And, of course, here's the government who say, well, we don't politically interfere in Crowns, well, except when they do.

And here's this government telling Crown corporations in Manitoba, you know, even if your board thinks it's a good thing—the Conservative-appointed board thinks it's a good thing, even if you know that you could get a better job on this project, we are not going to allow that to happen. We the

government are so worried about what you might do that we're going to take that right away from you as a Crown corporation.

And it's disappointing, Madam Speaker, because Manitoba actually had a booming construction industry that was contributing to a bright economic future, and that was in place. And, actually, this government inherited a very, very strong construction industry.

We know on this side that construction workers provide essential services to our province that allow all of us to have safe roads and buildings, and we know that a strong construction industry helps us to create a productive and prosperous province for all. And the construction industry is not a small part of this province's economy.

Before the election, the construction industry was actually accounting for about 8 per cent of Manitoba employment and, not surprisingly, has always been a significant contributor to the economic stability of Manitoba. And the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) put some really strong points on the record. We get the heavy construction news every week. I always enjoy reading it, and it's been a very different flavour of journalism in that newspaper than I think members of the government were expected. I believe they thought that the Heavy Construction Association would simply ignore the fact that this government has slashed the municipal roads and bridges program by more than 80 per cent.

I think they thought the association would ignore the fact that this government which promised to invest at least \$500 million a year in Manitoba's highway infrastructure is now at best going to spend \$350 million. And, you know, there was some really telling things the member for Elmwood put on the record, and I want to repeat it because I don't think that members opposite heard. The firms which provide bonding for companies have made some very, very dire comments and issued some dire warnings about construction companies who are owned, by and large, in Manitoba. Those companies are owned by people in our community. They might have bigger cars and bigger houses than some of us, but they are people committed to the community.

And, of course, if a construction company isn't busy, it's not just the owner who's impacted; it's everybody. It's all of the employees in the business. It's all of the workers, both full-time workers and seasonal workers, who are affected. And what happens when workers are concerned about their income and concerned about their job? They stop improving their

homes. They stop buying vehicles. They stop spending on a whole bunch of different things because they're worried about making sure they have enough money to put food on the table.

And I don't know whether the members of the Progressive Conservative government just don't understand that or if they just don't care. And I guess, if we have a debate about this, I suppose we can have some members step up and put their views on the record.

Now, in calling for what they would describe as open tendering, this minister is now trying to build a straw man, as we used to say practising law, create an impression that non-union firms have somehow been prevented from bidding on work on Manitoba projects. That's not the case. That's never been the case. And that is not the case. And, if Bill 4 is withdrawn by this government for which we will give leave, it is still not going to be the case.

* (16:10)

But this government, of course, likes to use some words to try to get some of their base fired up, to get some of their donors, I suppose, donating and get some of their volunteers volunteering. And it is disappointing, I think, that this government is suggesting that project labour agreements somehow violate the rights of workers when, in fact, they do the exact opposite. They provide workers with certainty, they provide workers with safety and it is not just a benefit for workers; it is a benefit for those projects as well.

Put quite simply, project labour agreements have never, ever required that bidders or workers must be from a union and, further, non-union contractors are never required to sign union agreements. And, of course, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) pointed out in the question-and-answer period—or, I might say, the question and non-answer period—the former minister of—now the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, at least for now, actually confirmed that to the media. And he said that project labour agreements do not create forced unionization.

But here we are now. It's a new session. They couldn't get the bill passed because they couldn't get their act together. There's now a new minister. It's a new session, new number for the same bill and it's now a different rationale.

And, you know, I'm surprised that the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) criticized the member for

Elmwood for putting some very valid and very important history on the record. And, indeed, it was a project labour agreement that was in place when Premier Duff Roblin, who was a Progressive Conservative, and his government built the Red River Floodway. They built that floodway as a response to the devastating Red River Valley flood in 1950 that devastated much of Winnipeg. And it was recognized that it was a big project, a huge project, in fact, one of the largest projects ever undertaken in Manitoba.

And Premier Roblin knew that the best way to get that project built was to make sure there was cost certainty, there was labour certainty, there was safety certainty and the conditions were in place to make sure that that project went the way it should. And that is exactly what happened.

And why do governments and businesses alike use project labour agreements? Well, because it improves the quality of the work. And Duff Roblin knew it and other premiers have known it. This can prevent contractors that may not have the same safety standards, that may not have the same work completion records, the same satisfactory work, from bringing poorly trained and unqualified labour to critical infrastructure projects.

And Duff Roblin got it. He knew that lowest price did not actually necessarily mean the lowest overall cost or the best value. And, again, those project labour agreements were used in building the Red River Floodway, which came in on time and on budget.

And, Madam Speaker, as I believe you know, before I joined this Legislature, I was a lawyer at a firm downtown. And as a young lawyer working with a number of labour lawyers, I had the opportunity to be part of the negotiation of a project labour agreement for a very large project that took place in Manitoba.

I'm not going to say who the client was or where it was located. Members of the PC caucus might be surprised to know that I was actually negotiating on behalf of the employers—or the employer, I should say.

The employer knew that they had a large, difficult project to be built. The last thing that employer wanted was to have a contractor that didn't have a skilled workforce, and also the last thing that the employer wanted was to have a project that would somehow be stopped by a wildcat strike or some other labour action.

The employer, the owner of the business enterprise, wanted to make sure that there was a project labour agreement in place because they knew that even if there were any additional labour costs, the benefits

of safety and of proper work being done and the certainty of labour peace certainly had a value.

So it actually—it was a fascinating project to be part of. We had all the different trade unions come down, and we negotiated. I got to meet some of the leaders from various trade unions in Manitoba. They were pleased to sign on, but so too was the company.

And, you know, I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) was rather shocked when I reminded the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) that even Premier Mike Harris—Premier Mike Harris in Ontario—who, until recent days probably had the most reactionary, nasty government in Canadian history—even Mike Harris understood the value of a project labour agreement.

And I don't know, Madam Speaker, on the conferences that you attend, if you've ever had the joy of driving on the freeways in the greater Toronto area. The freeways have been congested, as you try to get around that city, and the Harris government agreed they were going to build a new freeway—in fact, it's a toll freeway, I believe, that goes around Ontario.

But, when that was built, they decided to make that subject to a project labour agreement, because, just like Duff Roblin, just like the large commercial client that I looked out for, the Government of Ontario, under Mike Harris, recognized that if you want to get the project built on time, on budget, without sudden stoppages, without untrained workers, that's the best way to do it.

And, with this move, with stepping up again and making this the first bill they really want to deal with in debate, this government has now solidly lodged itself somewhere to the right of the Michael Harris government in Ontario, which is really quite breathtaking, if it wasn't so horrific.

Now, we know that by requiring all contractors to pay prevailing wages under one collective agreement, the selection then gets based on productivity and quality, and not just on price.

So, if you take the difference in wages out of the way, it's then the best company—the company that can do the best work, the company that has the best processes, the company which is most innovative—that winds up getting the work and gaining by working on the project.

And this government is passing this law—or trying to pass this law based on what a small number of private-interest groups have been lobbying them to do, rather than looking at the big picture. And, you know, I

know that—I don't know if it was the member for Elmwood or the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) asked the minister exactly who he had consulted with.

And he said, well, there you go, I talked to the Construction Association, and I also talked to the Merit Contractors Association, so there you go, and I—maybe I talked to some other people. But he couldn't really think of who else he talked to.

We know he didn't talk to a worker. We know he didn't speak to the very, very good construction companies doing their work here in Manitoba—often doing work in difficult conditions, sometimes dangerous conditions that require companies to have tremendous plans in place to keep their employees safe and to also keep their assets safe.

And they should have listened to everybody, because if they had, this bill would not be before the Legislature today, and we would not be debating it this afternoon. It's their job as government to actually hear and to listen and to come up with the best possible laws, and Bill 4 is not part of that.

This government actually owes a great deal to the public system. They owe a great deal to the union system for investing in workforce development through apprenticeship and training programs. And the irony, of course, is that when someone goes through a union program that gives them training, that gives them a lot of experience in how to do the job better, it's not just unionized employers who benefit.

The irony, of course, is that non-unionized groups, such as those that belong to Merit, also benefit from the development of those union workers. And I don't see the government finding anything wrong with that. Manitoba unions actually invested six and a half million dollars on training in 2017 alone, training which would otherwise have to be either taken on by the employers, or training that just simply would not be done.

And what's the result of that training not being done? Well, greater chance that a worker is going to get hurt on the job. A greater chance that equipment or other assets are going to be damaged or are going to be lost. A greater chance that a project which might be very important to the people of Manitoba, people all over the province or perhaps in a specific area or along a specific highway or requiring a specific project to be built—the real danger that project's not going to be built in a safe way on a timely basis.

The government needs to understand that unions are proud to partner with private sector contractors. I

know, Madam Speaker, that sometimes people believe that it's all an adversarial relationship between unions and businesses. I was proud to serve as the minister of competitiveness, training and trade, and I saw a lot of co-operation.

* (16:20)

I saw a lot of employers in this province very interested in working with unions and many employers really appreciating the training that the union was providing to their members, because it made the employees better employees, and it made the companies stronger as well.

And these partnerships, at the present time, fund five jointly funded union training centres in Manitoba. And I've had the chance to visit some of these training centres. I remember, when I was the minister for CTT, I had the chance to go out and see the union training centre in Brandon. And that training centre, of course, played a very, very important role with workers at the Maple Leaf plant out in Brandon.

And a big part of the Maple Leaf plant has been importing workers. They've been unable to find people in our province prepared to do rather difficult work in difficult conditions. So, as I believe you know, Madam Speaker, and I think all members of this House know, we've been successful at encouraging people from countries as diverse as Colombia, Ukraine, El Salvador, China, to come to Manitoba first of all as temporary foreign workers, but if they like it here and if their employer enjoys having them employed, it's not just temporary foreign workers who are sent back after a couple of years through the nominee program; these are people who now have the chance to become Canadian citizens.

And Maple Leaf will tell you that they've benefited greatly from the United Food and Commercial Workers and their training centre helping their new employees learn English as an additional language. The town of Brandon has benefited greatly from the UFCW training centre.

I've had the chance to visit the UFCW training centre right here in Winnipeg, and I've seen the great work that they do helping employees. And again, yes, it's a union that's benefiting their members, but it has to be understood that there's a real benefit to their employers as well, and we all win.

We know that the workplace is a tradesperson's classroom, and many of the people who work on project labour agreements on big enterprises are skilled tradespeople. And we know in Manitoba that we

needed to do a better job of finding more skilled tradespeople, which you would know if you ever need to find an electrician or a plumber or somebody else to do your own residential work. We know that for many years, that was ignored by government. And I'm very proud of the work that we did to improve and increase the number of apprenticeships in Manitoba. And that's been a big part of the boom in construction and a big part of having skilled workers here to do the work.

Just today, Madam Speaker, I was up talking about Tec Voc. Tec Voc is a wonderful school in the West End that has great vocational programs. And now I'm very pleased there's a number of trades where students can actually begin working on their Red Seal. They can actually start gaining their first level of their apprenticeship while they're still in school at Tec Voc.

The aerospace industry has been very excited about that. A number of trades have been very excited about that. It is another example of how an investment in an employee actually winds up to be a benefit for the company and a benefit for all of us overall.

And it's no mystery that when there is a project labour agreement, that non-unionized workers actually benefit. They benefit because they receive the same pay and the same working conditions as unionized workers. And without the training offered by unions, Manitoba frankly would lack the skilled workforce required to build essential infrastructure.

If this minister stood up and said, don't worry, we're going to fund additional training spaces so that if unions don't have the ability to train workers, we'll do it, well, maybe that would be a different story. But that's not what we've heard from this government. That's certainly not what we've heard from this minister. And that does not form part of their rationale for Bill 4.

So it has to be understood that union dues, which I know this minister and this government denounce—these union dues pay for a workforce development system which is used by both union and non-union sectors. It just means that in a project labour agreement, there's an acknowledgement of the benefit that both unionized employers and non-unionized employers get, and it is a level playing field. And I simply don't understand why the government would have a problem with that.

In effect, what this legislation does is it removes the incentive for unions and their private sector business partners to continue doing what they've done so successfully, and that is to continue investing in a

skilled workforce essential to Manitoba's economic prosperity, and this change is either going to leave taxpayers on the hook when skilled workers are needed and there's no one out there to provide funding for training, or projects are simply not going to be done on time and safely, and that's a real shame, Madam Speaker.

As Sudhir Sandhu, the CEO of Manitoba Building Trades, has said, skilled labour is not cheap and cheap labour is not skilled. There are two sides to the equation that this government needs to understand. That's why they need to listen to what our caucus is saying, but they also need to have a broader sample size of people they talk to. They need to turn away from a very, very narrow perspective provided by a very narrow group of people and they actually need to understand how things work in construction, and we think that returning to a free-for-all, cost-only, decision-making framework is going to sacrifice the long term for very narrow and short-term considerations.

Again, it may now be that this government is only thinking in the short term. We stand opposed to that way of thinking. We stand opposed to this bill and we'll do everything we can to stop Bill 4 from taking Manitoba backwards.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): It's a pleasure to rise to speak against this bill today. In my real life I ran a small business in communications and public relations—*[interjection]*—this is only—this is, kind of, theatre—so I have launched small businesses, advised many politicians and candidates, and I'm a generation Xer, and like many people in my generation I've had to work several jobs at once to pay the bills, put food on the table. Sometimes it's meant working full time while working two part-time jobs on the side and juggling child care with my wife.

But there's really nothing exceptional about this, which is the point. I realize there are lots of people who are much worse off than me, who are struggling and deserve a much better shot at life, and the reason I entered politics is that I don't think it needs to be this way.

We don't have to accept that lousy economic growth is the new normal. We can create better jobs and let people out of poverty and we can leave a better province and climate to our kids, and while I'm partisan enough to lead a political party, I still want

people who support the NDP and the PCs to succeed. I don't want them to win the next election, but I do want them and their families to be able to succeed in Manitoba because, ultimately, there are good people in every party and many people who have no partisan affiliation at all, and I've always said that the strongest disagreements are between people who have the same goal but disagree strongly on how to get there.

Anyway, because there are things we can all agree on, like the goal of creating a stronger economy and creating jobs.

Again, and we all share that goal; we disagree strongly with the way the PCs are approaching it because, for example, good health care and good education and good infrastructure are not costs to be cut. They are the foundation of a modern economy. In fact, good public health care and good public education and good public infrastructure are what make an economy competitive because healthy, creative skilled employees and quality infrastructure for everyone are good for businesses and government and communities, and that's what we should try to compete on.

But is that what we have? No. We have high rates of diabetes, poverty and drop-out rates. Our infrastructure needs fixing. It all takes investment, not cuts, and that's where we disagree.

We all know Manitoba is a have-not province and this government says the public sector is too big compared to the private sector so we have to shrink the public sector.

Well, another way of seeing it is that our private sector is too small compared to the public sector, and the reason the public sector is large is because Manitoba gets substantial transfer payments because our private economy is too small. And the Manitoba employers report, the 2018 Manitoba Prosperity Report laid it out: We have a smaller GDP per capita, we have low wages, and we have fewer businesses.

So just cutting government on its own doesn't generate growth. All those people who work for government and who work for contractors and who work on make-up projects also spend their money in the private economy, and if you shrink government, it means we'll have a small government and a small private sector which, at the end of the day, what you've done, if you're the PCs, is shrink the economy. You get what we have, and people leave.

This government's own projections are for growth to slow down over the next two years and B-4 is a bad bill. It delivers exactly the opposite of what our

province needs, because for decades young Manitobans have been facing a job market where it is harder and harder to get a good full-time job with benefits.

* (16:30)

StatsCan says that over 50 per cent of Canadians of working age, between 25 and 54, are working part-time, precarious work. And workers are not just overhead to be cut; they are human beings and they are customers. So we can't enrich our province by lowering wages and taking away benefits.

And there's plenty of hypocrisy in this legislation, Madam Speaker. The PCs voted to change a law, the so-called fiscal responsibility law, to make sure they will keep getting pay raises. It's a law that's always been a sham since virtually every time it gets close to being enforced, it gets changed to avoid facing the consequences. But the government, they're presenting a law that will make sure that workers will be paid less and more Manitobans will be stuck in a two-tier workplace. There are already too many workplaces that are like this. And this government is not just out of touch; it is dangerously out of touch with the economic reality facing most Manitobans and most Canadians.

It's not 1975 anymore or 1995; this government is introducing legislation with the goal of driving down wages and reducing benefits when the opposite needs to happen. It takes good jobs and turns them into bad jobs. This will drive people out of Manitoba. It means that businesses that want to pay their workers a fair wage and give them decent benefits will be undercut.

And it's not about forced unionization because no one is being forced to join a union. It's an ideologically driven attack on working people, in part because of their perceived attachment to the NDP, and that's clear from the comments from the member from Morris and from the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

The associations of labour and the NDP unions are not seen as defending their own interests, who are trying to ensure quality work, stable jobs, decent wages and benefits; they're seen as targets. And that sums up everything that's wrong with this government because they think the key to success is to make sure their opponents make less money. So no wonder Manitoba is a have-not province.

And I do want to say something. When I hear that laws like this are supposed to be good for taxpayers, our obligation is to citizens. Taxpayers are not in the Constitution. Our obligation in this House is to all citizens, and we need to look at more than just value for money that is defined only by the government's

bottom line. We need to focus on community return on investment because part of what labour—these project labour agreements did was make sure that Manitobans got good jobs.

And I want to refer to The Manitoba Prosperity Report, which is from the Manitoba Employers Council, because it touches on a whole bunch of issues that are undermined, essentially, by this legislation.

And this is from earlier this year. It says, while some improvements were made, Manitoba still struggled in most of the areas considered in this report.

In 15 of 28 indicators, relative to the four neighbouring provinces to which we are most frequently compared, Manitoba finished at the bottom. Manitoba finished second last in six of the 28 other indicators. In 21 of 28 indicators; therefore, Manitoba finished amongst the bottom two provinces. And I'll name some of them: Manitoba performed poorly in several key areas, such as last in GDP per capita, last in net interprovincial migration, fewest businesses per capita, lowest post-secondary graduation rate, most—and lowest weekly earnings.

It said that while Manitoba had the strongest GDP growth of the five provinces over the past decade, despite this growth, Manitoba still has the lowest GDP per capita, more than \$3,000 lower than the next closest province.

Some improvements came not from anything Manitoba did, but rather changes in other provinces. For example, the recent decline in natural resource prices greatly impacted other provinces' budgets, improving Manitoba's budget balance ranking. To be competitive, Manitoba and its employers must have access to a skilled workforce. On a net basis, Manitoba lost 50,000 people to other provinces over the last decade. While improvements were made, Manitoba has nearly the highest percentage of labour force without a high school diploma.

Conversely, Manitoba's labour force has the fewest people with either a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree. Manitoba has also—Manitoba also has the largest public sector workforce of all provinces.

It makes a whole series of recommendations, but what is really important are some of the challenges that we're talking about in terms of the economy, in terms of not just the family tax comparisons but business and labour comparisons, that for businesses per capita in Manitoba ranked fifth. It has the lowest business establishment count of all five provinces, that the head office per capita, all five provinces lost head offices

over the five-year period of investment. On private capital investment per capita, which the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has very often been talking about how much Manitoba has had—seen some of the sharpest increase in growth in terms of private investment, it is partly because investment—private investment—has absolutely been plummeting in Alberta and in Saskatchewan, where it has dropped by—where both investment in both those provinces has dropped by half.

In terms of the labour force, Manitoba's ranking was fourth. In real terms, Manitoba's labour force grew by over 50,000 workers over the past decade. However, in percentage terms, that was the second worst growth rate amongst all provinces, ahead of only Ontario.

And there are also challenges, even when it comes to measuring Manitoba's unemployment rate. In Manitoba, we have seen generally an increasing—the number of people who are participating in the labour force has been dropping. We don't measure unemployment on First Nations. High school graduations rates in Manitoba are also low. Manitoba has the second highest percentage of workers in the labour force without a high school diploma.

Manitoba ranks fifth, the percentage of labour force with a post-secondary diploma, certificate or a university degree. And the list goes on. And part of this is that there have been very serious challenges in terms of Manitoba's economy because we simply don't have adequate wages.

And that, more than anything, is what ends up actually attracting people to Manitoba—or attracting people out of Manitoba. People moved to Fort McMurray not because of the low tax rates, but because you could make \$300,000 a year as a diesel mechanic.

And one of the things we have to do, to focus on more than anything, is bringing up wages and creating good jobs and good work in Manitoba in order to keep people here and to attract them. But this bill is going to do the exact opposite.

And it's incredibly frustrating, Madam Speaker, because part of the reason for the bitter divisions in politics is that people assume we've reached a zero-sum point where we can only make one person better off by taking from somebody else. The premise of this bill is that people will be paid less for the same work. So this government is going out of its way to make sure that Manitobans earn less for its work, and they're making it harder for people to pay their bills.

And it's extremely unfortunate, in part, just because when we talk about what—the premise behind competition or competition on price. Steve Jobs famously said is that if you're competing on price, you're in the bozo zone, is that there's always going to be somebody else out there who can undercut you. So what we really need to do is focus on quality.

And that's part of what project labour agreements did. They focus on quality. They focus on quality jobs, they focus on keeping the benefits of that spending—of public spending with Manitoba dollars in Manitoba. It doesn't just mean it's all going to go, as they said sometimes, to a fly-by-night—some fly-by-night company that's unreliable because they put in the lowest bid.

Again, it's incredibly unfortunate that this government took away the means by which you could compare the public delivery of a service, and compare it to the private sector, because often the public sector can deliver goods and services at a lower cost. They shouldn't do it all the time, but there are times where it is much more efficient.

And, just to review, I mean, these agreements are the best way to guarantee that Manitoba projects create jobs for Manitobans. Since the 1960s, governments of all stripes have used these agreements to give all workers on public infrastructure projects the same fair wages, the same safety standards and the same training opportunities, because many of—for many of these jobs, the training only occurs on the job. These agreements put quality first and they create community benefits, like local employment and training opportunities to grow a local, skilled workforce, which we lack here in Manitoba. It ensures a level playing field for all workers on a project and help ensures that projects are completed on time and on budget.

Again, the challenge here is that this bill is eroding good jobs. The Manitoba Building Trades has said that the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) talk of forced unionization is really about pushing to give non-unionized contractors an advantage—an advantage, not about levelling the playing field, but giving them an advantage in bidding on the province's public and private construction projects.

And four former Manitoba Labour ministers responded to those comments saying it shows he will, quote—he, quote, will try to turn Manitoba into a low-wage, right-to-work province, end quote, attacking how unionized, organized—including union dues is an opening assault on a basic concept of workplace fairness upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada for

70 years where everyone pitches in because everyone benefits. This is also an attack on the Canada—Canadian Charter of rights, which promotes the freedom to associate and which was upheld in the Supreme Court of Canada, specifically as the right to join unions. We've been down this road before. The Premier was senior minister in the Filmon government that systematically rolled back the rights of workers and unions. End quote.

And again, this—as—this is an incredibly narrow bill that takes as a premise that we can make everybody better off by making them worse off. And that's not a way to run an economy. It's not a way to run a government. It's profoundly unfortunate. It's going in completely the opposite direction for where we need to go with jobs and for the economy in this province.

If you look at what has happened over the last 40 years, since the 1970s, one in five Manitobans has not seen an increase in their market income before taxes. One in five Manitobans has not seen an increase in their pay since 1976.

* (16:40)

The benefits of growth between 1945 and 1975 were much better shared. When the economy grew, it grew for everyone, and that's what we need to aim for. And this is the opposite of what this bill is achieving.

So, thank you for listening. Thank you for taking the time and for the opportunity—[interjection]

Well, I know I can just keep going, but—

An Honourable Member: You don't have to give up.

Mr. Lamont: I've never—I don't have to. I don't have to, but I've said all I need to for now, so thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Every member of this august Chamber have different life experiences, and our world views, personal preferences and value systems are shaped by these life experiences.

It is often said we should not judge or condemn others unless—judge or condemn others for their actions unless we have walked the road in their shoes. So I can understand why members across the way, among others, view minimum-wage increases or membership in unions so differently and quite dramatically opposed to how we view it from this side of the House.

A few years ago, I had a good, honest conversation from a colleague across the way on minimum wage. I respected my colleague, and I believe he did the same. We held totally different view on minimum wage

because he was speaking from the experiences of a business owner, and I spoke from the experiences of a worker. We ended up the conversation by agreeing to disagree with each other.

Why do I have a different view of union membership? Sadly, I have learned first-hand about labourers and how little they are paid for the labour they do. And I've known many overseas foreign workers, many, many years ago until this very time, and I've heard about the difficulties they faced—they have faced and are still facing.

Take the case of a male foreign worker known to us personally. He happened to be one of the best friends of my husband. He accepted to work in one of the companies in the Middle East, and unbeknownst to him, the work that he was assigned to do will involve being exposed to harmful chemicals. And the—it's quite unconscionable for that company not to provide protection for its workers.

To make a long story short, the worker had to be repatriated back home because he fell ill. He had to be hospitalized for the ailment, and there was no medical health-care benefits in the old country, so the family had to pay for all the medical bills and, in the end, had to ask help from other friends, especially friends living abroad.

One day, my husband went back home to visit his friend when he learned that he was gravely ill. He entered the hospital room and he stayed—he didn't enter; he didn't go in when he learned his friend was down on his knees, praying loudly for God to give him healing.

A few days after that visit that friend of my husband passed away, leaving a young wife and a young son to fend for themselves. He was the only breadwinner of the young family.

One should wonder, let's not bother with that kind of story. We're in Canada; we're in Manitoba, but, Madam Speaker, those stories have also occurred—those sad stories have also occurred here in Canada, in Manitoba. We've heard of workers who died and contracted illnesses while being employed in their various workplaces.

Just wondering: How will those business or company owners feel if one of their family members meet exactly the same fate as this poor worker, or, in the first place, will they allow their family members to work in that kind of environment that is unprotected and unsafe?

Now, back to my earlier point, that I understand, somehow, why members across the way do not appreciate the sad situation of some of the workers. They simply have not been walking in those workers' shoes. Had they been—if they have done the same, they will feel how these workers are paid so low for the work that they do which benefit greatly the companies they work for.

I have a personal—very personal story of why I appreciate being a union member and how I value the hard work, the dedication, and the concern of some of our union floor leaders. I have once been a member of MGEU, having worked for a provincial entity government office for a long time before I was allowed to do this job that I presently am doing, which I thank the members of the Logan constituency for allowing me to continue to do this job and work for them.

I had to make a decision to retire from—or resign from my job because, at that time, I don't know why I'm feeling sad and depressed and why the seemingly harsh treatment that I was receiving was getting to me. In the past I don't mind it; I tell myself I'm an immigrant; I'm a coloured person; I just have to bear it if I were treated differently.

* (16:50)

But, in those particular—at that particular time, I felt a little sensitive and I don't know why. And without any hard—without much thinking about it, I wrote a letter of resignation and my supervisor accepted it. Maybe my supervisor was just happy to accept it. That means he could take in a new employee, maybe someone not as different as I am—as I was. And I said, I'm retiring—or I'm resigning in a week's time. So by—before the end of the week has to come, I have to go all over the departments and have my—what's that, that you have to sign off—that they have to sign off that I don't have outstanding obligations to anyone in the department, or that I'm free to go. So I had to get the signature of HR and then some other departments.

When it came to my—one of the departments, one of the staff at that department asked me, why are you resigning? And I told the guy, who happens to be a union member, that I don't feel so well; I would be needing some treatment; in fact, I have a scheduled MRI a month from now. And then that member—one of the union members—said, if you're ill, if you're sick, you don't resign, but you take a sick leave. I won't sign this paper and instead accompany you to HR, and you will have to rescind this resignation. But, I said, it's been approved by all the folks that should approve it,

my supervisor including—included, and it's just your signature that's needed. No, I won't allow that.

So it was noontime. He missed his lunch. We—he helped me craft my letter rescinding my resignation, and then we went to see the HR person. The HR person, although he had signed off already, realized that the guy has some point. Like, if I'm not feeling well, that I have some medical issues, I should get a sick leave instead. So the—to make a long story short, the supervisor, whom I believe was just too happy to see me go, had to accept their letter—my letter rescinding my resignation.

And, lo and behold, I took a sick leave all right, and when my MRI date came, it was found out that I had brain tumour and then I had to be operated on and that I had to be away from work for a year. Had it been for that union member who intervened on my behalf and who understood that if a worker is ill, that worker should not resign but should take a sick leave, it would have cost me—it would have been an error that would have cost me and my family huge, huge financial losses.

For a year, I had paid sick leave, and so somehow, I had an income. Otherwise, had I resigned and had that union member not intervened on my behalf, I would be without assistance for a year. And I have valued the work of dedicated union members, union leaders, as a result of that. And I have also valued how union membership and unions do advocate on behalf of workers.

So why would we not appreciate the role of unions? Why should we not allow unions to operate if workers willingly, voluntarily, with no pressure from anyone, join the union? And why would the union not be allowed to bargain for the welfare of workers?

Union membership—unions provide training to their workers. They train the workers to do the work the best way they can, so the companies will eventually benefit from the labour of the workers. And we've seen that happen and we've heard people say—HR people say the best resources are human resources.

So we do make a point. We will always make a point to raise the value of union membership, not only because—simply because of so many stories and incidents already wherein membership with the union have saved not just lives, but also provided many benefits to an otherwise—workers who would not have those benefits in the first place.

We do believe that membership—the labourers who are members of the union contribute to the economy. We believe unionized members, just like any of us, pay their due taxes, and they are productive members of society. They do volunteer work for the community. And they provide sustenance to their families—without whom, families would be without a stable income.

Why should we not provide the right wages for labourers when they provide just and productive labour for their companies?

Without the training offered by unions, Manitoba would lack the skilled workforce required to build essential infrastructure. Take, for example, unionized members of the construction industry. This industry, we know full well, contributes—while the unionized construction industry contributes to this training, the non-unionized industry passes the buck to community colleagues and the unionized construction industry.

I have another personal experience to share. Back in the old country there's this big organization with members. And this organization has some church connections whose members are targeted by one of the biggest corporations in the company for its cheap labour. Why? Because this—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 11 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 3, 2018

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Members' Statements		24-Hour Giving Challenge	
Volunteer George Ames and His Dog Rusty Nesbitt	293	Ewasko	303
Heidi Wright		Wharton	303
Swan	293	Lifelight Air Ambulance Privatization	
New Amish Families in Vita		Gerrard	303
Smook	294	Friesen	303
Leila Castro		Death of Patient Using Air Ambulance Service	
Saran	294	Gerrard	304
CP Holiday Train		Pallister	304
Morley-Lecomte	295	Privatization of Water Bomber Services	
		Maloway	304
		Pallister	304
Oral Questions		Petitions	
Lifelight Air Ambulance Privatization		Vimy Arena	
Kinew	295	Fletcher	305
Pallister	296	Addictions Services– Brandon and Western Manitoba	
Privatization of Water Bomber Services		Allum	306
Kinew	296	Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services	
Pallister	296	Lindsey	307
Manitoba Hydro		Preventative Health Services Plan	
Kinew	296	Gerrard	307
Pallister	297	Addictions Services– Brandon and Western Manitoba	
Ontario French Language University		Swan	308
Kinew	297	Concordia Hospital Emergency Room	
Pallister	297	Wiebe	308
Bureau de l'éducation française			
Kinew	297		
Pallister	298		
Methamphetamine Addiction			
Swan	298		
Friesen	298		
Addiction Treatment Services			
Swan	299		
Friesen	299		
B & L Foster Care Agency			
B. Smith	299		
Stefanson	299		
Disability Support Workers			
Lamont	300		
Pallister	300		
Gimli High School			
Wiebe	301		
Goertzen	302		

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