

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
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	PC
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
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	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew, Hon.	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
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
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	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 29, 2017

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.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I would like to draw members' attention to the table today as I am pleased to introduce to the House our new Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Dave Shuttleworth. Mr. Shuttleworth will be the first full-time Sergeant-at-Arms in the history of the Manitoba Legislature with an expanded role and new responsibilities. These changes to the Sergeant's role and duties will bring Manitoba in line with other legislatures in Canada and were approved by LAMC.

Sergeant Shuttleworth brings a wealth of experience to the Assembly as a 30-year veteran of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, where he rose to the rank of inspector. His extensive policing career included postings in Nunavut, Labrador, Ottawa and Saskatchewan as well as various detachments across Manitoba, including his last posting as operations officer for the RCMP Manitoba North District in Thompson.

Some of his responsibilities with the RCMP included serving as both a detachment commander and a district commander, command of the Aboriginal operations unit of National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, responsibility for contract and Aboriginal policing programs for the province of Manitoba.

I would also like to note for the House, as Sergeant Shuttleworth is a member of the Manitoba Metis community, he will become the first indigenous Sergeant-at-Arms in the 146-year history of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

Sergeant Shuttleworth, on behalf of all honourable members and all Assembly staff, I welcome you to your new role.

And at this time, I would also like to introduce his family who are with us today. Seated in the Speaker's Gallery, we have his wife, Isabel Shuttleworth; children, James, Jamie and Joshua Shuttleworth; grandchild, River Storm; sister, Roxanne Shuttleworth; and nieces Chloe Shuttleworth and Arielle Williams.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 37—The Concussion in Youth Sport Act

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 37, The Concussion in Youth Sport Act; Loi sur les commotions cérébrales chez les jeunes athlètes, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: I am pleased to rise in the House today for the first reading of Bill 37, The Concussion in Youth Sport Act; Loi sur les commotions cérébrales chez les jeunes athlètes.

This is a new bill that proposes the introduction of measures to optimize concussion awareness, education, prevention and management of concussions sustained in youth sport in Manitoba. The Concussions in Youth Sport Act would accelerate the awareness and education efforts and provide active mechanisms to remove youth athletes from play and provide defined protocols for proper medical clearances to know when it is safe for a youth athlete to return to play.

If this legislation can prevent any possible consequences of concussions, it will be a major step forward, a step that may lead to more concussion legislation across Canada.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

Bill 203—The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I move, seconded by the member from The Maples, that Bill 203, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fletcher: This bill's been on the Order Paper for a year, and I was waiting for confirmation in the federal census, which was released on February 16th of this year. And this bill reduces the number of seats in the Legislature by eight, though I think it could be easily amended to make it as high as 20. We are overgoverned in Manitoba. We want to look for efficiencies and effective government, and this is completely consistent with smaller Cabinet, smaller government, responsible government and more effective government.

So I look forward to the debate. The boundaries are going to be changed before the next election in any case, so this would be a good opportunity to reflect on how we want those changes to be made. Thank you.

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

Bill 205—The Brookside Cemetery Recognition Act

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that The Brookside Cemetery Recognition Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

* (13:40)

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, this is one of the most significant cemeteries just not in Canada, but in the Commonwealth. There is a—many thousands of military veterans—Tommy Prince, a well-known and famous Aboriginal hero—Canadian hero, there are many other prominent Manitobans and it's a beautiful, serene place and I believe it is among, I would say, one of the great treasures of Canada both spiritually and from a historic perspective.

Thank you.

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

Bill 206—The Legal Profession Amendment Act (Queen's Counsel Appointments)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from The Maples, that The Legal Profession Amendment Act (Queen's Counsel Appointments), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, in this year, our 150th year, given the Queen's record-breaking reign and given the good things the legal profession—yes, I said it—good things the legal profession can do for society, there is a historic honorific designation that can be provided: Q.C. is the one that has been used for centuries. The previous government took it away, but it's still used in most provinces today and would be an excellent way to recognize meritorious legal minds such as Sid Green, who is a stellar example of public life, public service and also being a lawyer.

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

An Honourable Member: *[Agreed.]*

Madam Speaker: Did somebody agree?

An Honourable Member: *[Agreed.]*

Madam Speaker: *[Agreed and so ordered.]*

Bill 202—The Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, this is a bill, the insurance—

Madam Speaker: Could I just ask the member to indicate the number of the bill he's proposing?

Mr. Fletcher: Moved by myself and seconded by the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen), that The Insurance Amendment Act be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Assiniboia, seconded by the honourable member for Kewatinook, that Bill 202—The Insurance Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, this deals with medical assistance in dying, something that I was very involved in when I was a federal Member of Parliament. The reason for this amendment is there is a very serious loophole in the amendment act—or, in The Insurance Act—that still allows for insurance companies to potentially call a medically assisted dying a suicide, and if it's declared a suicide there could be changes to the beneficiaries of the said insurance.

So this bill ensures that medically assisted—medically assistance in dying cannot be considered suicide for insurance purposes.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Fourth Report

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 25, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report – Manitoba East Side Road Authority – dated September 2016*
- *Auditor General's Report – Public Interest Disclosure Investigation Manitoba East Side Road Authority – dated September 2016*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. BINDLE*
- *Mr. HELWER (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JOHNSON*
- *Ms. KLASSEN*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Mr. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. SMOOK*
- *Mr. WIEBE (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. YAKIMOSKI*

Substitutions received prior to committee proceedings on May 25, 2017:

- *Mr. JOHNSON for Mrs. MAYER*
- *Mr. SMOOK for Mr. JOHNSTON*

Officials Speaking on Record

Officials speaking on record at the May 25, 2017 meeting:

- *Norm Ricard, Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN, Minister of Infrastructure*
- *Lance Vigfusson, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure*

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your Committee has considered the following reports and has adopted the same as presented:

- *Auditor General's Report – Manitoba East Side Road Authority – dated September 2016*
- *Auditor General's Report – Public Interest Disclosure Investigation Manitoba East Side Road Authority – dated September 2016*

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

L'Association culturelle franco-manitobaine

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Merci beaucoup.

Madame la Présidente, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour reconnaître et célébrer le travail l'Association culturelle franco-manitobaine.

Cet organisme est un groupe de coordination qui représente 19 comités culturels du Manitoba rural.

Il appuie une culture francophone rurale dynamique ainsi que les arts dans notre province, en aidant à élaborer des services de programmation et de soutien pour ces comités.

Translation

Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the work of the Association culturelle franco-manitobaine.

This organization is an umbrella group representing 19 cultural communities in rural Manitoba.

It supports a vibrant rural francophone culture and the arts in our province by helping with the development of programming and support services to its member committees.

English

In addition to bringing together francophone committees—communities and organizations in our province, the association has strong ties with a sister organization in New Brunswick, a province with which Manitoba shares a proud history of bilingualism.

Beginning two years ago, they began a project called Lieux-Dits by compiling a list of places in rural Manitoba that had significance to the francophone community, and 29 sites were chosen.

Ensuite, un projet a rassemblé des élèves d'écoles françaises et d'immersion, ainsi que des aînés de la communauté francophone.

Les élèves ont suivi une formation pour apprendre les techniques de base de l'histoire orale. Elle leur a permis de faire des entrevues avec des personnes âgées qui ont des souvenirs liés à ces lieux traditionnels.

Translation

This was followed by a project that brought together students in French and French-immersion schools with elders from the francophone community.

Students were trained in basic oral history techniques that allowed them to conduct interviews with seniors who have memories of these traditional places.

English

With the help of CBC/Radio-Canada, the students produced audio clips that let listeners hear the stories of elders in the community. Starting in September, they were broadcast on Radio-Canada every week.

A booklet summarizing all 29 stories was also produced. Included with it is a USB card containing the 29 oral history clips. Copies of these booklets were presented to the participants at an event in April, and about 600 additional copies will soon be distributed in schools, libraries and community organizations across the province.

Madame la Présidente, ce type d'initiative enrichit notre province sur le plan social aussi bien que culturel, en rassemblant des jeunes et des aînés pour partager des histoires.

Translation

Madam Speaker, this kind of initiative enriches our province both socially and culturally by bringing together young and old to share stories.

English

Such an initiative nourishes Franco-Manitoban culture by ensuring that such stories are not forgotten in our own community.

J'espère que vous vous joindrez à moi pour féliciter l'Association culturelle franco-manitobaine de son travail, ainsi que les personnes de tous âges qui y ont participé.

Merci beaucoup.

Translation

I hope you will join me in congratulating the Association culturelle franco-manitobaine and the participants, young and old, for their work.

Thank you very much.

English

And I'd like to ask everyone to welcome members of the Association culturelle franco-manitobaine into the House today.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Merci au ministre pour son discours aujourd'hui.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner la contribution importante de l'Association culturelle franco-manitobaine à notre province.

Pendant plus de trois décennies, cet organisme a travaillé afin de promouvoir et développer la culture et les arts dans les communautés francophones rurales.

En septembre 2015, l'Association a lancé le projet « Les lieux-dits en ruralité manitobaine . . . une histoire, un patrimoine, une culture afin » de mettre en vedette les communautés francophones rurales.

Au cours des deux dernières années, les Manitobains et Manitobaines de tous les âges se sont rassemblés pour créer des capsules audio racontant les histoires locales, celles des lieux-dits, comme la gare de la Broquerie et l'église de Laurier.

Après deux ans de travail intense, le projet a été récemment achevé. Les histoires recueillies à partir de ce projet nous enseignent qui nous sommes et d'où nous venons.

Madame la présidente, j'aimerais remercier les membres de l'Association culturelle franco-manitobaine, qui sont présents parmi nous aujourd'hui, pour leur contribution exceptionnelle au secteur culturel et au patrimoine de notre province.

Grâce à leurs efforts, la culture franco-manitobaine continuera de s'épanouir et de grandir dans tous les coins de la province. Merci.

Translation

Thank you to the minister for her speech today.

I rise today to acknowledge the important contribution of the Association culturel franco-manitobaine to our province.

For over three decades this organization has worked to promote and develop culture and the arts in rural Francophone communities.

In September 2015, the Association launched a project called: Rural Manitoba landmarks: a history, a heritage, a culture, to showcase rural Francophone communities.

Over the past two years, Manitobans of all ages gathered to create audio records recounting the history of local landmarks such as the train station in La Broquerie and the church in Laurier.

* (13:50)

After two years of intense work, the project was recently completed. The stories gathered through this project teach us who we are and where we are from.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the members of the Association culturelle franco-manitobaine, who are present here with us today for their exceptional contributions to the culture and heritage sectors of our province.

Thanks to their efforts, the Franco-Manitoban culture will continue to develop all across the province.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to speak in response to the statement? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Lamoureux: The French-Manitoban Cultural Association dates back to the early 1970s, however, it was officially founded in 1986.

The association facilitates and showcases talented youth and adults through large-scale events all throughout our province. These events are an opportunity for artists to promote their cultural diversity through art, music and dance.

To date, there are 19 cultural committees and the association seeks to increase even more opportunities to promote the French language.

Madam Speaker, the primary focus being to promote cultural diversity is a great mission and we believe it is truly outstanding the amount of effort and skill that has gone into this.

I would encourage everyone to try and identify ways that they can promote cultural diversity and to participate in events to help support notre *[our]* Association culturel franco-manitobaine.

And I'd like to thank the members from the Association for joining us here today.

Thank you.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to enter the names of my guests into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Does the minister have leave to enter the names of her guests into Hansard. *[Agreed]*

Ms. Squires guests: Louis Allain, DG CDEM; Justine Aubut-Beaudry, Préposée aux membres ACFM; Daniel Boucher DG SFM; Réal Déquier, Patrimoine Canada; Jocelyne Doré, VP ACFM; Alain Laberge DG DSFM; Méo Labossière, Président ACFM; Marcelle Lussier, Urbanink; Patrick Rey, Radio-Canada; Louis Tétrault DG AMBM; Josée Théberge, DG Canada

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Northern Flood Update

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Concern over the high waters of the 2017 spring flood is now focused on communities in northern Manitoba.

Melting heavy winter snows across the North are impacting the northern rail line and the Churchill River is at very high levels.

The Canadian Red Cross is co-ordinating the delivery of critical supplies by air to First Nations communities which rely on the rail line for supplies.

Several provincial departments are co-ordinating with federal officials and the Canadian Red Cross to ensure the safety and comfort of the evacuees.

In the community of Churchill, efforts are under way to protect the pump station which provides water to the town. Manitoba Hydro is working with provincial officials to sandbag the facility.

We also acknowledge the 564 residents of Red Sucker Lake First Nation who have been evacuated as a result of smoke and wildfire threats. Canadian Red Cross is co-ordinating the evacuation. The fire is now under control and the Canadian Red Cross is working with the community on a repatriation plan.

As we said, during flooding in central and southern Manitoba we have a history of pulling together in tough times and, once again, we applaud the efforts of our response partners. In particular, Madam Speaker, I would like to single out the community members, Manitoba Hydro, the Red Cross and EMO staff and all affected people in this effort to protect everyone.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): At this time of year, many Manitoba communities are feeling the impact of either flooding or, traditionally, forest fires. Manitoba's North continues to bear the brunt of these natural disasters.

Ice jamming on northern rivers and overland flooding have disrupted the lives of many communities who have to face property damage and undergo evacuations.

Flood damage has left the rail line to Churchill out of commission and has made the town somewhat inaccessible, other than by air.

Fire activity is always a risk in northern Manitoba. Forest fire conditions can become extreme

and cause fires to spread quickly, become out of control and threaten our northern communities.

It is important that people throughout the province exercise caution in their outdoor activities, as conditions from sparking forest fires in our province can be higher throughout the summer season.

We'd like to thank the Infrastructure Department and all those contractors and others for their quick response in repairing flood damage to Highway 391, the main road link to the people of Lynn Lake.

We look forward to seeing this government's plan in addressing these issues in the future. We need to find long-term solutions for prevention and protection measures for both flooding and forest fires, and we need to ensure that supplies are getting to all Manitoba communities impacted by floods or fires.

On behalf of our NDP caucus, we continue to send our sincerest thoughts and support to the residents who have been disrupted by these events, as well as the emergency response workers and volunteers who are working hard to protect our northern communities from floods and forest fires.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I ask for leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Klassen: Thank you.

On behalf of the Red Sucker Lake chief and council, I would like to extend our appreciation to the organizations for the evacuation efforts thus far. I had the chance to witness first-hand the first two days, which can be summed up as organized chaos. Over 560 people were forced to leave their homes for safety due to the forest fire.

A beautiful 550 hectares of boreal forest has been lost. No human lives were lost, due to the evacuation, but we know that many of the homes and lives of our beloved four-legged relations have been lost and I would like to request a moment of silence after my statement for our four-legged relations.

I call upon my colleagues in this House to be proactive in long-term planning for disasters; climate change is real and it is impacting our world.

We should have firebreak lines surrounding our boreal communities. There should always be trained people in basic first aid. Perhaps our minister of

indigenous affairs could create a template that—so that every community can use it to draft their own emergency response plans.

I always encourage innovation and out-of-the-box thinking, and in respect of transportation in the North, I'd like to table this article on airships. I see it as a beautiful solution to the problems that we are facing in the North, and it's out-of-the-box thinking like this that will go a long way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave as requested for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please stand.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Concordia Hospital ER

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Northeast Winnipeg residents are shocked and angered that this government is closing the Concordia emergency room and the intensive care unit. I've been running ads in The Herald weekly newspaper and have been getting a huge response to my survey.

The ad reads as follows: Concordia Hospital's emergency room serves over 150,000 Manitobans in northeast Winnipeg and Transcona, with around 30,000 patients seeking treatment annually. The provincial government is eliminating the Concordia ER and the ICU unit and will force 30,000 patients to fight their way to the already overstressed St. Boniface ER and Health Sciences ER. Concordia Hospital's ER is one of the three ERs being closed by this—by the Province. The—combined with the additional visits from Victoria's 30,000, Seven Oaks's 40,000 ER patients, every year a total of 100,000 Winnipeggers will have to fight their way to the remaining three ERs, fighting extra traffic, increased parking problems and fees, just to wait at existing overstressed ERs. These overstressed remaining three ERs are expected to take up these extra 100,000 treatment 'visits' without properly increasing their capacity to handle them, and add to that the extra, I believe it's 40,000 from Misericordia, we have a total of about 140,000 visits now in the remaining three. This will result in chaos in our health-care system.

* (14:00)

And attached is a survey which reads: Should the Concordia Hospital ER be kept open to service

the needs of north-east Winnipeg and Transcona? And I will say that all members are invited to participate in the survey, and they can go to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Sarah Campbell, YWCA Award Recipient

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I rise in the Legislature today to speak about an individual in my constituency who has achieved so much in such a short period of time, becoming a role model amongst her peers. I recently attended the YWCA Winnipeg Women of Distinction awards and learned about one of the nominees, Sarah Campbell, a young woman who has accomplished so much, given a great deal of voluntary time to our community.

Sarah's volunteering activities are extensive and impressive. Among these, she has volunteered at St. Amant Centre for those with special needs; Alex's Scarves, knitting scarves for schools in need of winter clothing; Students Helping Our World, where she assisted and recently became a leader in putting on events and activities to benefit those in need; as a Canadian Blood Services ambassador, recording donors and blood drives and informing the public on the process of donating blood; creating a community garden where she built a garden box, planted seeds, and grew produce that she donated to Winnipeg Harvest; acted as a peer tutor, tutoring students in precalculus. She participated in a Natural Helpers program, where she listened to and supported peers in dealing with difficult situations.

Her accomplishments, Madam Speaker, are equally impressive, as she was a 2016 United Way community services recipient, a 2017 Premier's award—service award recipient, a 2017 Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise nominee, and after being on the honour roll with distinction for the entirety of her education at J.H. Bruns Collegiate, she is the class of 2017 valedictorian.

Manitobans are among the most generous people in the world, boasting a long history of volunteerism and 'philanthropy'. We honour Sarah today as she exemplifies these very values, and will continue to be a role model for young Manitobans, the very future of our great province.

With us here today in the gallery to celebrate with Sarah is her family: Margaret Campbell, Dean Campbell, Jamie Campbell, Colin Campbell, Gwen Campbell, James Bryden and Stacey Bryden.

I call on the House to join me in celebrating Sarah's successes.

Transcona Memorial United Church

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Transcona Memorial United Church is no ordinary place of Christian worship. It is a hub of community activity, encompassing the gamut from expectant parents with the Families Connecting program. It is there for those who struggle to make ends meet, as the church is home to the Transcona Food Bank. The Transcona Council for Seniors meet to provide companionship and a sense of community in our changing world.

Established in 1953 through the amalgamation of four local churches and with a new building, the church began to grow in its mission to foster and nurture growth in worship, sharing, and being welcoming to all. It also grew in its quest to serve the community around it. That service continues today, and, under the direction of Reverend Carol Fletcher and Reverend Jeff Cook, they continue to search for ways to do good for their community while engaging people to care for each other, all the while growing the pride of all that touch their ministry.

Last Thursday, they were delighted to be able to cut the ribbon on a new community extension building, a \$2-million project which they have been working on for many years. This will offer enhanced programming space with large naturally lit rooms and ensure that those who utilize the programs offered will be able to access them with the dignity of doing so in a barrier-free building.

The groups which I have already mentioned are but a few of the many which utilize the facilities, bringing hundreds of people to the church each week, and each one of those will benefit from the renovation as it looks to the future. During the renovations, yes, there were challenges, but through those challenges you could see Carol in her pink hard hat, forging ahead, ever positive, working diligently to create this legacy for the community.

The new addition, with its focus on accessibility, seems to mirror the phrase: let's make our building as open and as inclusive as we are. The TMUC community embodies this in all they do.

Please join me in congratulating Carol Fletcher, the TMUC executive, building planning team and all who will utilize—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, may I have leave to continue?

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to complete his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Yakimoski: Please congratulate those members who are here in attendance, and thank you for being an integral part of our caring Transcona community.

Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include the names of those that were instrumental in getting this project moving forward.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to have those names included in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

HSA Design, particularly Heather Sarna, Tom Tomchyshyn and Tamara Nyysola; Parkwest Projects, particularly Rene Massicotte; TMUC's team: Bob Kirkhope, Terry Cousins and Carol Fletcher; TMUC administrative staff: Lynn Measner and Laurie Chudley; TMUC's council, chaired in this process by Gail Purcell, Deanna Howard, Harvey Hochkievich and Audrey Lumsden, and congregation.

Mr. Maloway: I would like to table the two documents that I referred to in my statement.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the member has indicated that he is tabling the documents that he included in his statements. Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I have to indicate that, from my position, I did not see what was being tabled, but I'm understanding from some of the comments that are being made here that there may have been some props that were put forward by the member, and I would caution all members—and all members, I'm sure, understand the rules—that there are no props to be used in making any statements here in the House.

Cricket Demonstration and Tournament

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I rise today in the House to bring attention to an event that took place recently in the Morden-Winkler constituency. On April the 29th, Winkler held its first ever cricket demonstration and tournament.

The exciting event was hosted by Winkler's own cricket club, took place at the Winkler Arena. Four teams played in the tournament, three from Winkler:

the Pharma-Six team, the South African team, the Winkler Cricket Club and special guest team from The Maples, Sher-e-Maple. And the residents of Winkler and the surrounding community attended to watch the matches and get acquainted with the game.

For those of you who don't know, cricket is the second most popular sport in the world. As Winkler's cricket club's president, Zahid Zehri, puts it, cricket is the refined form of baseball, or in Zahid's words, the better version of baseball.

Cricket is a team sport where matches can last anything from an afternoon to several days. And though the sport is intricate and has many rules, the tournament offered a lesson on the—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —basics for viewers to learn and take part in the festivities.

Cricket is a growing sport in my community and across the province. The Winkler Cricket Club will be getting its own pitch later this year, situated in the northeast part of the city. This new pitch will not only allow the Winkler team to practise, but it also provides others in the community the opportunity to learn and engage with the sport.

The game of cricket is a great way for people to develop friendships, team skills and leadership. It promotes the importance of sport in bringing people together from different backgrounds and cultures.

Winkler's successful tournament is a great example of the benefits in living in an increasingly culturally diverse community.

On behalf of Morden-Winkler, I congratulate the Winkler Cricket Club on its successful event and look forward to the completion of the new cricket pitch.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Discriminatory Practices

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the Chamber today to outline the worries and concerns about ongoing discriminatory practices in many fronts, to call for an end of discrimination in some sectors.

The history of discrimination dates back until 1940. South Asians were denied voting rights in provincial elections—excuse—until 1948. Racist immigration policy continued in Canada until the

1960s. I know from my personal experience about discrimination by living in the province for the last four decades. The Province practised a discriminatory preferential treatment in immigrant intake even in 2007. South Asian immigrants in nursing, teaching and other professions were considered less qualified and lesser preferred for intake than immigrants of other countries with similar education and skills.

* (14:10)

As an MLA in 2007, I advocated proportionate immigrant acceptance from different countries and removal of persistent barriers. As a result some barriers were removed in part, not in full. As a provincial employee, I myself had to go through human rights processes because of discrimination in my workplace. Like many of my constituents, I have personally experienced subjection to discrimination, even in 2017.

A gravely discriminatory practice is evident in the enactment of Bill 30. This brings the enormous concern and worry to the taxi industry workforce in Manitoba. The taxi industry in Manitoba is operated mostly by the South Asian immigrants. These entrepreneurs went through a complex licensing process, invested their hard-earned income and created self-employment, which eventually relieved the provincial government from pressure of job creation for the immigrants.

The Bill 30, to pave the way for Uberization, will devastate their livelihood and social well-being. The Bill 30 is serving as an act of discrimination against the South Asians in Manitoba—

Madam Speaker: The member's time as expired.

Mr. Saran: May I have leave?

Madam Speaker: The member is asking for leave to complete his statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted, if the member could, please, quickly complete his statement.

Mr. Saran: Thank you.

The Bill 30 is—served as an act of discrimination against the South Asians in Manitoba. As discriminatory practices are causing barriers to South Asian immigrants' socio-economic integration in

Manitoba, many of them are considering moving to other provinces.

On behalf of the people of The Maples and the Indo-Canadian immigrants, I demand the above-addressed discriminatory practices be stopped and barriers to integration of South Asian immigrants be removed.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

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

Unfortunately, I think the students from River East Collegiate may have left, but there were 25 grade 9 students under the direction of Dennis Dekleva and Ms. Gill, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox).

Also in the public gallery from Carberry Collegiate we have 47 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Raegan Dyck, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke).

And also in the public gallery we have with us today from the Transcona Memorial United Church: Carol Fletcher, Lynn Messner, Terry Cousins, Cynthia Ostapyk, Susan Copeland, Audrey Lumsden, David George, Wally Stoyko, who are the guests of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski).

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

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: And also, we have two pages, and this is their last day in the Legislature as well, so I would like to just make a few short comments about both of the pages.

Sarah Miller will be graduating from Springfield Collegiate Institute in 2018. She plans to go into medicine, to become a respiratory therapist, at the University of Manitoba. Sarah plays club badminton and participates in many tournaments throughout the year. She is on Team Manitoba Badminton.

Sarah spends her summers camping with her family and volunteering at vocational bible school at her church.

Working as a page at the Legislature is a time she will never forget. It was an eye-opening experience and the members were welcoming and kind. She has said that she has practised calling votes so many times that she will always remember the order of the members.

We wish her the best in the future and would happily welcome her to return one day to our Legislature.

Nathan Dueck is graduating from Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, class of 2017. He is the recipient of the Canadian Mennonite University Leadership Entrance Scholarship and will work towards a humanities degree at that institution this fall.

This summer Nathan will volunteer at Manitoba Pioneer Camp as a lifeguard and cabin leader.

Nathan has loved paging at the Legislature this past year. He will, however, always remember the brief feeling of panic that he felt on his first day on the job and when he was asked by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) what his name was and responded Mr. Dueck instead of Nathan.

He appreciates and respects the kindness and hard work demonstrated on a daily basis by the members of the Legislative Assembly.

And, on behalf of all members here, we wish you both the very best of luck as you continue your future careers.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Infrastructure Budget Government Funding Plan

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Again, we join you and the rest of our House in wishing our pages the best of everything in the days ahead.

Madam Speaker, it's been seven weeks since the provincial budget, yet many municipal officials are only now learning that the government has hit their infrastructure and transit funding. With growing demands and inflation, this is a cut to our municipalities. This is not the kind of transparency the Premier promised.

Why is the Premier breaking his pledge to openness and accountability?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, before I respond in respect of our generous

arrangements with municipalities in Manitoba, let me welcome our new Sergeant-at-Arms to this Assembly and wish him all the best. We thank him for taking on this challenge.

And if I could add to—both to Sarah and to Nathan, to say all the best in your future. We've appreciated your approach here, and your friendly smiles and demeanour will carry you a long way in life in spite of the challenges you've had to face in this Chamber. For Sarah, having an extensive career in badminton has helped her, no doubt, to understand that this place is sometimes for the birds as well. Nathan, Mr. Dueck, I should say, wish you all the very best in your future, young man.

Our relationship with municipal governments is a very important one for the future of this province. We want to be and we strive to be Canada's most improved province in our first term, and that, of course, can only happen if Winnipeg is Canada's most improved city as well. We're committed to that relationship and building it, and that is why we have maintained the most generous funding arrangements with municipal governments in the country of Canada, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Marcelino: We have asked about the City of Winnipeg and municipal funding numerous times in this House and in Estimates, and the government's response is that their partners are pleased with the budget. Yet, when we revealed the Premier's plans mean cuts for municipalities, the mayor said that Winnipeggers should be expecting pain for the city's infrastructure, pain for its roads and pain for the city budget.

Why has it taken seven weeks for municipalities to hear about the Premier's painful plans for our municipalities?

Mr. Pallister: Well, perhaps part of the reason that the AMM, Association of Manitoba Municipalities, members are so pleased with the new relationship they're forging with the provincial government is because they remember the genuine pain of years gone by. They remember the elimination of a third of their members, Madam Speaker, without any consultation whatsoever. They also remember the previous administration hiking fees, broadening the PST onto the—apply to the things it had never applied for before, like benefits that they supply to their

workers, like the buildings they must insure, the vehicles that they own and so on.

And they also remember, Madam Speaker, the incredible and onerous burden that the previous administration placed on them by way of its mismanagement, causing a credit rating downgrade for the Province which then led to a credit rating downgrade for the City of Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, for these and many, many other reasons, the new relationship between the City of Winnipeg, its government and the Province of Manitoba is a stronger one than ever before.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier's own city councillor says that he does not think the Province should be downloading expenses onto the citizens of Winnipeg. Yet, that is exactly what is happening; worse, the Premier has hid his intentions.

* (14:20)

Many municipalities have already set their budgets, yet the Premier has concealed his cuts only to be revealed seven—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —weeks later.

Why is the Premier downloading costs and hiding his cuts?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, we, of course, are on a road to recovery and we've taken responsible steps on that road already by shoring up our credit rating, not seeing it decline. But the credit rating downgrade isn't something to be underestimated. It is an additional cost not only to the taxpayers of Manitoba, but also to the ratepayers of Winnipeg, and so they are doubly hit by this impact, and this mismanagement under the previous government was well understood.

That being said, we are committed to maintaining a strong and generous relationship, the most generous in Canada according to the former minister, Drew Caldwell, according to the former Finance minister, Greg Dewar—the most generous in Canada, and we'll maintain that relationship, Madam Speaker, because we care about the future of Manitoba and the future of the city of Winnipeg as well.

Municipal Infrastructure Budget Government Funding Plan

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier as well.

Madam Speaker, in this House on April 13th, the minister said she had met with municipalities and they were, quote, very pleased with the budget for infrastructure. Yet, now, civic leaders—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway:—civic leaders are saying that these cuts will bring pain to their communities.

Why has the Premier hidden his cuts and why has the minister concealed her plans from communities?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I thank the member for the question. I thank any NDP member for a question on transparency, Madam Speaker, because it allows me to reference a number of failures in that respect by the previous administration.

Certainly, the decision announced on the eve of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' meeting to eliminate one third of the members of that organization without any consultation did not demonstrate any kind of commitment to transparency whatsoever.

In addition—and their own members, I know, will agree with me on this—their decision to, in the 2013 budget, raise the PST was a surprise even to NDP members, Madam Speaker—no consultation at all. Yet, the previous government now asks questions about transparency. When it was in government it had the chance to demonstrate it cared about it; it failed to do that. We will demonstrate that transparency as Manitoba's new government.

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

Mr. Maloway: The Premier never got close to answering the question.

In this House on April 27th, the minister said that she had met with the Winnipeg mayor to explain her budget in detail and that he was, quote, totally accepting of our budget. Yet, now, the true effect of the budget has been revealed. What does the mayor say now? He says the budget means pain for Winnipeg infrastructure and Winnipeg taxpayers.

Why is the Premier balancing the books on the backs of Winnipeggers?

Mr. Pallister: Well, it's a nice line if you don't think about it, Madam Speaker, but it just isn't supported by the facts.

The facts are these: we maintain, in both our first two budgets, commitments that are the most generous in Canada. I mean, it's not just me saying it; it's a former NDP Cabinet minister saying the same thing. We're maintaining support far and away beyond the kind of support expected by other cities across Canada from a provincial government.

We continue to do that and we continue to build a strong working relationship with members of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, included among them, of course, the City of Winnipeg. Madam Speaker, that is why the AMM and its members have been so supportive of the relationship of trust that we are building with their members.

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

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I've asked the minister to be clear about our funding for municipal priorities. By law, the funding that keeps communities should be at nearly \$340 million. Communities are now concerned and unclear about their funding.

Will the minister state clearly, what is the size of the Strategic Municipal Investment Fund? How much less than \$340 million is it?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we're on to a new agenda now, Madam Speaker. As opposed to the rocky road to ruin, we're on the road to recovery now.

The previous administration managed to jack up the PST. It hurt cities like the city of Winnipeg and rural municipalities as well—hurt them very dramatically—and what we're going to do, Madam Speaker, is lower the PST, which the previous members said they wouldn't raise. We're going to correct the error—a tragic error in terms of a lack of integrity by the previous government—we're going to correct it by reducing the PST, and so to update our agreement, naturally, we want to maintain funding.

The agreement says one seventh of all revenue will go to municipalities. Madam Speaker, we want to maintain that level of funding, but by reducing the PST we'll actually assure cities around the province, rural municipalities around the province, that they have a very stable and strong fiscal partner to deal

with, because there's no security in a company leaking money like the NDP ran our province in the past 17 years. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Handi-Transit Services Funding Intention

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): We know that Manitobans rely on their provincial government to be a strong partner when it comes to funding roads and to help pay for transit.

The Building Manitoba Fund also paid matching dollars for Handi-Transit. This funding meant communities could keep us with rising costs for Handi-Transit while at the same time providing a strong level of service.

Can the minister tell the House today: Will the government continue to pay for 50 per cent of the cost for Handi-Transit?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I've addressed a number of these questions in the past but I don't mind addressing them again. This gives me the opportunity, because the member, in this preamble, alluded to the need for partnerships with funding agencies, we—and health care, in particular, Madam Speaker.

Let me cite a recent report that was released in respect of this very topic. It's called Canadian Health Transfers and the Federation: Past, Present, and Future, by the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy. It was just released. Now this is Kevin Page, Madam Speaker, who co-ordinates this study group, a former Canadian Parliamentary Budget Officer, well-respected Canadian.

In his report, he examines the policies of the federal government in respect to its cutbacks on health care and he concludes by saying that the report notes that the inking of the Canada Health Transfer agreements by all provinces, excluding Manitoba, exchanged short-term gain for long-term pay, and they conclude that provincial and territorial governments should have rejected the federal government's recent offer on health funding and held out for a better deal, as Manitoba continues to do.

Somebody has to stand up for Manitobans; somebody has to stand up for health care. We're proud to do it here, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, I can't believe that he couldn't hear me when I asked the question, and I can't believe that maybe his earpiece isn't working, because I heard a very long answer. I didn't hear him mention once the term Handi-Transit.

So, will the Premier of this province now come clean with the people of Manitoba and will he tell us clearly, transparently, openly: Will the Province of Manitoba continue to fund Handi-Transit at a 50 per cent level?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate a question on hearing, because hearing is exactly what we are doing when we listen to the people of Manitoba and when we stand up for them on health care.

Also, hearing services are an important part of offering health-care services to the province, so let me say—and I would now take some pride in quoting a member of this House who said the health-care negotiations will shape health care in Manitoba for the next 10 years or even longer. We need a representative in those negotiations who will stand for all Manitoba families.

Madam Speaker, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) got his wish because we're going to stand up for Manitoba families while the members opposite sit on their hands.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, that's an outrageous abdication of his responsibility in this House to come clean with Manitobans and be crystal clear on those who are among the most vulnerable in our society.

So I want to ask the Premier of this province—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Allum: —the individual most responsible for the budget, will the Premier of Manitoba today commit to ensuring that Handi-Transit is funded at a 50 per cent level? Is that yes or is it no?

* (14:30)

Mr. Pallister: Well, he's talking about one service that relates to vulnerable people, and I appreciate a question about vulnerable people. Vulnerable people

in our province depend on health care, Madam Speaker, and it would be an outrageous abdication of our responsibilities here not to stand up for those vulnerable people, which is precisely what we're doing. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: We're standing up for Manitobans and all Canadians who deserve sustainable health-care funding now and in the future.

The abdication is on the part of the member for Fort Garry-Riverview and his colleagues who sit on their hands and do nothing, despite the fact that former colleagues of theirs stood up and said things about the federal proposal while they now are quiet.

Here's one: We need to remember that our job here is not to protect our political friends in Ottawa, our job here is to make sure that Manitoba citizens, who rely on health care, get it.

An Honourable Member: Who said that?

Mr. Pallister: Stan Struthers said that, former Finance Minister, my—you know, all the people in the NDP who you could count on to stick up for health care seem to be gone, Madam Speaker.

Funding to Municipalities and Organizations Government Transparency and Accountability

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): The Premier (Mr. Pallister) may be hearing questions, but I don't think he's listening.

For this government, it seems like openness and transparency are just words, because their actions tell a whole other story. This government cut funding for the City of Winnipeg, cut even more funding for other municipalities; they repealed the law guaranteeing affordable utility rates. And all of this we found out through the fine print of legislation and from the media.

Madam Speaker, we know that the Premier wants to cut, so why doesn't he just tell us his plans to cut instead of doing his best to hide his true intentions?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I thank the member for that question about listening, and that is exactly what this government did in advance of our budget. And even today we'll have this opportunity. We expect to debate the

BITSA bill. And the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act shows how this government listened to Manitobans—Manitobans who said it's time to bring alignment to your tax code; Manitobans who said we want to see good investments made; Manitobans who acknowledged, as that party does not acknowledge, the context of all of these discussions, which is a \$900-million deficit which they left unaddressed.

We do not take that view. We will address that challenge and we will do it with our eyes wide open with all Manitobans standing with us.

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

Mr. Kinew: The minister says that his government is listening, but nobody—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —but nobody would have voted to close three emergency rooms, nobody would have voted to lay off 900 Hydro employees, nobody would have voted for wage freezes in the province of Manitoba.

There is a bigger and bigger difference between what the Premier said he was going to do in the last election and what he is actually doing now that he is in government.

Now, it's one thing for the Premier to make these harmful cuts, but why the stealth?

Will the Premier commit to telling organizations and municipalities directly that he is cutting funds, rather than relying on others to do the work for him?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question, but let us be clear: when it comes to the record of the NDP government, there was no Manitoban who, in consultations that that government said they did, would have advocated for a PST hike in 2013, taking \$200 million—\$300 million out of their pocket. I am quite certain that, in their budget preconsultation in 2012, no Manitoban would have said, please remove \$200 million of my funds by widening the PST to include haircuts and home insurance policies.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to listening, we have demonstrated we will do it. We are demonstrating now that we are listening to Manitobans and we are on this road to recovery. And we are doing it in conjunction with Manitobans,

bringing the recovery that our province so desperately needs.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the logic of what the Finance Minister just said condemns his own government's actions.

Again, this government, you know, ordered a wage freeze, ordered 15 per cent cuts to post-secondary, slashed funding to North Point Douglas Women's Centre. All these we find out about through the media, through the Estimates process or deep in legislation. They don't tell us what they are actually planning to do directly.

So will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) commit to accountability and to announcing his cuts to the people of our province directly?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, where that party was not accountable to Manitobans, we have committed that we will be accountable.

I remember a BITSA provision that the NDP brought whereby they artificially extended the period of recovery. When they were busy saying out of one side of their mouth that we had fully recovered, they said we're not yet out of recovery because they did not want to take penalties in pay that would have accrued to them. Instead, they broke the rules.

We are keeping the rules. We are putting provisions in BITSA that will help all Manitobans, and we're proud to have that debate this afternoon, Madam Speaker.

Northern Manitoba Communities Need for Sustainable Rail System

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The town of Churchill has been rocked for the past year: port has effectively been shuttered, connection with surrounding communities has been compromised and its access to fresh and healthy food has been undermined. Job losses have hit the community hard. Now the community is being flooded.

Can the minister tell the House exactly what steps the provincial government is taking to help the residents of the town of Churchill?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for that question because it brings to light what's happening in Churchill.

And—during—over the weekend I reached out to the MLA for Kewatinook, I reached out to Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson, to make sure that they knew that we were aware of what's going on. We have EMO staff right now in Churchill. We have EMO staff today also accompanying OmniTRAX personnel to do a flyover over the rail line today.

The safety of Manitobans is a first priority, and that's what we're—we'll do.

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

Mr. Lindsey: While we've heard from the Town of Churchill that food has been flown in for them, other communities along the rail line depend on it to get fresh supplies.

Can the government tell us what steps they've taken so far and what steps they will continue to take to make sure that all those communities have access to fresh and affordable food and supplies?

Mr. Pedersen: I want to assure the House that the Red Cross is co-ordinating with the First Nations. There was some food that was flown into a couple of the First Nations who are requiring it. The Red Cross is also monitoring any medical conditions where—if they need to be evacuated on an emergency basis. And we continue to work—the EMO staff is—had a meeting this morning with the Red Cross and—to make sure that everyone is on the same page, making sure the safety of all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Lindsey: It's good to hear, finally, that they've taken some steps in an emergency situation.

What we need to hear from this government is, really, what the long-term plans are for the viability of a sustainable rail system that feeds all those communities along the Bay Line and the town of Churchill. We need to hear what the government's long-term plan is for the community of Pukatawagan, whose rail service has been cut off this year—it was cut off last year—long-term and sustainable plans.

And one thing that the people of the town of Churchill might actually appreciate is if the Premier showed up and told them personally what the game plan is and listened to what their concerns are.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, this is not a time to get political when people's lives are at stake and that food and necessary supplies are at stake in here.

* (14:40)

EMO will continue to be there for Churchill and for those other communities along there, that the Red Cross is also in there to the First Nations, making sure that everyone is safe. We will be in there for the long term, and we will make sure that the North is looked after, just like every other Manitoban.

Election Mandate Government Record

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Much respect to the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), however, this government still continues to play games with the people of Manitoba. It ran on a campaign of promises, promises which they have yet to put to ink. How can people plan their lives around such worry and stress?

Summer is coming, our sessional break is about to start, but there is no break. In fact, the whirl—the real work is about to start. There's no time for an eight-week trip to Costa Rica when there are starving people, when there are people now waiting up to 15 hours in ERs. This government has still not even reduced the ambulance fees by half.

Minister, when is this government going to end the mental anguish people are facing? When are there—when are they going to begin fulfilling their promises to Manitobans?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, the member, I think, asked a serious question. I was disappointed that she tried to become political in what should be a serious question for all members of this House. All of us take the responsibility to ensure that all Manitobans, whether they're in the north or the south or the east or the west, have services that they can rely on.

It's been difficult, of course, not having had a government that considered that a priority over the past 17 years. It's been difficult, of course, not having a partner in Ottawa. The member talks about promises and promises made during election campaigns. We've certainly been disappointed to see the current Prime Minister not fulfill his election campaign to have a real partnership when it comes to health care, Madam Speaker.

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

Efficiency Manitoba Act Request to Withdraw

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): From what we've seen in committee, this government closes its ears and digs in its toes when it comes to getting negative feedback.

There was no word of creating a new Crown corporation in their election platform. This government is making impoverished people pay for this new Crown corp. There are many Manitobans who will feel the impact of the 8 per cent hike in Hydro, particularly the three–30,000 people earning minimum wage who did not get an increase this year.

I ask again: What is this minister doing to help people cope with the impact this will have on already tight budgets?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, we know that all Manitobans after 17 years of NDP government, 17 years where each and every budget they increased the taxes. Of course, it got worse as their time in government went along to the point where they increased the PST, the mother of increasing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —of taxes, Madam Speaker, something that hit every Manitoban. It didn't matter where you lived in the province, whether you lived in the north, the south, the east or the west, Winnipeg, Brandon, every city. No matter where you lived, every Manitoban had to pay more because of what the former government did—the NDP—in terms of raising taxes.

This was a budget that didn't increase taxes and Manitobans appreciate us holding the line on taxes, Madam Speaker, something we committed to and continue to do.

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

Ms. Klassen: Manitoba Hydro's rate increase comes at such an inconvenient time. It has a massive debt which has negatively impacted our credit rating. Now, Manitoba Hydro has to pay for the start-up costs for this new Crown corporation. The stance the government is taking is unreasonable; they are

investing illogically and making the most impoverished pay for their mistakes.

Will this minister rescind Bill 19 today?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Well, I'd like to thank the member for that question because this is all about respecting a process, Madam Speaker, and the NDP was wrong not to send the public—to the Public Utilities Board the bipole line. In fact, it was the NDP who forbid the Public Utilities Board from even looking at the bipole line—Bipole III line. And because of that mistake—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —now Manitobans will pay for this mistake that the NDP undertook. The NDP 'piepole'-Keeyask levy is going to cost Manitobans. It is going to hurt Manitobans, but we will trust the process that's in front of the Public Utilities Board.

Youth Sports Concussion Protocol

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, in my riding of St. Norbert we are proud to have many community sports teams for children to stay active.

However, in sport, accidents sometimes happen and injuries occur, especially head injuries like concussions. If left untreated, concussions could have lasting negative effects.

Unfortunately, I've seen these injuries first-hand as a football official. As a proud member of the Manitoba Football Officials Association for 12 years, I've seen these injuries at the youth level, university level and professional level of the Canadian Football League.

This is why I'm very pleased to hear of the new legislation from my colleague, the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Ms. Squires), introduced regarding concussion protocol.

Could the minister please explain how this legislation will help youth sports safer for all children?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I'd like to thank my colleague from St. Norbert for that question about this groundbreaking, first-of-its-kind legislation in Canada.

This bill is about the safety of our children. It is announcing measures to optimize concussion

awareness, education, prevention and management of concussions sustained in youth sport in Manitoba.

I'd also like to take a moment to pay homage to a 17-year-old rugby player named Rowan Stringer, who suffered from a fatal concussion on the sports field in Ontario, and I'd like to just take a moment to congratulate the legacy of her, that her family brought about in raising awareness about the dangers of concussion.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Michael Ellis, who is in the gallery today, for his support across the country. He's a leading expert in concussion management, and I really appreciate all of his efforts in bringing about this legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Rural Emergency Health Services Need for Doctor Retention Program

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): FIPPA records recently obtained show that more and more rural emergency departments are closing down temporarily due to a lack of doctors. Since February, six EDs have been closed in the Southern Health region, and Prairie Mountain Health only has 13 still open out of nearly 40 communities with health centres.

Madam Speaker, these temporary closures will only get worse now that the government has cancelled the rural doctor program.

Will the health—sorry—the Health Minister has cancelled this program and refused to put anything—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —else in its place for doctor retention in rural communities.

Will the Health Minister announce a new incentive for medical students to commit to working in rural Manitoba in time for the new school year to start?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I don't know if the member just realized that Manitoba extends beyond the Perimeter. But had he looked beyond the Perimeter for the last 17 years, he would have known that rural ERs had been closing for more than a decade under the NDP government. They were closing because there weren't enough doctors. Now, I never heard him, as a member of the government, ever raise this as an issue. I never saw

him bring forward a resolution. I never saw him bring one issue to this Legislature that talked about rural ERs. Suddenly, he's a great advocate for ERs. I'm glad that he's finally got on board, but he's 17 years too late.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I'm surprised to hear the minister say that. We just spent a few hours together in Estimates talking just about rural health, and I'd be happy to have that discussion continue.

Prior to these February temporary closures, many regions had experienced intermittent service suspensions which lasted more than 24 hours. In some regions, those days were in the hundreds. The Beausejour Health Centre, for instance, was suspended for more than 137 non-consecutive days; the Elizabeth Crowe memorial hospital, 203; Pinawa Hospital, 87; Roblin health centre, 69; Ste. Rose General Hospital, 135. The list goes on, Madam Speaker.

These suspensions represent months of rural families being without access to emergency care and are being forced to drive another hour or three hours to get the help that they need—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I can see why the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) was hanging his head in shame as his colleague read that question, because there was all the different ERs that that government shut down over the previous seven year—17 years. Now he stands up and shames his own former premier. Now, I know there's dissension in the ranks, and they don't like to talk to each other over there, but he stood up and he led a—read a list of shame of the former NDP government, all the ERs that they shut down.

I'm glad that he's finally on our side. He finally understands what a terrible job the NDP did in rural health care. I'm happy to speak with him for three hours, five hours, 10 hours. Let's keep talking what a terrible job the NDP did, Madam Speaker.

* (14:50)

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

Government Intention

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, all bluster and not a single answer for the people in rural Manitoba. It's shameful. Shame on them, Speaker.

Total closure of these three—of the three—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —emergency departments and the urgent-care centre in Winnipeg is, clearly, only the beginning for this government.

When the Health Minister and the WRHA announced the ER overhaul, the chief medical officer, Brock Wright, said, quote: We are just talking about Winnipeg today. There's probably similar opportunities across the province. Manitoba families in rural communities deserve to know if this government plans to close more ERs permanently.

Is the Health Minister planning to do the same upheaval in rural Manitoba's health care as he did in the WRHA?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the issue here is that Manitobans have waited for hundreds of thousands of hours collectively in emergency rooms for service. There hasn't been a plan that the NDP actually wanted to institute to improve that. They haven't said anything when it comes to the reduction of funding from the federal government.

Now, all of a sudden, this member has found his voice. He talks about Dr. Brock Wright and the announcement, but what he doesn't mention is at that announcement, Dr. Brock Wright said clearly—he said clearly—ask those critics who don't like this plan why they don't have any other alternative. I would say to that critic who has stood up and said in this—in the last year, that he's got all sorts of ideas, but said nothing for the previous 17 years. He doesn't have any other ideas.

We're going to fix it because they broke it, Madam Speaker.

Federal Climate Accord Provincial Response

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I'm wondering if the Minister for Sustainable Development might be able to listen to a quote that I will read out into the House and tell us, (1) what's wrong with the quote, and (2) maybe take a guess on who said it.

So here's the quote: We have not made provisions in this budget year for any revenue on carbon pricing. What's the problem with that, and who said it?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): Thanks to the member opposite. You know, I'm not going to take any suggestions from the member opposite or, you know, comment to answer—respond to his question, you know, with regard to that.

Anyways, we are developing a made-in-Manitoba climate and green plan, one that's good for Manitoba, one that's driven by Manitobans. We're going to listen to Manitobans throughout this process and ensure that we get it right, unlike the members opposite who failed miserably to reduce any emissions.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: The quote that I just read out actually came from her colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), who was answering a question that I asked in Estimates. And the problem with it, which the minister should have realized, is that the federal climate-change accord begins in January of 2018. If they have not booked any money for this budget year for January, February or March, they are in contravention of the federal plan.

Will the minister please clarify what her intentions are around reducing climate emissions and following the climate accord with the feds this year?

Mrs. Cox: We've had over 7,000 responses to our climate survey and we've actually extended it so that we gave more Manitobans the opportunity to participate in that.

We believe in inclusiveless—inclusiveness and listening to Manitobans, and that's how we're moving forward with our climate and green plan, not like the members opposite who imposed a 1 per cent PST increase without listening to Manitobans.

We're going to get it right, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: I will point out that this is the same minister whose government has twice promised action on climate change in their throne speeches, and two times in a row in the budget speech they haven't even mentioned the term.

And now we know why. Because in response to another question I asked in Estimates, the same Finance Minister gave us this gem, quote: Manitoba is forecast to grow from the current 21 megatons of greenhouse gases to 23 megatons in the year 2030.

She's going in the wrong direction, Madam Speaker.

Will she please stand up and acknowledge she either doesn't know what the Finance Minister is talking about, or her government is going in the opposite direction of what this world needs today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member knows the wrong direction, Madam Speaker; he and his colleagues took it for 17 years.

The fact is we care about sustainability, whether it's fiscal management or environmental—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —management.

And so, I appreciate, though, the member's consistency. He and his colleagues always are most interested in one thing, Madam Speaker, and that's raising taxes. And so, naturally, his first concern wouldn't be the environment at all, but the booking of revenue. That's what he—that's what his question is centred on. This coming from a colleague of a former government where spending addictions were demonstrated year in and year out, where tax hikes were made without consultation or forethought again and again and again. And that onerous burden is one that Manitobans have had to bear.

Madam Speaker, that's why we ran on a commitment, after a decade of expanding debt and taxes, to fix the finances of this province. And we're going to clean up the environment, too.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

As the House is expected to adjourn later this week for the summer and also as significant renovations will begin here in our Chamber very soon, I would encourage all honourable members to prepare for this by removing the contents of their desks sometime this week.

I would further encourage members to recycle as much of the material as possible. The blue bins here

in the Chamber are designated for recycling of Hansard only. Any other material you would like to recycle may be placed in the larger recycling containers in the message rooms located just outside the Chamber.

Thank you for your attention to this detail.

PETITIONS

Neighbourhoods Alive! Funding

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Since 2001, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program has supported stronger neighbourhoods and communities in Manitoba.

(2) Neighbourhoods Alive! uses a community-led development model that partners with neighbourhood renewal corporations on projects that aim to revitalize communities.

(3) Neighbourhoods Alive! and the neighbourhood renewal corporations it supports have played a vital and important role in revitalizing many neighbourhoods in Manitoba through community-driven solutions, including employment and training, education and recreation, safety and crime prevention, and housing and physical improvements.

(4) Neighbourhoods Alive! now serves 13 neighbourhood renewal corporations across Manitoba which have developed expertise in engaging with their local residents and determining the priorities of their communities.

(5) The provincial government's previous investments into Neighbourhoods Alive! have been bolstered by community and corporate donations as well as essential support from community volunteers, small businesses and local agencies.

(6) Late in 2016, the minister responsible for the Neighbourhoods Alive! program said new funding for initiatives was paused and that the future of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program was being reviewed, bringing hundreds of community projects to a standstill.

(7) Neighbourhood renewal corporations and their communities are concerned this funding freeze is the first step in a slow phase-out of the Neighbourhoods Alive! grant program, which would have severe negative impacts on families and communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support the Neighbourhoods Alive! program and the communities served by neighbourhood renewal corporations by continuing to provide consistent core funding for existing neighbourhood renewal corporations and enhancing the public funding available for specific initiatives.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

* (15:00)

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city, and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

This petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

Northern Patient Transfer Program

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize that everyone deserves quality accessible health care.

(2) The people of northern Manitoba face unique challenges when accessing health care, including inclement weather, remote communities and seasonal roads.

(3) The province—excuse me, the provincial government has already unwisely cancelled northern health investments, including clinics in The Pas and Thompson.

(4) Furthermore, the provincial government has taken a course that will discourage doctors from practicing in the North, namely their decision to cut a grant program designed to bring more doctors into rural Manitoba.

(5) Provincial government has also substantially cut investments in roads and highways, which will make it more difficult for northerners to access health care.

(6) The provincial government's austerity approach is now threatening to cut funding for designated—excuse me, is now threatening to cut funding for essential programs such as Northern Patient Transfer Program, which was designed to help some of the most vulnerable people in the province.

(7) The provincial government has recently announced it would cancel the airfare subsidy for patient's escorts to fly to Winnipeg for medical treatment, which will be devastating for patients with

mobility issues, dementia, who are elderly and need assistance getting to the city.

(8) The challenges that northerners face will only be overcome if the provincial government respects, improves and adequately funds quality programs that were designed to help northerners, such as the Northern Patient Transfer Program.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the absolute necessity of maintaining and improving the Northern Patient Transfer Program by continuing to respect Northern Patient Transfer agreements and funding these services in accordance with the needs of northern Manitobans. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitobans recognize that everyone deserves quality accessible health care.

The people of northern Manitoba face unique challenges when accessing health care, including inclement weather, remote communities and seasonal roads.

The provincial government has already unwisely cancelled northern health investments, including clinics in The Pas and Thompson.

Furthermore, the provincial government has taken a course that will discourage doctors from practicing in the North, namely their decision to cut a grant program designed to bring more doctors to rural Manitoba.

(5) The provincial government has also substantially cut investments in roads and highways, which will make it more difficult for northerners to access health care.

(6) The provincial government's austerity approach is not threatening to cut funding for central programs such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program, which was designed to help some of the most vulnerable people in the province.

(7) The provincial government has already announced it would cancel the air force—airfare subsidy for patient escorts who fly to Winnipeg for medical treatment, which will be devastating for

patients with mobility issues, dementia or who are elderly and need assistance getting to the city.

(8) The challenges that northerners face will only be overcome if the provincial government respects and provides and adequately funds quality programs that were designed to help northerners such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the absolute necessity of maintaining and improving the Northern Patient Transportation Program by continuing to respect Northern Patient Transfer agreements and funding these services in accordance with the needs for—of northern Manitobans.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry in—the taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans,

many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

* (15:10)

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues

such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly by Manitoba—we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihoods of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk that could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service in some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of driver—or, taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): This afternoon we wish to call for second reading Bill 36, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 36 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 36—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017

Madam Speaker: So I will call Bill 36, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 36, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, 2017; loi d'exécution du budget de 2017 en modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 36, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure today to introduce the budget implementation, tax statutes and amendment act for second reading, and, of course, as people know, we refer to that bill around here as BITSA. But the bill itself is that bill, an omnibus-type of bill that implements tax, financial and other measures. This year, these are based on our on-going review of the provincial tax system, our prebudget community consultations with stakeholders, and 'inpat'—put from Manitobans and

civil servants. It will help to put Manitoba on the road to recovery to become the most improved province in Canada.

BITSA includes both housekeeping measures and also measures that help reduce red tape, assist with tax enforcement and crack down on things like illegal tobacco smuggling, as well as provide the government with the flexibility to bring further tax changes in the future in a timely manner to provide tax relief. This BITSA bill reduces wasteful spending, tax expenditures and contingent liabilities. The bill eliminates ineffective tax credits while extending or entrenching others that were deemed to have value in growing or building our economy.

And, in addition to the major Budget 2017 measures, it also implements technical tax changes that respond to decisions by the court, tax appeals commissioner and issues or errors discovered by Manitoba's own tax division, legal services, Legislative Counsel or the Canada Revenue Agency.

Madam Speaker, in this Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, we are taking steps in our second budget to continue the critical work that we began last year in fixing the finances, repairing the services of Manitoba and rebuilding the economy. We're building a province that will provide our children with a compelling reason to stay here, while offering hope and opportunity that inspire others to journey here, invest here and to make Manitoba their home.

As we have said, we have listened to Manitobans with the most robust preconsultative exercise ever of its type in Manitoba. We have over 14,000 logged unique interactions with Manitobans in the form of in-person meetings, stakeholder meetings, letters to the Finance Minister's office, letters to other ministers' offices, an online build-your-own budget portal, a portal for civil servants to be able to provide input into this process, and it's the basis of that advice on which we're making these decisions. We worked—we reached out to front-line workers, Manitoba families, small business and employers for their input on the future direction of our province.

Madam Speaker, a few things that we're doing in this BITSA bill: We are, of course, reducing red tape. We are keeping taxes low. For example, I should mention that this Bill 36 is reducing the filing burden for insurance corporations who used to have to file on a quarterly basis. Now we bring a change that moves to a one-time filing per year. It reduces

the paperwork burden for both business and the government of Manitoba.

We also are eliminating corporate capital tax early instalment, and instead it will be filed with their annual return. These are common-sense changes that reduce busy work and help business and government employees both focus on more substantive work.

We know that this bill repeals the affordability utility rate accountability act, which simply wasted taxpayer dollars. It produced a report that cost \$7,000 every year. Virtually no one read the report. It wasted paper. It was also an expenditure that we just—we did not need. Not only will it form part of our overall commitment to reduce the overall agencies, boards and commissions in this province, but we understand that the department itself can provide the same detail as what was being contracted previously for \$7,000 a year, so I will trust our civil servants to provide that detail of work that we require, and we'll take the savings on behalf of all Manitobans.

Other things: With the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) seconding this bill this afternoon at the second reading stage, I note that, instead of burdening kennels with licence fees, driving up the cost for pet owners, we're modernizing our regulatory system and providing education and training for companion-animal kennels, breeders and pet retailers, similar to the way that every other province proceeds on this issue. In so many respects, it's like Manitoba has been dragging their feet after 17 years of NDP doing things the same old failing ways. And so this small change—albeit small from our perspective, for those people in industry, those pet owners and others, it is a significant change that simply adopts best practice as seen elsewhere.

* (15:20)

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, we're fixing the finances by protecting benefits for Manitobans. We are maintaining tax credits that have been eliminated in 2017 by the federal government. Notice how the NDP never want to talk about the fact that, in this budget, we have protected the youth fitness tax credit, we have protected the children's arts tax credit, we have protected the cultural activities tax credit, and we have protected the Manitoba education amount which delivers a significant tax relief for post-secondary students in the province of Manitoba, even at the same time as the federal Liberals have axed that tax credit.

Madam Speaker, in Manitoba, that means that any student post-secondary enrolled in full-time classes is eligible for a \$400-per-month credit that we have protected for the number of months that they are enrolled. Any part-time student in post-secondary is protected with \$120-per-month credit that we have protected. Those are real savings for real students in school facing those burdens, and I know, beyond that, the Education Minister will be happy to take questions this afternoon and talk about the changes we're bringing to increase the amount of dollars actually available for students, almost quadrupling the amount of dollars—more than \$20 million each year to students in need in school.

We take the view that that is more effective than the former system of providing tax credits years after a school experience. As a matter of fact, what the NDP would not want you to know is that graduates of post-secondary institutions previously had up to 10 years to begin claiming a credit, and then they had 20 years more in which they could claim a partial credit. The student didn't even have to go to university in Manitoba. So, in essence, we could be subsidizing students who went to Dalhousie University. There was no evidence ever collected by the NDP that it had any effect in actually attracting or retaining students—or, I should say, graduates in the province of Manitoba. But that's okay, because the NDP never took an approach based on evidence before, so why should they have started with this particular tax credit.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Madam Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker—I look around and I see the Deputy Speaker in the Chair—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we take an approach that says we need to fix this. We need to bring coherence to our tax system. Other provinces are doing it; other jurisdictions are doing it. We need that same commitment to best practice here.

What the NDP did was simply glom on credit after credit. Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I suggest in this place this afternoon the same way I have with the media and with Manitobans and in other contexts that we have an overly robust tax-credit system in this province. What we have is over 30 tax credits amounting to over \$600 million of revenue forgone by government. I would suggest very strongly that the existence of an overly expansive tax-credit system in Manitoba is evidence of a high tax approach taken by the NDP. Because for every tax increase—and we know the kind of tax increases

they—the NDP brought to Manitobans year after year after year, well, then, the system became more and more artificial. Groups would come back and say this has affected me negatively, and the NDP would say, well, quick, let's find a way to return \$20 of income to them at a tax credit time; or maybe \$30 or \$40. But, at the same time, what they would not do is acknowledge the very, very significant tax burden that they were placing on the back of those income earners.

That's why this BITSA, you will notice, does not increase taxes. As the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), the Minister of Health, said earlier this afternoon: it's a budget that is devoid of tax increases. And why—how long has it been in this Chamber when a sitting government was able to make that claim in a spring session having brought a budget? Manitobans should not lose sight of the fact that there were many ways—there are, of course, those who will say that on this road to balance we're moving too quickly. There are some who will say we're not moving quickly enough. And, to those we would say, oh, there are all kinds of ways that the NDP used to move more quickly, but they didn't do it in terms of expenditure management; they did it on revenue generation.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Gord Mackintosh, the author of that book just now released, I think it's called *Tales from the Crypt*—or is—oh, or it might be called *Stories Best Left Untold*, and he mentions the fact, for all the disagreement of the NDP caucus, I noticed there still is that one area of fundamental agreement. It didn't matter if they were the rebels who brought the rebellion against the—that sitting government two years—three years ago. It didn't matter if they were on the outside looking in. It didn't matter if they were new members who recently came to the Legislature. There is one issue on which NDPs are actually united in this province. It's one fundamental issue, and that is that every challenge to government can be addressed through one simple strategy: increase taxes.

And even Mr. Mackintosh said in his book, while he quarrelled with the premier's approach in respect of raising the 8 per cent, it wasn't because Mr. Mackintosh was so committed to standing up to Manitobans who were already paying too much tax. No. He said what he favoured was the shotgun approach, and the shotgun approach was, I guess, to load the muzzle with a shotgun shell and fire directly at Manitobans but in such a way that you get that scattershot—and I remember that scattershot approach

because I remember after, in 2012, when the NDP government brought an approach that widened the retail sales tax, I wondered why it was that members in my constituency were not taking exception to the PST being applied on home insurance policies, and now—and then I understood months later why it was. They only took note when the PST came actually on their property tax bills. Then they were furious, but at that point in time the NDP thought they had really—they had avoided the anger of Manitobans because they were out of session by that time—they thought they fooled them. They thought they fooled them once on the retail sales tax; they thought they fooled them twice when they raised the PST but, of course, we know that Manitobans were not fooled and we understand that the full degree of their angst and ire was felt by the NDP in the 2016 election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many ways in which we're rebuilding our economy. Just briefly, the interactive digital tax—media tax credit is extended by three years in Bill 36. We're giving the industry and those companies interested in relocating to Manitoba greater certainty in trying to grow this thriving industry. We have extended the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit for three years. We want—we know that mining will be key to the future of Manitoba's North and the prosperity of our northern residents and communities. We've extended the Book Publishing Tax Credit. The manufacturers' tax credit is renewed until 2020. We're maintained the R & D tax credit, the Research and Development Tax Credit, and bringing them in line with other provinces and other jurisdictions.

We have recognized that the Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit has built a thriving and growing industry in Manitoba here. I would take this opportunity to once again say it was the—it was a PC government that built this commitment in Manitoba to helping that industry grow and we understand that we've got one of the best credits in Canada and it's resulting in jobs right here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that, like I said, in many cases, a review of tax credits, which we have underwent, show that we were not meeting objectives with some of these tax credits, and that is why with a number of tax credits they've been done away with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did an analysis of tax credits and found out there were tax credits on the book for years in this province that had absolutely no application. There was not a single citizen, group

or business applying into these categories. The government didn't even review their own tax provisions enough to know that there was no or virtually no subscription in these programs.

Some of these credits include the co-op development tax credit, the Neighbourhoods Alive! Tax Credit, the Data Processing Investment Tax Credit, the Odour Control Tax Credit, the Nutrient Management Tax Credit, the riparian property—the Riparian Tax Credit. All of these were eliminated because they simply didn't meet an objective or they had little or no uptake. In some cases, we will reprofile the theme or the idea behind this, bring it back in a substantive way that actually makes sense and helps to meet a target.

*(15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that when it comes to other changes in this act, which we will welcome it for debate this afternoon, we are investing \$1.7 billion this year in infrastructure, the second most significant investment in infrastructure ever in the history of Manitoba. We are establishing the Manitoba strategic municipal investment fund. We know that we have listened to municipalities; they wanted us to focus on a single-window application process. They wanted us to create a single—a one-basket funding model because, until now, they've been running back and forth. Sometimes a single application could have meant interfacing with three or four or five separate departments. We've made it easier for them to navigate. We have kept the investment levels there, and we know that municipalities have responded and said that, given the context that this Province is in, they are very pleased with the level and manner of support in which this government has continued to fund municipalities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that we have to lead by example, and that is why this Bill 36 goes a step further. It outlines a two-year reduction of the Legislative Assembly members' special allowance. You'll understand, as well, that nothing in this change curtails the ability of a member to correspond with their constituents, with these—I think we call them—we nickname them, like, Ten Percenters—I think that's the word that the federal government gives for their members to correspond with their constituents. Nothing prevents that member from using that. But this is a separate allowance, a per-member amount that was given to each of the caucuses. We believe, in this case, this is a way for

us all to lead by example. We know that when the government chose to not take the COLA increase—the cost-of-living adjustment increase—we know at that time that the members of the NDP caucus and the members of the Liberal government—caucus stood with us. Today is their next chance for them to stand with us and say we can lead by example; we can demonstrate with our own actions that we are leading the charge on reducing the cost of government.

And I can hear right now the member for the Louise Bridge crowing on that side, and I can only think that that member is—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

I just want to remind the minister just to use the person's constituency name, not nicknames or their personal names.

Mr. Friesen: I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's the member for Elmwood, who I could hear crowing.

I think what he was doing was signalling to me his unqualified support for this measure, and he cannot wait for the opportunity.

I note that today is the last day for one of our pages. Mr. Nathan Dueck is here. I believe he's a Westgate student.

And I believe that the member for Elmwood might be indicating that he can't wait for this vote to come to the Legislature. And maybe today is a day when that young page could call this vote and have every one of those members rise in support of these measures, and I would only—I'd be delighted to have that take place today.

It comes down to this, though, also beyond that. We have to be clear that partisan advertising should be undertaken by partisan groups. And, when it comes to the NDP party, if they want to put out overtly partisan communications to people, nothing prevents them from doing that, but they have to do it on their own dime.

And now I notice the member for Elmwood getting a little bit louder again, and I understand why: because they don't actually want to have partisan cost centres to provide for partisan mailers. What they would like to do is skirt the rules in order to use taxpayer dollars for these things. How do we know that? We know it because, in the past, they did it. They took a million-dollar vote subsidy that this party on principle refused to take. We stood on principle; we went back to our members; we said that

is money that we will forgo. The NDP was effectively \$1 million ahead of other parties in the lead-up to the last election, and even that didn't help them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did away with the vote subsidy. We did away with that vote subsidy and we will stand up for Manitobans. This is about hard work and it's about saying that, if we want to do those activities, we have to undertake the hard work to communicate our message to Manitobans. If they wish to support us, then they support us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have cracked down on tobacco smuggling and tax evasion in this budget. We have brought substantial investments to front-line services in this budget, and through Bill 36 that is also reflected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we take—we're taking steady, measured steps that are necessary to move Manitoba towards recovery, toward balance, toward prosperity, toward economic growth. After a decade of debt, we're fixing the finances. After a decade of decay, we're repairing the services. After a decade of decline, we're rebuilding the economy. And budget 30—Budget 2017 and Bill 36 lays the foundation for Manitobans to achieve that goal, not just for today, but for future generations as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The opposition—

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister of any—by any of the members of the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 35 seconds—45 seconds.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to ask the minister whether the Province consulted with the City of Winnipeg prior to bringing in changes to the 50-50 transit funding agreement.

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

I think he would understand by now that our consultations with the City of Winnipeg as well as the municipalities have been extensive in the past year, something that did not happen previous to this. I remember going through some situations with the

previous government where there absolutely was no consultations on anything.

The mayor of Winnipeg stood with other mayors from across the province as well as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities in consultations—the most robust consultations in history.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to know—ask the minister: How will the cuts to transit funding impact service delivery, safety and affordability for Winnipeg Transit?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): The member should understand that the investment that this government continues to make, in terms of funding for municipalities, is very, very significant. A great deal of my conversation with the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) the other day in Estimates was exactly centred on that Indigenous and Municipal Relations page of the Estimates of Expenditure, which shows one of the most robust and extensive investments in municipal funding ever in the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Due to section 23, we'll be able to put more money back into people who politically contribute but has the audacity to eliminate the tax credit for Neighbourhoods Alive!

Why not show the same support on tax forms? If people knew that they could receive a tax credit for those types of donations, there would be more uptake. Why not promote the tax credits for organizations like Neighbourhoods Alive! instead of eliminating them?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question, but she is—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member from Finance—Minister of Finance. Can you hear me, everyone? We're going to pause for a minute here. Okay, we're going to have to redo this question again.

Can—the honourable member from Kewatinook.

Ms. Klassen: With the BITSA, due to section 23, there will be more money put back into people who politically contribute, and then there in section 38, I believe, we take—the government has the audacity to eliminate the tax credit for Neighbourhoods Alive!

Why not show the same support on the tax forms? If people knew they could receive a tax credit for those types of donations, there would be more

uptake. Why not promote the tax credits for organizations like Neighbourhoods Alive!?

* (15:40)

Mr. Friesen: The member is mistaken. She actually refers to section 38. The Neighbourhoods Alive! tax credit has never had an applicant to that tax credit. But, also, the member should understand it's not a tax credit that is for individuals; it was a tax credit that was set out for corporations and companies, so there is absolutely no application who has ever applied for the tax credit, so she's asking to preserve that on the political contribution tax credit section 23. The member should know that the changes that we're bringing bring our tax credit in line with other jurisdictions like Ontario and Alberta.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister: Did the province consult with the City of Winnipeg prior to repealing the legislation which directs 1 percentage point of the PST into the Building Manitoba Fund?

Mr. Friesen: So, as the member knows, what we have done is we have embarked on a new strategic municipal investment fund that we have set up. It's—the focus is this new single-window basket funding and a fair say on how their—those funds are spent.

The section 88 of the Bill 36 simply delinks the legislative requirement of the Building Manitoba Fund and references now this new fund, which is the strategic municipal investment fund.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Why does this government feel that companion-animal breeders, pet stores and kennels no longer need licensing? With the removal of licensing, does that mean that anyone could open a kennel-breeding facility or pet store without requirements, and how will animal-welfare investigators be able to reprimand the facilities for abuse without a licence to revoke?

And are the positions of companion animal-welfare veterinarian, animal-welfare investigator and animal-welfare program licensing co-ordinator also being terminated?

Mr. Friesen: And I thank the member for the question. I want to allay his fears. What I would want him to understand is that every other province uses the same approach that we would move to under this measure. It is section 81 in the Bill 36. It simply eliminates the licensing requirement, and it goes towards a voluntary training certificate program for facility operators and owners. The process would

educate any companion-animal facility owner-operator on their obligations of care. Certificates are issued to the owner/operator following training completion, and that certificate is then displayed in their premises.

It is the same approach that every other province takes. I assure him this is not a question of safety, but efficiency.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister: How will cuts to municipal infrastructure slow the growth in downtown Winnipeg and roll back much needed roadwork and bridge projects in Brandon?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the member is mistaken in his question because what he does understand, even if he won't repeat it, is that this government is making, in this year, a \$1.7-billion infrastructure commitment to Manitoba municipalities. It is the second largest infrastructure investment in the history of this province.

However, that member did cut support for municipal funding every year except election years because the approach of the NDP was to underspend on infrastructure investment, and then, the year before an election, they would overspend. And we've heard now the professionals and experts tell us that kind of approach, varying the degree year over year, actually builds in a premium that government must pay to procure in that manner. We believe in better procurement, consistent—

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

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to ask the minister: Why does this BITSA bill enforce taxpayers who reside together to claim both Education Property Tax and the Seniors' School Tax Rebate together under one individual, rather than having the flexibility for those living under one roof to determine with who and how they would like to file these taxes?

Mr. Friesen: I appreciate that question. She's referring—the member is referring to section 53 and section 26 and section 29. Simply, this requirement is brought in the Bill 36 in order to make sure that the amounts are being claimed by the same individual. If they aren't, this is actually a tax compliance issue, and we could end up with situations—and we have, indeed, where spouses or partners are inadvertently double-dipping. We don't believe in double-dipping. We want to make sure

that it's clear and everyone is acting according to the rules.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister how BITSA's repeal of The Affordable Utility Rate Accountability Act hurts Manitobans' affordability advantage and makes life more expensive for families.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I thank the member for the question. What he's referring to is a convention that the NDP clung on to whereby they would pay a third party \$7,000 each and every year for a report that I argue probably no minister ever read, and most Manitobans never even knew existed.

The NDP didn't care about affordability, they cared to be seen—to be acting as if they cared about affordability. This government cares about affordability. That's why we haven't brought any tax increases in Bill 36. They care about appearances, we care about results.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I couldn't hear a word you said because of the background noise over here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister: How will—why do the cuts to the Education Property Tax Credit dissuade students from pursuing post-secondary education, increase the burden of student debt and make Manitoba less attractive to international and out-of-province students?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I'm not certain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the member's referring to. He seems to be referring to section 27 and 29, but he wouldn't find cuts in there. Instead, our government has been proud to renew the Education Property Tax Credit, the Seniors' School Tax Rebate. That member will understand that they made a false promise to all Manitobans. Totally desperate to get re-elected, they decided to promise to Manitobans to quadruple their property tax credit for seniors. And, of course, they didn't have the means or the commitment to actually accomplish that.

We've been proud to renew that credit and to make sure that we have income tested it to make sure it's there for the Manitobans who most need it.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister: How did the repeal of the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit and research development tax credit hurt economic growth in Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: It doesn't.

As a matter of fact, it—he's referring to section 35. What he doesn't recognize—or, perhaps, he hasn't read it, so I'll just clarify the provisions there for it.

We extend the manufacturer's investment tax credit by three years. That shows the value we have in it until 2020. We have committed to keep the entire refundable 8 per cent portion of the credit. There is no impact. The only change that he's seeing on the—on paper, there, is a change from 2 to 1 per cent for the non-refundable portion. It is still one of the significant types of credits of its kind in all of Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any other questions? Well, I guess we'll go on to debate.

Oh. The honourable—the interim—just one second.

I'd just like to make an announcement first. There was a letter that was sent to the Speaker from the interim Leader of the Opposition—Official Opposition, and it said: Pursuant to the rules 42-2 of the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceeding of the Legislature Assembly of Manitoba, I am writing to advise that I am designated my unlimited speaking time for concurrence and third reading of Bill 36, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act—sorry, I just wanted to clarify that it's actually the second reading, not the third reading, of Bill 36. So—of the budget amendment 'imifitation' and tax statute amendment act, to the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum).

* (15:50)

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, the interim Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank very much—I thank profusely my colleague, the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, for accepting, once again, this opportunity for unlimited time.

With this, we believe that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Manitoba needs to hear, in no uncertain terms, without skimping on time or days, the real reasons why this government has introduced Bill 33—or Bill 36, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act. And this was brought to this House for reasons that are not well-intentioned at all,

and we will have the opportunity to mention each and every one of those points later on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I started taking notes while the minister was filibustering his bill, according to my colleague here from—the member from Elmwood.

One of the points made by the minister is that this government consulted and listened to Manitobans before this Budget 2017 was brought up. We believe that they did the consultations all right, but did they listen to different opinions or differing—or statements from Manitobans that are different from what they had already in mind? Or have they made up their minds already, that this is what they'll introduce, this BITSA, regardless of the differing opinions from Manitobans?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister also mentioned, in one of the statements, that the tax credit for—the graduate student tax credit was eliminated in this budget, because that means subsidize—subsidizing students from out of province, such as students from Dalhousie University.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, here in this side of the House, we believe that that tax credit for Manitoba students, as well as for students from out of province, had helped tremendously boost our economy. When we were in government for the last few years, the Conference Board of Canada declared that Manitoba's economy was the second best performing economy in all of Canada, that Manitoba had the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada.

Why did that come out—come up to be? Why was it so?

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the reasons for the good economic performance of the province was because many of the students, from Manitoba and even outside of Manitoba, came to Manitoba to live and work here. I know first-hand of several graduates outside of Manitoba who came to Manitoba because, here in Manitoba, they believe they can find good employment. They believe they can buy houses here. They can start a family here. And, true enough, many of those students, as well as graduates of Manitoba, did fulfill their dreams of home ownership. And, of course, it came with a car. And, of course, it came with good jobs. And what is the net result for Manitoba? These former students who were encouraged to stay here or inspired to stay here did so because of those—of the generous tax credits that helped them start their life in Manitoba. Now they're here, paying taxes, raising their family;

their children are in schools here; they are supporting or are invigorating our economy because of these tax credits and other programs by the former government that have encouraged new Canadians or new immigrants to come to Manitoba.

The minister also mentioned that in the—inputs from Manitobans were gathered, such as front-line workers, and they were listened to in preparation for the budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if front-line workers or those who were consulted did say to them, to this government, yes, freeze our wages; yes, cut 900 Hydro workers or cut 15 per cent of civil servants and employees of Crown corporations and other government offices.

I wonder if this government listened to inputs or feedback from Manitobans when this government hiked university and college taxes. I wonder if students were consulted and students agreed when it was presented to them that, we will hike 5 to 7 per cent of your tuition fees. I wonder if students agreed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when this government brought up or insinuated that, you know, we will no longer freeze tuition; rather, we will hike tuition rates and fees for post-secondary institutions. I wonder if this government listened—or I wonder if this government received input and then they followed it through, and if this input were slashing tax credits for students and increasing tax credits for political donors making large corporations.

I wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government is—if what they received from the public, from Manitobans, is that—put health care and education infrastructure on the chopping block. Did people tell this government to put 20 per cent less for hospitals and personal-care homes or nearly 30 per cent less for schools, gyms and labs—that's why that's part of their budget?

Also, I wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if new immigrants, those who are just starting their life in Manitoba, were consulted when this government changed substantially several criteria into the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. I wonder if they even asked community organizations servicing new immigrants, including organizations servicing refugees, if they even asked them, we will levy \$500 for every nominated application to the Provincial Nominee Program.

*(16:00)

When this was announced by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in late November, many, many new

immigrant organizations, community organizations and members of those organizations lamented the fact that this was a head tax. These people are coming to Manitoba wanting to start their new life in Manitoba and bringing with them their work ethic, their passion, their skills and their talents and their commitment to staying in Manitoba and making a living in Manitoba and contributing to the economy of Manitoba and adding to the diversity and inclusion in this province. And this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is now being put at risk with this \$500 fee levied—or head tax levied on new immigrants. These are kinds of people we want to come over to Manitoba. They—this province will not spend substantially for their education. They won't spend much for their training because they come here already highly educated and trained and ready to work. So imposing the \$500 fee to Manitoba Nominee Program applicants will mean less applications for this program. And to think that because of new immigrants, our province had reached over 1.2-million mark. And what does increased population mean to Manitoba? It means to—and the effect to the country as a whole? It means more people working here, more people paying taxes here and more people who would be making our economy thriving and—a thriving economy that it used to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 36 introduces reckless cuts in health care that will hurt families and seniors. These are callous tax and tuition increases, and it hurts students, parents and above all, these are the future workers here in the province and right away they're being treated very badly by this government.

This budget, as well, Budget 2017, is coming off the heels of the biggest changes to Manitoba's health-care system in a generation. In the past few weeks, we have seen groups of workers, and they're predominantly from the health-care component of our community, and they are protesting for—protesting and so disappointed that this government has chosen to do the biggest attack on the health-care system. And what was this attack? The Premier closed three emergency room—hospital emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in Winnipeg. And what will it do? It will make it harder for seniors and families to access emergency or urgent-care in their communities.

In the northwest part of the city where our family lives, the Seven Oaks General Hospital has been a very busy emergency room facility. And it has saved many, many lives, and it has been

providing excellent health-care service to not only people from Winnipeg, but also people from the adjoining communities, say, in the Interlake region.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget also follows the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) bill which opens the door, as I've said earlier, to massive tuition hikes for students. Right now, many of the students, those who are not as fortunate as having their parents support them for their education, are eking out through minimum wage jobs. Through minimum wage, they pay their living expenses as well as hope to have enough for their tuition, so their plan is to obtain higher-pursue higher learning be it in university or trade or vocational schools.

But not increasing the minimum wage has made it very difficult for these working students to make both ends meet, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these changes have made it harder for students to afford post-secondary education, and with no mention of a job strategy in the budget or a proposed 15-cent increase to the minimum wage, these students will find it very difficult for them to pay up their loans, and by the time they graduate because of the loan-heavy loan they have incurred, it would mean a huge burden on them instead of starting life a little bit easier. Instead of having more money in their pocket after taxes, they will find it very difficult, and many, many will still be in the poverty-line situation even after graduating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's surprising that the only tax credit the Premier increased was for donations to political parties, and what does this do? It is one which would only help the most well off. Everyday Manitobans were left out of the budget; their voices weren't heard.

And speaking of the hidden agenda that this government has kept from most Manitobans, this government hid two major changes to legislation in their omnibus budget bill, and it will severely impact municipalities, and we believe municipalities deserve transparency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget—in this budget, the government tried to hide a huge cut to the City of Winnipeg in their omnibus budget bill. They rolled out a long-standing agreement between the Province and the City of Winnipeg to pay half of the City's public transit costs.

I remember a few weeks ago or a few days ago in Estimates, we have asked the Premier, on different occasions several times, but didn't exactly get a

definitive response from the Premier, but we endeavoured to ask in the Estimates early on if the Premier and his government will respect the 50-50 transit funding in this budget in the days ahead, that the provincial government will be assured of the 50-50 transit funding. That is very important, because many Manitobans who can't afford to have cars rely on the public transit. Many seniors rely on the public transit because they can no longer drive, and many new immigrants who cannot afford to buy their cars yet rely on the public transit. So making it affordable is a big help for these people, yet it seems that funding will be cut.

* (16:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, after the tragic murder of transit driver in February, transit workers called for greater investments to improve safety on buses. Winnipeg had committed to working to introduce—the City had committed to working to introduce a series of new safety measures and that safety measures could be in jeopardy without the Province's 50-50 funding.

And speaking of the City of Winnipeg, our mayor says these cuts will mean some pain for Winnipeg infrastructure and Winnipeg taxpayers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to this, this government has rescinded legislation which requires the province to direct 1 percentage point of PST revenues to municipal infrastructure. This legislation was part of a brand new funding deal called Building Manitoba. And that term, building Manitoba, might do the opposite because of these cuts to municipal infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we, in this side of the House, are committed to growing our cities, and the government's cuts to municipal infrastructure will slow growth, eliminate good jobs and drive out families. And on this, the AMM president, Mr. Chris Goertzen, says, infrastructure is their greatest challenge and that municipalities, quote, want to solve it and we want to be partners with other levels of government trying to solve that issue, unquote. And this was his comments to CBC.

We believe, in this side of the House and, sadly, this is a fact, that this Budget 2017 are for only those at the top. This budget that the government introduced last month is hurting regular Manitobans and they are balancing the books on the backs of families, seniors and youth, and that's not what Manitobans voted for. Sadly, the Premier is ensuring that those at the top get to keep more money when

they donate thousands to political parties and the Premier increased the budget for his political staff by 5 per cent.

Mentioned earlier—I mentioned earlier about the pain that this budget has caused to many Manitobans when they introduced the shuttering of ERs and urgent-care centre. The—this biggest cuts—this is the biggest cuts to health care in a generation. This budget comes off the heels of the biggest challenge to Winnipeg's health care. With this budget, there's no new investments into the ERs and, rather, it's just massive cuts.

How will the government ensure those facilities have the capacity to handle hundreds of thousands more patients? I recall elderly, who I met recently, who shared with me—because he's living by himself and just taking the bus—if he—and he lives in—by the Elmwood area, and he thinks now that Concordia emergency room is to be closed, how can he go to Health Sciences Centre fast? Well, we—he has to take the taxi and—with the limited money and limited income from his pension, that would be a big drain on his finances.

Likewise, I met this person who has been going to emergency rooms of Seven Oaks hospital because it was the closest to the son's residence and in case of emergency because he has some health problems already—health challenges. It would be—and, if the son happens to be away and no one is at home, it would be a big problem for him to get to Health Sciences Centre for—to seek emergency care.

Sandi Mowat of the Manitoba Nurses Union said, quote: It still does not make sense that you are having increased wait times but you're going to close three emergency rooms. We have to figure out what the bottlenecks are and fix those instead of pretty drastic cuts to front-line services, unquote. And she said it in scum on April 11, when the budget was given out.

At The Forks a few weeks ago, there's this health-care worker from Seven Oaks who told us that, with Seven Oaks being—emergency room being—to be closed, that means not only emergency room staff will have to face layoff or job losses, others in—say, in ICU or, in other departments of the hospital are also in danger of losing their job. And these people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have families that rely on their employment in the health-care field. And cutting or shuttering these emergency rooms and urgent-care centres could mean loss of income for these breadwinners.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Also, on health care, this budget brings on a massive 20 per cent cut to health-care infrastructure. The Health Minister closed down the St. Boniface QuickCare Clinic, and his announcement will mean the ER at St. Boniface will be busier than ever. And people are still reeling from the news that—the cancelled health infrastructure projects, including a new facility for CancerCare Manitoba, two personal-care homes for Winnipeg and one for Lac du Bonnet, an ACCESS Centre for St. Vital, a primary-care clinic in The Pas, a consultation clinic in Thompson, a new facility for Pan Am Clinic, an international centre for palliative care at the University of Manitoba, a blood bank in St. Boniface—all of these will mean the excellent health care that Manitobans have been used to receiving will be at greater—much greater risk now than before.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget included no health prevention measures or any investments into healthy living initiatives. These are the kinds of investments we need for families and seniors to reduce the use of emergency rooms in the first place. Prevention is way better—spending on prevention is way better than spending on serious illnesses and they cost—you cost this government more money.

* (16:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government also campaigned on a promise to build thousands of personal-care-home beds across the province for our growing, aging population of seniors—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): It's a real honour to always to stand in this House and put some comments on the record for any bill. The budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act is no exception. Must confess, it's my first year here, and I had to become familiar with this rather robust piece of legislation, so I think my remarks, while touching on some details, will be more broad in nature. And I think that for those who take the time to read Hansard or possibly to listen over the Internet, it's those kinds of broad remarks which they may find helpful.

And, by way of introduction, just to set the stage for what I'm going to say, I think that it needs to be acknowledged, our party obviously has a different philosophy to the members opposite. And it is—one of our core values is fiscal responsibility, heading towards balance, heading towards a financial

situation which is sustainable. And that's really a cornerstone, a touchstone of our approach to government. And so the purpose of this budget and of future ones will be to ensure a sustainable future for our province.

And, when I say our province, I mean our children, I mean my children, I mean the children that I was honoured to care for as a school principal. People used to ask me, how many children you—do you have? And I would sometimes say, oh, I think I have about 300, because that was the size of the school. And occasionally I would say, wait, no, I think it's 301, if we added a student, or I'd joke, no, it's 299, if we'd recently had a student move away. But, you know, these are not just numbers; these are people. And these people will grow up to join the workforce and they'll grow up to pay taxes.

And the unfortunate reality, Madam Speaker, is we just cannot in good conscience continue spending at the levels the NDP became accustomed to. The more we borrow, the more we compromise the future of our children, of our grandchildren. That is the price of standing still and it is unconscionable to do nothing.

We note that last year in 2016, Moody's downgraded Manitoba's credit rating. This is an embarrassment. This is a very unpleasant thing to have to tell our creditors. I wish that we wouldn't even be speaking of creditors, but that is the reality. That is the unfortunate predicament we find ourselves in. And, you know, Madam Speaker, the sad part is this situation is avoidable. This situation is not one that we have to be in. A more prudent approach in previous years, I would note, especially the last 17 years, could have had a much different reality that we would be inheriting. You know, the debt was doubled, and that's a tragedy.

We also have to keep in mind that we are enjoying, at the moment, historically low interest rates which are inevitably going to rise, and with those interest rates rising, our debt servicing expenses will also rise. And it kind of goes without saying, but apparently not, that every dollar that you spend on debt servicing is a dollar you cannot spend on medical services, it's a dollar you cannot spend on education, it's a dollar you don't have for child care, it's a dollar you don't have for roads, it's a dollar you don't have for any number of worthy projects.

And so the solution proposed by the members opposite—I notice the member from Elmwood is listening intently. I wonder if possibly the lights are

beginning to go on. Possibly, there's a change of heart; possibly, he's beginning to reconsider his decades of ways. And I am inspired to continue to speak with the hope that—now I notice more and growing numbers of members opposite are watching me as I lay these facts out for the record. I can only hope that they are beginning to think twice about their ways, beginning to think about mending their ways. And I appeal to them in this House and say it's never too late to do the right thing. It's never too late to abandon the tax-more, spend-more regime. It's never too late to say, you know, perhaps we should repent. Perhaps we should show the province that we're contrite about the things that we once were proud of.

Well, certainly there is hope if they would embrace such an attitude, but I hope that these remarks will strengthen the glimmer of hope that I have for them to mend their ways.

Well, all is not lost. And the prudent financial course that the Finance Minister, fine man that he is, has set for our government is that you don't just balance the budget by cutting everything instantly. You do want to set a situation where you're actually investing, and that is what we see. In fact, remarkably, we see record levels of investment in Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living, including over \$100 million—107 and a half million, to be more precise, in new spending.

Now, this is remarkable. Not only are we trying to be more responsible, but there are areas where we—where the careful reader will find new spending, and I'm quoting here, 107 and a half million on new spending with targeted investments in primary health-care services.

And I see nearly \$2 million—1.7 for universal newborn hearing screening, an additional \$8.8 million for expanded dialysis treatment. That's something that I've watched friends go through, and so I'm very happy to hear that dialysis treatment is getting more attention and not less. One point six million dollars more to support mental health services; these are not small numbers. The budget includes \$9.4 million for new cancer drugs.

And I'll remind members, readers, listeners, that during the election, we heard scare tactics about our government taking cancer drugs away, but what do you find? No, you find, actually, the better part of \$10 million, \$9.4 million, for new cancer drugs.

Madam Speaker, these details should not go unnoticed. You see six and a half million to further reduce ambulance fees for Manitobans. That is something that we said we would do. That is something that we're planning to do. That is something that is being rolled out, and it's right here in this fine BITSA bill, something that we should all be proud to embrace here.

But that's not all. My time is short, so I'm going to have to move quickly. We see significant investments in Manitoba Families, increasing the department's budget by more than \$105 million. That's a 5.4 per cent increase over last year. The budget provides support for over 500 new licensed child-care spaces and 50 home-based child-care spaces. It increases operating grants for home-based child-care providers. It includes nearly \$13 million, 12.8, for projects that will improve supply and quality of affordable housing.

My notes are jam-packed with numbers, statistics of things we're doing that will improve the lives of Manitobans, that will increase funding, that will increase investment, that will improve access. I notice here that rent assistance programming is receiving—it will improve the quality of affordable housing, and \$85 million to further support employment income and rental assistance programming clients.

*(16:30)

So we see numerous positive steps, numerous investments, and let no one say that we don't care about the everyday lives of Manitobans. If you take the time to read BITSA, you will come to the opposite conclusion, and I know that many Manitobans are doing just that.

Well, I want to allow my colleagues on all sides to make comments, and so I'm going to sit down in just a few moments, but I would like to say to start—or to finish up as I have—as I began, we have inherited a financial situation that is not sustainable. We are on a road to recovery, but yet, even as we rein in spending, we also commit ourselves to making strategic investments in areas that matter. We are not leaving Manitobans high and dry. We are helping them where it matters. We are investing in things that have been neglected, and all at the same time keeping our children and grandchildren in view. We want to pass on a much healthier fiscal landscape than they have inherited from the previous NDP government.

That is our commitment. That is our plan. That's what you can see in this BITSA bill.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): And I am really excited about speaking to Bill 36, the BITSA bill. It's something I've been waiting to—waiting for for quite a while. I would have expected the government would have brought in their budget a little earlier, and therefore, the BITSA bill would have been part of the five bills that we designate to hold over 'til the fall, but, at the end of the day, that's exactly what we're doing anyway. We'll be holding the bill over to the fall for further perusal and discussion. This is quite a—quite a large—a large bill, and I think we could take the summer to study it more as the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) has indicated.

And I have to say, you know, a lot of things have changed in the last year. A year ago—just a year and a month ago, I think we were in an election and I remember going to—I do, you know, participate in a debate once an election, and this last election was no different, and the candidates all arrived and somebody taped the debate, so there was a tape of this debate out there, and—but I remember saying at some point to the other candidates in reference to the Conservative candidate that these—this Conservative candidate—the Conservatives in general—were all cute and cuddly before the election, but when the election was over—when the election was over, that's when the claws were going to come out and the real Conservatives would be apparent.

And so I was disappointed for the first few months, because I thought, well, you know, we—we have a bill—a budget introduced last year and, well, the budget was a pretty good budget. It was evidently our budget, according to the Conservative team over there, and they were seeming to make good on their promise to not to cut front-line services.

And so we got—they got past pretty much—almost past the first year—close to it, but then the whole roof fell in. The whole building collapsed around them when they announced one day, a couple days before the budget, that they were going—you know, and I know the previous government did insert some poison pills in the last six months to a year, right? I never thought—I thought they'd recognize those pills for what they were, but what they did was they found—they discovered this Peachey report, right, and it's a report to the government, like lots of other reports to governments—governments of all stripes, you know, do reports on a myriad of topics, but it

doesn't mean that they accept all or even any of the recommendations.

So, I mean, it doesn't really take a genius to figure out that you have a report commissioned by the previous government, right, that says this is all going to be real easy here, you can solve all the health-care problems by taking six emergency wards and cutting them in half, shutting down three emergency wards, and that is going to—that is somehow going to prove to be a popular move.

Well, needless to say, they—it has not proven to be very popular at this stage and the reality is that, you know, the Conservatives have been hiding—and I say unsuccessfully—behind the Peachey report, but they—those of us in the room here who have been around a while will remember the famous debate in federal politics when John Turner became the Liberal leader and he had to promise Pierre Trudeau Sr. that he would take care of folks and load the Senate up with a bunch of Liberals that Trudeau wanted appointed. And John Turner did accept that as a condition, I guess, sort of like Nixon gave Ford the—made him promise to pardon Nixon. And so they got into this national debate and Brian Mulroney was the young and new leader of the Conservatives in, what, '83, in that election—or, '84 election, pardon me, and Mulroney went after John Turner on the basis that he shouldn't have made these appointments to the Senate and the response to John Turner was, I had no choice, my hands were tied, you know, the devil made me do it, I had to do this. And Mulroney turned on him, and, in a response that basically galvanized the election for Mulroney and against Turner, was he said, you had a choice. You had a choice, sir.

And that is what we will say to this Health Minister and this Premier (Mr. Pallister): you had a choice. No one was putting a gun to your head and saying, oh, you have to support, you know, you have to accept the Peachey report. Just because the previous government commissioned it and paid for it, well, we better get value for that money, we better implement all the recommendations of the Peachey report. I—that never happens. Usually, when there are reports, a government might accept a few of the recommendations but not the whole works—not the whole works.

So the reality is this Premier had a decision. He made the decision to implement this report, and nowhere in the report, however, did it say that Concordia had to be one of the three. They were non-specific about that. The Peachey report said

we're going to reduce the six to three, but they didn't say which ones and, of course, the Conservatives made their choices and they decided to close Concordia. Well, I'm just saying that there is a—there has been a—no surprise to me, a reaction. *[interjection]*

Now, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), he was just a young person the last time the Conservatives tried to close Concordia, and that was when Gary Filmon—isn't it interesting? It's the only time any ERs get closed is when it's Conservatives in government. So back in 1995, take you back—self back to 1995 and the Filmon government of the day announced they were going to close Concordia overnight, okay? So people who are thinking about, well, where am I going to go if I have a heart attack, or thinking, well, you know something, I might have that heart attack at night, and it's going to be closed. It's open during the day but it closes at night. That's what they were going to do. Well, guess what happened there? You had a different cast of characters on the scene at that time.

* (16:40)

You had Gary Filmon and you had Bonnie Mitchelson, and it didn't take long for Bonnie after, you know, her phone was ringing off the hook, to go and tap the premier on the shoulder and say, uh-uh, that is not going to happen. And the Rossmere MLA at the time was, I believe, Harold Neufeld, and he, too, went to Filmon and said, no, that is—and you know that this great plan of theirs lasted two months. October of 1995, they announced it, and by December they had their tail between their legs and they were running away from this idea. They didn't want to hear about the closure of Concordia anymore overnight.

Now, what does Peachey—what are you doing now under the Peachey report? You are closing the whole thing. You're not closing it at night; you're closing the entire emergency ward, plus on top of that, you're closing the intensive care unit as well. So the residents are more than livid about all of this, and, you know, I'm just reflecting what they're telling me. I'm not creating—*[interjection]*—I know.

I know the Minister of Health likes to make comments about, you know, T-shirts that are inside out and signs that are, you know, going through Rossmere and ads and all this kind of stuff. That is just a reflector of what people think and what they're saying. I don't have to do any of this, and the result

would be the same, if you were to have an election right now on this subject.

And so the—at this point in time, you know, a survey has been—and I made a statement today about the survey, and I was unable to get it, you know, completed, but, I mean, it's there for anybody who wants it. We have the website—www.keepconcordiaeropen.com—and in there is a survey and the members here can—you know, we don't throw anybody's responses out. I've had a couple of people who say—one young—well, young—he's 45. He's a pretty fit guy and he said, no, I don't—I think it should be closed down. I said, well, what if we have a heart attack? And he said, I want to just go quickly, he said, if that were to happen. I said, well, look, fill it out and mark no, right, and because we—you know, we're going to—it's a survey. Even though it's like 98 per cent in favour of keeping it open, there's still that 2 per cent that, you know, just like with the Disraeli Bridge issue, there was that 8 per cent who thought we were on the wrong side.

Okay, so we are inviting even the members of the Legislature here to participate in the survey, and anybody that needs copies of it—I mean, I can give you copies. I can give you copies of the signs. I can give you—even put some—*[interjection]*—yes, I can even pound one. I've had some misfortune—not so much lately, but, in the beginning; haven't put up any signs for a while now—and I put some screws into my—one of my fingers and had a lot of blood coming out, and I was so happy that that ER was close there that, had I needed to go, I would—it would have been there for me. But, after next March when it closes, then that option is not going to be there.

So I would think that these guys have—that this government has gone in one year now from cute—the cute-and-cuddly stage to now where they're dropping like a stone. And I would think the crisis group is in heavy conference at the moment, probably doing a lot of overnight polling, trying to figure out, you know, now that we know how we got into this, how do we get out of this.

So don't be surprised if they don't start holding some people accountable. I know the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston)—I don't think he has to worry about that at the moment, but, you know, historically, governments have had difficulty with the health-care file and, you know, it's not usually a file where there's a lineup of ministers wanting the job, because they know after a couple of years, you

know, that things don't work out. You can go up quickly but down really quick as well.

So I would say that, for those members of the Conservative caucus who think they're—you know, can move up the chain here, things might be getting right. You know, the conditions might be developing to the point where there may be some openings pretty soon because what we know about premiers in general, and leaders, is they don't usually take responsibility themselves for what is going on. They find somebody else to take that responsibility.

So there's always—incumbent Health ministers are really ones to look at that possibly may be, you know, demoted or resigning or leaving to make room for new people. But it's not really a job that anybody over there is going to want because this is not an exercise that is going to be done in a quick manner. I've found out through the Estimates, asking the minister that, in fact, they're still constructing the Grace operating rooms and they're not going to close Concordia until they open the Grace.

Now, he—they say it's going to be March. But—they say it's going to be March next year. But when has any project that the government done embarked on lately ever finished in time? So, now, we're in to the middle of '18, we're probably going to see delays of maybe six months. And meanwhile—meanwhile—they—popularity of the Conservatives is going to be approaching zero. Certainly in the North.

And, now, they may bounce; it may hit zero and it may bounce up a little bit, but the trajectory will be going down. So the members have to realize that, once they embark on this program, you know, there is a point of no return. And Gary Filmon saw the point of no return and that in 1995—and, Madam Speaker, you were too young to be here at that time, but there shortly thereafter Gary Filmon realized that the point of no return—where it was. Bonnie Mitchelson pointed it out for him and showed him the light and the way. And, in two months, they just walked away. They said, ah, we've had enough. We've learned our lesson. And, you know, I'm not going to be—I'm going to be—it's going to be a happy day when this government walks on Concordia and backs away. Okay?

I may be stuck with a few thousand dollars worth of—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order.

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

Point of Order

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

Mr. Micklefield: Yes, Madam Speaker, the rules say we cannot remark on the presence or absence of a member, and I believe it was just noted that one member of this House was—there was a correlation between the member's youthful age—I think it may have even been yourself, Madam Speaker, and your absence from this House at a certain time.

I wonder if—I think that is a violation of the rules. I just wanted to call the member to order on that point—or, ask you to call them to order. You cannot reflect on the presence or absence of a member at any time.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Certainly, no point of order here, and I think the member just misunderstood what I was saying. I was reflecting back to 1995, the last time a Conservative government tried to whack ERs—or eliminate ERs—emergency departments in Concordia was October, 1995. And I merely said that you, Madam Speaker, were not elected at that time, but you were elected shortly thereafter—a couple years after. I just—I'm not certain of the year, but I just know that she was not here. Had she been here, I'm sure she would have been talking to the premier and trying to get them to back off.

Anyway, my point about this is that government—and I'm speaking to Bill 36—

Madam Speaker: I have to—I would point out to the member that I have to rule on the point of order. And I would indicate that it is not a point of order; it is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

*(16:50)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): You know, so I just want to say that—in case the members hadn't really been thinking about this lately, that they've been down this road before. Conservative government has been down this road before. They tried to close the Concordia Hospital emergency ward on an overnight basis in October of two thousand and—sorry, 1995, and the reaction was so severe that two months later,

they were pretending they hadn't even thought of it in the first place, right.

And I'm saying that as much as I am enjoying the hospitality of the folks out there in the community, right now, and the excitement they all have in greeting me at all hours of the night and encouraging me, holding up the post so I can pound in the sign, as much as I'm enjoying that, I want to keep the emergency ward open, okay.

So, like I just said, I don't mind if I get stuck with a couple hundred extra signs that don't get put up right now. I just request the government to reconsider what it's doing and reinstate that emergency ward for the people of northeast Winnipeg and Transcona, and not only that, but out into the rural areas as well, who are mightily offended that the government would shut down the emergency services there. And so will they do it? Time will tell, but I can tell you that people are—seem to be very determined and those signs are very well constructed, so they will survive through a winter or two and, you know, the—and if you do close it, you know, people are not going to forget about it because we're going to be reminding them about it; 2020 is not that long a way off. And those—all those signs will be reusable, so I'll make sure I collect them all.

So anyway, I want to give you some advice on that, and whether you take it or not is your business, and I know that in the surveys there have been a number of people have said—not a significant number, but, you know, a decent number have said—you know, at least leave an urgent-care centre there, okay? And, I mean, there is an urgent-care centre going to be left in at Seven Oaks and Victoria, and now, when we look at the Misericordia, I mean, the fact that you would take the urgent-care centre there and downgrade that, that is even more preposterous. I really don't get that one.

So I don't know how much discussion there is about this stuff in the caucus—

An Honourable Member: I don't think they have caucus meetings.

Mr. Maloway: Probably not. But, you know, I mean there's nothing wrong with raising heck with your caucus. I mean, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher), my old-time, long-time friend in Ottawa, I mean, I think he's a perfect example of what these new members should be looking to. Like, you know, he has done a amazing—I don't agree with all of the—necessarily all the bills that he's

introducing and stuff like that, but the fact of the matter is that that's why we're here, okay? We're not here to be—if I ran originally to be popular with one—with my leaders—I don't think I've been popular with any leaders, maybe—except maybe the existing one, and she's not going to be around that much longer, right. So, I mean, you know, the facts of the matter is I know how the system works. I've been around the system for a long, long time and it's very easy to just go along. What do they say? Go along to get along, right. And I know that when the plan was to shut down the Disraeli Bridge and divert all the traffic—turn Elmwood into a parking lot, it wasn't to my political advantage to do what I did, believe me, because I got a lot of flak internally from it, and even though we were going after the mayor for the extra money, at the end of the day, all the mayor was doing was contacting the premier, right. So the money was really coming from the provincial government,

But, out of that—I mean, after I think their polling started to show that things were not looking so good up there, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) found that \$50 million and got it into the bridge. And so I'm just encouraging the members to not sit back and just be passengers on the train here, that—you know, a little bit of revolution every once in a while is good for the system. And the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) is leading the way. I mean, he's a perfect example of who you should be looking at, and you should be asking him for some advice on how to—and you should be supporting him in some of his initiatives.

And, like I said, I don't agree with some of his initiatives because they're more in line with your philosophy than with ours, but you should think about that and—because, you know, do you know that the alternative is? The alternative is you're all going to end up losing in three years. And—well, I'm just saying you can't do.

Well, now the member wants to talk about the Louise—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

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

Point of Order

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

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, comments should be directed through the Speaker. Statements such as you're all going to lose in three years are out of order for the way that speeches should be—should be looked at—should be given in this place.

Madam Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): You know, just on the point of order there. There is no point of order in my view here. I'm just demonstrating to my honourable colleague, who is a good friend of mine—become a really good friend of mine, and I'm—I'll say that. I know Hansard can be distributed.

But, you know, he was lamenting the fact that—no, but he—seriously, just a few minutes ago—a half hour ago, he was lamenting the fact that only one MLA was listening to his speech. And I'm just trying to demonstrate to him that there is a way of getting everybody participating in the speech.

Madam Speaker: I'm going to indicate this time that the point of order does stand. The member should be directing his comments through the Chair, and our rules very, very clearly state that. So I would ask the member who is in debate to please direct his comments through the Chair.

* * *

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): That is entirely true. It might lead to a less exciting speech, but it is certainly a long-held tradition for sure. And so, you know—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —I—it was a lot of points that I wanted to speak about on this BITSA bill, and, of course, this is really an omnibus bill. It's a budget implementation bill and, I guess—because of that, I guess, it can be a little bit disjointed because it takes a whole series of tax measures and throws them into the bill. There are some odd—there are some odd aspects to it, but there—the reality is that this government, as I'd indicated, is—actually, it was the first paragraph in my notes that set me off, Madam Speaker, so I'm really back to the first paragraph here. But it was that the budget itself had hit the front-line services that Manitobans count on, and that's when I started talking about the whole ER issue and why it's—why it is the explosive issue that it is.

And so—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: There's other areas that this government is—it's not just ERs that have got people concerned. I mean, just let's look at the education components of what this government—this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has done. The university and college fees are going up. Students are going to be paying up to, like, \$2,500 more in taxes. The budget slashes tax credits for students but increases tax credits for political donors making large donations.

What it's actually doing in the BITSA bill will be increasing the tax credit from \$650 to \$1,000. And there is a difference. Like, in the old days, there used to be a direct correlation—since 1972—in the tax credits—political tax credit field, used to be a direct correlation between the maximum you gave. It would be the maximum you gave—it would be—the

maximum you gave would be eligible for a tax credit. But that is now changed a little bit, and the tax credits usually end—federally, they end around \$1,100, and that's the tops of your contribution levels. But provincially, even though the tax credits end around \$1,100, you can—taxpayer can donate up to \$3,000. So anything around \$1,100 gets no tax credit.

Now, what the government is doing in Bill 27 or 26 in bill—I believe it is 26—and it will take effect on September the 1st, because it's three months past royal assent. What they've done is they're going to—

Madam Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have four 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, May 29, 2017

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