

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

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

Vol. LXXI No. 19 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 14, 2018

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
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	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 12—The Red Tape Reduction and
Government Efficiency Act, 2018**

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 12, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2018, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, our government committed to reducing red tape for citizens, businesses, non-profits and municipal governments. Bill 12 will amend 44 statutes, eliminating 399 regulatory requirements and 475 additional pending regulatory requirements that have been deemed outdated, costly or ineffective.

Madam Speaker, initial estimates indicate that these efforts may save government nearly \$1 million annually. We are proud of these continuing efforts, and this legislation builds on our demonstrated record of success.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Crown Services, 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.

Red Tape Reduction Act

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): I am pleased to rise today in the Assembly to inform this House about the continued progress our government is making to reduce red tape here in Manitoba.

With the introduction today of Bill 12, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2018, our government continues to build upon the great work undertaken since our election in April of 2016.

Madam Speaker, included in this legislation are amendments to 44 statutes. This will eliminate 399 existing regulatory requirements and an additional 475 pending regulatory requirements that have been identified as costly, burdensome and ineffective.

These amendments will help individuals, large and small business, local municipal governments and non-profits increase efficiency in operations and keep more money in their pockets. These streamlined efforts will save the provincial government approximately \$1 million annually, with millions more in savings for individuals and organizations.

Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and Finance Minister were the proud recipients of the CFIB's latest Golden Scissors Award, and with the introduction today of Bill 12 we continue—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —to build upon this legacy, going from laggard to national leader in terms of red tape reduction.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to extend our appreciation to the stakeholders in attendance today. Many of these amendments were identified in co-operation with their organizations. As we move forward together, I thank all of those in attendance and we appreciate your guidance.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): There are two big problems already, and the bill has only just been introduced—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: The first is a process issue, Madam Speaker. It is completely unprecedented and inappropriate for a government to arrange for a minister to speak to a bill in the manner that has just happened, yet again, without the bill first having been even tabled in the House for the opposition members to have a chance to comment on.

This is an issue that needs to be considered immediately by the rules committee of the House and I would ask that that work begin.

Secondly, there is absolutely no reason for anyone to take great joy in the fact that this government is now bringing in yet another omnibus piece of legislation. This is the second problem.

Forty-four different pieces of legislation—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —are being dumped on this House, apparently, and 44 different changes will have to be contemplated in perhaps a very restricted timeline.

This is exactly what this government did the last time around with their infamous legislation which wiped out regulatory limit—if the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) wants to speak, I'm sure he can stand up and have a turn; just wait for the talking stick to come around.

They wiped out important protections for water safety—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I'm having considerable difficulty hearing the member, and I would ask that members in the House show respect for the member that has the floor and allow him to be heard as every member would wish that they could be heard. I do need to hear the words that are being said so that I can ensure that the language that is being used in the House is in accordance with our rules, so I would urge everybody's co-operation.

Mr. Altemeyer: I appreciate that and I point out that that type of interruption is precisely the type of behaviour that fits with the government's approach, where they attempt to speak to legislation before is

appropriate and they attempt to ram through 44 different changes which does not allow the community or us, as opposition, to have proper time to consider them.

The impacts from last year's red tape reduction bill were documented in the committee stage when dozens of people raised their concerns. This government did not listen. They are one thing, Madam Speaker, and that is consistent, but that needs to change.

Thank you.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, businesses in Manitoba were pleased to hear that this government was looking at the extensive red tape that bogs them down.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, unfortunately the red tape reduction act from the previous session was only about reducing red tape for this government and other levels of government.

Madam Speaker, here's an idea: what is required is a customer service approach. For example, imagine the difficulty of a small-business owner who receives conflicting information from many different offices and that cannot seem to work together efficiently due to the lack of co-ordination by this government.

* (13:40)

This government should be providing the tools they need to work together. Tons of our systems are confusing and completely outdated. Think about the correspondence that still is being done through faxing.

Madam Speaker, this is the red tape that businesses in Manitoba want to see reduced.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): That's fine, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Thank you, then.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Troy Scott

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are known for their generosity and heart for service. Each of the members within this Chamber strives to make a positive impact on the lives of all who live in our great province, and those in our constituencies are full of others who actively pursue the same goal.

Today it is my absolute honour to introduce to the House Mr. Troy Scott, principal of Acadia junior high school in Fort Richmond. My family has been blessed to benefit from Mr. Scott's leadership and support, and I can attest to the fact that he has a heart for all students within the school community.

The last few weeks have been very busy for Mr. Scott, who is one of only 40 recipients in Canada to receive the 2018 outstanding principal award. Principals are nominated by parents, colleagues and community members and then chosen by a national selection committee.

It was Mr. Scott's work on the development of an after-school program for newcomer students named the Peaceful Village that was instrumental in the recent recognition. Through the Peaceful Village program, students are able to build on language skills, access tutoring and participate in extracurricular activities to enhance connections within the school community.

Having grown up in the area, Mr. Scott was able to experience the changing diversity through the immigration programs, so he understood how to adapt and respond to the needs of the newcomer youth.

Thank you, Mr. Scott, for all that you do in Fort Richmond and for equipping all the students with tools for success.

Mr. Scott is joined today in the gallery by his wife, Dallas Ludwick; his parents, Jeff and Nila Scott. Please join me in congratulating them all on a wonderful achievement.

Siloam Mission

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Today I rise in the House to recognize the hard work of Siloam Mission in the heart of the Logan constituency.

Every day, Siloam Mission serves three meals to an average of 500 people. This means they prepare

and serve around 1,500 fresh and delicious meals each day.

Siloam Mission lends a helping hand to those who need it most. Besides hot meals, they also provide a multitude of services, including emergency shelter, medical and dental care, supportive housing, employment and mental health programming.

This New Year's Eve, Siloam Mission once again held their special holiday lunch. They fed over 600 people with the help of 120 volunteers who graciously offered their time on New Year's Eve to ensure that everyone in our community had a special meal. There were nearly 300 Winnipeggers who took a break from their festivities to give back to the community. They deserve our thanks.

No one plans to be homeless, and it can strike at any time. Poverty is a complex issue that hits the most vulnerable in our society. It does not discriminate, but it targets those who carry the biggest burdens: single mothers, the sick, seniors, young people and people from marginalized groups.

Organizations like Siloam Mission that are committed to fundraising and lobbying for supports are leaders in the fight against poverty.

I'm thankful that in Manitoba Siloam Mission is here to help. I request my colleagues to join me in thanking and welcoming Jim Bell, CEO of Siloam Mission, who is here with us today. Jim's commitment to Siloam Mission and the families they serve is a gift to our community.

To Jim and his team at Siloam Mission, we appreciate your invaluable service to our community every day.

Partners for Life Program

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Last month, Canadian Blood Services brought together for a breakfast the champions of their Partners for Life program, a program which helps bring awareness for the ongoing need for blood products and works with organizations across Canada to help push for regular donations among their members or employees. Groups such as The Catholic Women's League of Manitoba or Great-West Life are leaders in getting donations. Even this Assembly is a Partner for Life.

In 2018, Winnipeg partners donated over 5,000 units of blood, and nationally, it accounts for approximately 25 per cent of all donations

We know that there are times when life gets busy and we may forget about the need. That is especially over Christmas holidays. And when I was approached to adopt a blood clinic in Transcona last year on December 24th, I was happy to help and very proud that Transcona came out and filled out all the slots last year and then again this year.

I was honoured to be asked to be a guest speaker at their breakfast event, where I was able to share, as I have in this Chamber, my struggle with a rare disease called hereditary angioedema. And I require a plasma protein product from Canadian Blood Services to manage my disease, so it is always important to say thank you to those who donate and to also talk about organ and tissue donation, as people who give blood may also be inclined to register on [signupforlife](#).

There is an online tracker for Partners for Life, and I see that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly are both Partners for Life. I hope we can show our banjo-picking cousins that we are the province that really cares.

I encourage all in this Chamber to answer the call. The need is ongoing, on—and on behalf of someone who cannot donate, but benefits from this gift, I'd like to acknowledge Steve Raizen from Canadian Blood Services and all of the groups who participate and all of you who donate.

Thank you, and please remember that you have the power to give life.

Northern Health Professional Shortage

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): As northern health-care-professional shortages continue to grow, the workers, families and seniors of my constituency are increasingly concerned with the worsening levels of accessibility to their essential health-care services.

Currently, there's a 50 per cent vacancy rate of health-care professionals in Flin Flon's clinics, and we will soon be reduced to just two doctors caring for a wide variety of patients in Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage, Sherridon, and also from the Saskatchewan side.

On April 30th of this year, Snow Lake will lose its only community doctor. Health care for these Manitobans have reached critical levels. Without a doctor, the community of Snow Lake is at risk. Now residents will be forced potentially to wait months

before they're able to see a doctor about serious concerns or issues.

In the North, now, when patients finally do see a doctor, it's rarely the doctor who saw them last. This revolving-door system destabilizes health care, as residents are unable to build relationships of trust and are always starting from scratch. This is not an effective system, and it does not promote better health outcomes for northern families.

Beyond doctors, northern communities are also suffering from low numbers of health-care and home-care aides, which means seniors homes are unable to provide the necessary services, and northerners living with disabilities are without the essential supports that they require.

No matter where one lives, Madam Speaker, the ability to access a doctor is essential. We cannot continue to let Manitobans in the North suffer without the care they need. We cannot let the elders of our community live without the assistance they deserve. We cannot let those living with disabilities fail to receive the service they require.

I sent a letter to the minister on February 20th asking him—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: The member has asked for leave and leave has been denied.

Chief David Crate

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): I rise in the House today to recognize—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (13:50)

Mr. Johnson: I rise in the House today to recognize Chief Dave Crate of Fisher River Cree Nation. Chief Crate has been nominated by Governor General Julie Payette to receive the Order of Canada.

The House—the Order of Canada is the cornerstone of the Canadian Honours System. It recognizes outstanding achievement and dedication to the community and service to the nation.

The Order recognizes people in all sectors of Canadian society. Everyone's contributions are varied, yet they all have 'enriched'—enriched the lives of others and made a difference to Canada.

Chief Crate was recognized for creating ecologically responsible economic development opportunities for his community, along with improving access to education and technology in Manitoba's indigenous communities.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that Chief Crate is now serving his eighth term. He had served as co-chair of the Manitoba First Nations Technology Council, working to bring better Internet services to Manitoba's First Nations and he has advocated for better language preservation.

Furthermore, the portfolio of Chief Crate extends into a variety of sectors such as finance, capital projects, land claims, employment and training, emergency preparedness, intergovernmental relations, health services, land management, natural resources and environment, and that's just to name a few.

Chief Crate was also appointed to the Manitoba Hydro board, as well as the Fisher River Economic Development Corporation, where he represents the voice of the Cree Nation.

It is my privilege to highlight the legacy of Fisher River's own Chief Dave Crate and all the amazing ways he has served Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery from Lockport School five grade 7 to 9 students under the direction of Tyson Ochitwa, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Wharton).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lifelight Air Ambulance Privatization Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I first want to acknowledge Sam Kimelman, Izzie Helenchilde and other students at Grant Park High School today who organized a walkout of their fellow students in solidarity with other students across North America asking for an

end to gun violence in response to the Parkland shooting.

Manitoba's Lifelight Air Ambulance services are an essential health service that people in our province rely on. When a medical emergency strikes, families, parents, those who need medical care want to know that there are planes and medical experts, nurses and doctors there 24 hours a day, seven days a week willing to help in the case of a critical illness or an injury.

Now, when an ambulance won't be fast enough to help, that's when Lifelight kicks in, but the Premier has decided that he wants to privatize this essential service.

Does the Premier agree that Lifelight is a front-line essential service for Manitoba families?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I would agree if the member would've asserted that what's been missing in the government for many, many years now is a practical approach to getting value for money, and what we are looking to do is make sure that we offer services to the people of Manitoba at a very fair and reasonable cost because we understand that that is not the case, as it was not the case in the past, that taxes would be too high and therefore that opportunities would be driven away.

We also understand the past practices of government were to borrow when revenues were not sufficient. Even when taxes rose year after year under the NDP administration they raised deficits at the same time and doubled our provincial debt, and now, of course, we have a billion dollars of debt service costs as a consequence of that short-sightedness.

So, we'll take an approach that Manitobans take when they manage their own money. We'll look for value for money in every—at every opportunity, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Once again we hear the Premier talking about money, but not about the care that Manitoba families rely on.

Again, Lifelight planes have either critical-care nurses or doctors on board to respond to a situation, for example, if somebody needs a ventilator during transportation to another hospital. Now, if somebody needs a ventilator it is likely a life-or-death situation, but yesterday the Minister of

Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) said that Lifelight and water bombers are, quote, not an essential service. End quote.

Perhaps the minister should read the acts for which he is responsible—brought copies to table here in the House today. And when we look at The Essential Services Act we see that air ambulance and water bombing are both listed as essential services here in the province. You know, The Manitoba Essential Services Act states this clearly.

Will the Premier clean up this mess, the mess that the Minister of Infrastructure has made? Will the Premier admit that Lifelight and water bombers are essential services that Manitoba families rely on, and that he will keep them public health-care services?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I appreciate his—the member's reference to mess because the previous government left the province in a mess—a fiscal mess, a service mess, an economic mess—and we are cleaning it up, Madam Speaker, because that is what we're focused on doing for the good of Manitobans, because Manitobans deserve a more stable financial future, because they deserve secure services not those funded by billion-dollar deficits on an annual basis.

The member criticizes us for referencing money and yet he references money in his preamble. You know, a billion dollars is a lot of money and a billion dollars of debt service costs that we have to endure this year is the result of the thoughtlessness and a practice in the past of not looking for value for money, of simply looking at throwing money at the problem, and that never worked to make it go away, Madam Speaker. We have much evidence of that fact.

So we will continue to focus on getting value for money in every aspect of government operations and we will focus on making sure that the services provided by our investments are of the highest possible quality, as well, for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: An airplane with a medical doctor on board running a ventilator on a critically ill patient. The Premier is standing up in this House and saying that he's going to privatize that. He is going to privatize the service which delivers medical care, a ventilator, to somebody who is in critical condition, somebody who is critically ill—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —has potentially a life-threatening injury. That is the announcement that this Premier is doubling down on. We know that it's right there in black and white: this is an essential service.

He's got a minister who's running around apparently unaware of the legal obligations that he's under, and instead of telling that minister to clean up this mess and walking back this commitment to privatize an essential health-care service, the Premier stands up and says, full speed ahead with privatization.

Why won't he back down, admit the mistake that his minister has made and reverse this privatization of health care in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: The member opposite is so aware of the mess the NDP made, Madam Speaker, he leaves NDP off his promotional literature. He leaves the reference to his own party off his advertising.

Madam Speaker, he needs to understand that his predecessors in the NDP government purchased essential health-care services from the private sector when they were in government. It's called the STARS helicopter, and they did it without tendering, without shopping. In fact, the Auditor General—I encourage him to read the Auditor General's analysis of this fiasco, because the Auditor General says, the government paid multiples, millions, tens of millions of dollars more than they should have if they would've simply had the intelligence to go to the marketplace and find out who could provide that service according to well-enunciated standards, but they didn't do that. They had to get the announcement out just before the election.

They did, and Manitobans are paying a hundred million dollars more than they should, Madam Speaker. What a shame.

We won't do that. Where they got it wrong we'll fix it and get it right. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

International Students Future of Health Coverage

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier's cuts to education are hitting parents and students particularly hard. We know that the Premier's tax hikes have hit students by up to \$2,500 last year. Then he decided that

tuition should rise by some 7 per cent here in Manitoba. Now he's cut millions from the budgets for post-secondary institutions in this province.

Now, the Premier's cuts to our post-secondary education system guarantees that tuition will rise next year by the maximum amount. It probably also means that programs will be ended, and this could impact students' plans for graduation and the careers that they pursue in this province.

* (14:00)

What's particularly galling about that is that under this Premier's watch we now have the highest unemployment rate in this province within recent memory. For the first time in a generation Manitoba's unemployment rate is higher than the national average.

Will the Premier today commit to reversing this attack on post-secondary education and stand with students and their families instead?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, there's so much wrong with his preamble, Madam Speaker, I don't know where to begin.

First of all, on the myth of cuts, actually we've increased the funding for education by 11 per cent, Madam Speaker, 11 per cent in our first two years, so that is a significant contribution to education, obviously. I think, also, in terms of the doom and gloom the member espouses, we do have one of the highest quality educational opportunities provided by our institutions, post-secondary institutions, around the province that is available anywhere in the country, and I'm proud of the work that is done in those institutions by the instructors, by all the staff there.

So I would continue to say to him that he need not espouse darkness on the future of our educational institutions or the opportunity that we provide students. We have among the lowest tuitions in the country and a commitment by this government to make sure that it stays that way and that we will have, as a minimum, the lowest tuition costs in the whole of western Canada, Madam Speaker.

My concern—my opportunities in my life, like many in this Chamber, came from education, and I want to make sure that Manitoba students have those same opportunities going forward.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, if the Premier's so proud of the post-secondary institutions that he just handed a \$5-million cut to in this week's budget, I'd hate to think of what he does to the organizations in this province that he's not proud of.

There are some 8,300 international students in our province, and now media reports are saying that the Premier is eyeing ending their health coverage. Now, seven of 10 provinces cover health insurance for international students, but in Ontario cost of insurance is up to \$1,100, right, which could potentially make our institutions less competitive, but it also strikes to an issue of fairness.

So why is this government making it harder to attract and retain international students? Will the Premier back off his plans to cut health insurance for international students in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member says he's concerned about what I would do to an organization I wasn't proud of. What he should actually be concerned about is what Manitobans will continue to do to an organization they're not proud of, and that organization is the party which he refuses to put on his advertising literature. He need concern himself with that.

Madam Speaker, we value public education, certainly K to 12; we value public education available for post-secondary opportunities for our young people and for people around the world. We offer a learning opportunity here that's second to none. Foreign students come to this province not solely because there's a health-care program but largely because there's an educational opportunity and they will stay because there's an economic opportunity.

Madam Speaker, we lead the country now in many economic growth categories. The member espouses doom and gloom but the fact remains that we have the highest increases in average weekly wage growth, the highest private sector investment increases in terms of industrial investment, in terms of manufacturing investment. These are the opportunities that people from around the world want to be part of in our province. They don't just want an education and to go home. They'd like an education—and stay here, but they're not going to get fulfilled by a government that borrows a billion dollars more every year than it raises, with some of the country's highest taxes.

We'll lower taxes and we'll create greater opportunities for a future here for all.

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

Mr. Kinew: The leading economic indicators, GDP growth and unemployment, are backsliding under this Premier. That's his record so far.

Madam Speaker, we know that there are now some 8,000 international students in this province and they contribute millions to our economy each year. Now, we do want many of these students who want to put down roots here to contribute to our economy in the long term. However, they won't be able to put down those roots if they don't come to the post-secondary institutions in Manitoba in the first place. By cancelling the health coverage, they will be forced to look to other provinces.

Now, that also—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —has an impact on domestic students in our province, too. If international students start to look at British Columbia or Ontario or at other provinces to attain their post-secondary degrees, that is going to drive up the cost of education for domestic students here in Manitoba as well.

On all measures, this plan being put forward by the Premier is short-sighted and it will damage the quality of post-secondary education here in the province both for international students and for domestic students.

Will he reconsider and back off this plan to cancel health coverage for international students?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, just because NDP staffers run away to Alberta doesn't mean that international students will do it.

Madam Speaker, the tuition costs in Manitoba will remain the lowest in western Canada, and presently an international student will save more than \$2,500 versus Saskatchewan; \$2,000 versus BC; \$1,500 versus Alberta.

So with a health program available, freely available from—across the street for less than \$400, I think maybe international students are capable, with their math skills—and I'm confident they are—to understand the real savings they'll derive by being in a province that has growth opportunities for a change, because it sure didn't under the NDP.

We lead the country in average weekly earnings growth. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: The member talks about forecasts; I care about results. That's the problem with the NDP. They never cared about the results.

Madam Speaker, second in manufacturing, capital investment, the second lowest—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —unemployment rate in Canada. Our employment, seasonally adjusted private sector employment, third best growth in Canada, Madam Speaker, and private capital investment, third best.

We've moved from the bottom of the barrel under the NDP to the top, and we're going to keep it that way for international students, for all our students, for all our citizens here in Manitoba.

International Students Future of Health Coverage

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): International education is very important to Manitoba's economy.

Providing health care for international students has been a key tool for promoting Manitoba around the world. We are known as a welcoming society, as friendly Manitoba. International students have helped the affordability of our universities and increased the diversity of our post-secondary institutions, but now it's at risk.

Why has the government proposed cutting health-care coverage for international students?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Thank you to the member for the question.

We want to be absolutely clear that we're working together with stakeholders, both students and—or—and post-secondary institutions and others that have international students attending to make sure that a program is in place, to make sure that students that are here in Manitoba have health coverage on an ongoing basis, to make sure that there are no gaps in their coverage so that they can rest assured that they have coverage while they're at school here in Manitoba.

We provide them with lots of opportunities in post-secondary education. We also provide them with the opportunity under the Provincial Nominee Program to do much more, to become Manitobans.

And under the previous government, the waiting list went on to four years.

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

Ms. Marcelino: International students are veritable ambassadors for Manitoba in their respective countries.

According to the Education Minister's own annual report, international education makes a significant economic contribution to the province of over \$403 million per year. The international students who have graduated from Manitoba colleges or universities are also more prepared to live and work here after their studies. It's good for Manitoba. It helps our economy and our students.

Why has the government proposed cutting health-care coverage for international students?

Mr. Wishart: The member is correct in that international students do contribute in a major way to Manitoba, not only in terms of dollars, but in terms of cultural diversity. They're an addition to our community, and we're an open and welcoming community. We're putting in place programs that not only make it possible for international students to come here on a regular basis, but that they have an opportunity to stay here in the future. Under the previous government, they were stalled, waiting in endless lines.

So, Madam Speaker, I think our program and our process and our improvements to the Provincial Nominee Program are much better for international students.

* (14:10)

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

Ms. Marcelino: The government is increasing tuition for all students, cutting our post-secondary institutions, cancelling tax rebates, and now they are proposing a cut to health care for international students. It sends a message: Manitoba is a less welcoming place to come to and a less welcoming place to stay after graduation.

International students as well as Manitoba students and the Canadian Federation of Students are in the gallery with a message of solidarity for the minister.

Will he stop the cuts? Will he listen to them today?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. We're all very interested in making sure our post-secondary institutions are sustainable in the long run and that we have programs that cater not only to our own students, but to international students, and we will make sure that there are programs in place to make sure the international students are here in a safe way and that they have the health care that they need.

But we also have made sure that they haven't—don't have to wait endlessly in lineups for years while they apply for provincial nominee status here in Manitoba. Under the previous government, that had become the standard. We made—we fixed that problem within a year.

Mental Health and Addiction Services VIRGO Report Recommendations

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): The Minister of Health must have been confused yesterday when he denied sitting on the VIRGO report on mental health services for months. I table a freedom of information request showing that VIRGO's final strategic plan report would be provided to the executive directors of mental health and addictions policy by December 31st, 2017, which matches the date in the minister's own press release.

The minister told Manitobans an internal reference group would review the strategic plan, yet this week's budget speech made no reference to the plan, and even worse, there were no new investments in mental health services.

I ask the minister: Did the VIRGO report conclude that zero new investments in mental health in Manitoba are required?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, the member will know, because it's been discussed publicly, that VIRGO asked for an extension 'til March 31st. We've been saying that for many months. They have not provided a final report. I look forward to the final report.

It's particularly important because we know, for many years under the NDP, the addictions and the mental health system were not well aligned, they were not well put together and people were falling through the cracks. So we look forward to the recommendations from VIRGO and seeing how the system can be better aligned to help those who are dealing with addictions, Madam Speaker.

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

Federal Funding Agreement

Mr. Swan: Last August, in another press release by the minister, we learned that Ottawa handed this minister \$400 million over 10 years to be targeted to mental health and addictions services and home and community care.

You know, Jim Bell of Siloam Mission can tell you the impact that addictions and mental health issues have on our community. But there's no evidence in the budget that any of this targeted funding is actually being spent on mental health or addictions or home care or community care. The Minister of Health received \$40 million in targeted funding from Ottawa which has vanished into thin air.

Did the minister lose the money, or is he just hiding the money?

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate my friend from Minto raising Mr. Bell in the audience today. He deserves great accolades for the work that him and many others are doing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: And my friend from Minto—I'm sure it was just an oversight—failed to mention the great investments that our government have made in partnering together with Siloam, led by the member of family service, but of course supported by all members of our government, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, last year's announcement of \$400 million in funding from Ottawa included the first dedicated mental health funding from the federal government in a decade. Manitobans expect this money to be invested in services that protect families, that protect communities.

Last August this minister told Manitobans he'd put this funding towards key provincial priorities, and he said these were home and community care, mental health services and addictions treatment. But this budget makes it very clear the government has taken away \$40 million that was meant to help Manitobans in need.

He hasn't answered the question yet. He's done everything to deflect it. The money's not in the budget. None of it's in the budget.

I ask the minister: Where's the money?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member should know, if he doesn't, that the majority of provinces have not signed their bilateral 'agreements'—agreements when it comes to that particular funding.

Certainly, we are going to be looking towards VIRGO when they report on March 31st in terms of where funding should go.

But I wish that he would have had any sort of voice when it came to the issue of federal funding several months ago, Madam Speaker, when our government—our government—took up a historic argument with Ottawa to try to ensure that there would be real partnership with Ottawa when it came to health care, not just mental health, not just addictions, but certainly those areas.

We were looking for a real partner with Ottawa. We led the charge nationally. That member said nothing at the time.

Specialized Foster Homes Inappropriate Care Concerns

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Today we learned in the media that there are serious allegations against a private foster care group in Brandon. This group has been subject to multiple reviews by the minister's own department. The minister is aware of these serious accusations and concerns that have been lodged by Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services against the owners of this organization, but yet this minister hired them again to work with children in care.

Why is this minister continuing to pay someone accused of putting kids at risk?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Protecting vulnerable children is something that we take very seriously on this side of the House.

We continue to clean up some of the mess that was left from the NDP in terms of the child-welfare area.

Fifteen days into becoming a minister, I did—which I will table in this House today—a letter to the Children's Advocate that talked about the Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services and Dakota specialized services, asking them—responding to concerns related to this matter—and will table this.

The—in respect to that, the Children's Advocate has done a report with some recommendations that the government is acting upon.

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

Mrs. Smith: The issue is that the minister, in full knowledge, continued to hire these individuals.

This minister still hasn't answered my question about children in care deserving better.

Why has this minister rehired individuals who have a record of serious complaints against them?

Mr. Fielding: I can emphasize the fact that we referred this matter to the Children's Advocate within 15 days of taking office, a mess—something that we were not involved in, but we took immediate action. We got a report from the Children's Advocate on recommendations, and the government has 'foll'd'—followed through with the recommendations, continues to work with the Children's Advocate in terms of those recommendations to ensure that they are updated and fulfilled.

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

Mrs. Smith: The minister refuses to answer my question whether he is able to comment on the specifics of the case or not. The fact is these individuals are still working with children.

Children in care deserve our support.

Why is this government continuing to hire people who face serious accusations?

Mr. Fielding: I can tell you that we very much take into consideration, in fact make a priority of, protecting vulnerable individuals. This is something that we took action on immediately once taking office, sending a letter to the Children's Advocate to ensuring that the children are safe.

I can guarantee you that the children are safe. We've been working the Children's Advocate on the recommendations and have been updating—working with the Children's Advocate on a daily basis on this case.

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Implementation of Recommendations

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Since we last sat in these Chambers the world was given a glimpse of the injustice my people face.

Thirty years ago the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, a.k.a. the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, was created. It released its final report in 1991. The majority of its recommendations have sat gathering dust.

* (14:20)

For 150 years my people are still being haunted by these—those systems that were imposed upon us.

Can the Minister of Justice tell the House whether she has read the report, and, if so, will she be implementing any of the recommendations?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for that question.

And, in fact, I have read that report, and one of the recommendations in that report is to do away with preliminary inquiries. It's something that we spearheaded across the country. We've spoken with other provinces, and it is probably something that the federal government will now be acting on, at least we hope they will, and that was one of the recommendations that was in that report.

We look forward to the federal government following through on our actions and call to action on doing away with that.

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

Ms. Klassen: Words without action have failed us. When we lost Helen Betty Osborne and J.J. Harper we were promised change. We recently lost J.J.'s nephew Craig, whom was also shot and killed by Winnipeg police.

Why did my Wasagamack First Nation have to bury two individuals from the same family for the same thing?

Millions were spent to identify where these practices fail indigenous peoples. This government has also failed Tina, Helen, J.J., Phoenix, Brian and countless others whose stories were never told.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Will she promise us today that they will revisit the unfulfilled recommendations of these inquiries and implement them immediately?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for that question. Of course our thoughts and prayers go out to all the families who have lost loved ones and in such—in these tragic cases.

Madam Speaker, we do take these situations very, very seriously. It's why we introduced our criminal justice system modernization strategy on Friday, which takes into account many of the issues that the member opposite is bringing forward.

I look forward to working with her and other members of this House towards the implementation of that strategy, because it will be good for all—the safety of all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Klassen: It's really hard to watch this government point fingers and then sitting on their hands. This government needs to get work—gets to—needs to get to work on this issue now.

The patronizing policies handed down by consecutive governments to control indigenous peoples don't work. They only function to destroy our communities and they perpetuate systemic discrimination.

Despite being told numerous—in numerous reports and inquiries how to respond to these issues, governments don't listen. We know this because they have not acted yet.

Will the minister meaningfully work with First Nations to change the indigenous injustice system to ensure that my people's voice will be honoured so that those deaths are not in vain?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. I know she is very passionate about these issues, as are we, and we want to make sure that we can work together with communities.

It is a focus of our government to build safer communities and provide more timely access to justice than what has been seen in the past, Madam Speaker, and that's why we have introduced our criminal justice system modernization strategy. Part of that is the effective—more effective use of restorative justice and working with indigenous communities on that.

So we look forward to working with those communities towards more timely access to justice and provide safer communities for all Manitobans.

Investment in Child Care Budget 2018 Announcement

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): For years the NDP did nothing to address the critical

need for new child-care spaces in Manitoba. In fact, the previous NDP administration had 550 fewer family spaces in Manitoba than before 1999 and wait times had steadily grown over the years by thousands of children.

Can the Minister of Families please update the Assembly on how Budget 2018 and our PC government is keeping our child-care promises to Manitobans?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I want to say that providing affordable and accessible child care is something that we value here on this side of the House. We know the issues that the NDP had in terms of creating an ideological sense in terms of child care.

We, in this budget, increased—created a child-care-centre tax credit we think will help working families.

We've also made further investment: just recently over 1,400 new spaces that we created in schools, in community centres. We're also investing over \$10 million with partnerships with the federal government in terms of children with higher needs like autism. We think that's priority for Manitobans.

NDP needs to get on track with our record in terms of child care. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Infrastructure Budget Funding Concerns

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, we're seeing increasing trail of broken promises on infrastructure by this particular minister. This budget is all about broken promises.

Just a little over a year ago, the Minister of Infrastructure put out a press release promising predictable, stable five-year funding for Manitoba highways of \$500 million per year. But instead, this year saw a \$152-million cut. By the government's own press release, this means 1,500 fewer jobs and a \$121-million reduction to Manitoba's GDP.

Why has the minister misled Manitobans?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Under our government we have two schools currently under construction. The budget that was just presented, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: –announced five new schools that are to be built. We have started and we will have finished Freedom Road by the end of this year. The Lake Manitoba channels are beginning the construction.

Madam Speaker, \$500 million in infrastructure and maintenance and \$1 billion in private Manitoba investment: we kept our promise.

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

Mr. Maloway: This budget is about broken promises. The Pallister government promised \$500 million of highway spending every year for the next four years, but this bungling minister had a laundry list of excuses yesterday for his cuts, but not a rational explanation. Budget numbers show that the government's own spending on strategic infrastructure has declined yet again.

Will the minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) just state the obvious: Our roads, our highways and infrastructure are not a priority for this government.

Madam Speaker: I would just caution members that when we are directing questions or answering questions that we be careful we're not denigrating people personally. I don't think that's a fitting commentary in this House.

It is one thing to take on people's, you know, and criticize, perhaps, the practices of people, but to start to name-calling I don't think is very useful in this House as we are trying to build a more democratic system and follow that in a more respectful way.

So I would just urge caution in members that name-calling really doesn't fit in this Chamber.

Mr. Schuler: I want to remind the member for Elmwood that for 17 years they committed to building Freedom Road, not one toonie was spent. Madam Speaker, for 17 years they talked about Freedom Road, not one loonie was spent, not one dime, not one nickel. Nothing was ever done in 17 years.

Madam Speaker, in two years not just did we complete phase 1, phase 2 is under construction. We will get Freedom Road built in two years, which they couldn't get accomplished in 17.

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood.

Mr. Maloway: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Elmwood, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Maloway: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This budget's all about broken promises.

Yesterday the minister suggested that cuts to highways are offset by spending on other infrastructure, but that's simply not true.

The government's own budget tabled Monday shows a further budget reduction to strategic infrastructure of \$115 million. So on top of a broken promise from this government, we have statements that turn out not to be true. It's time for this minister to own up to his broken promises.

Will this Premier order the minister to clean up his mess, as he promised he would do just last week?

Mr. Schuler: In fact, the Premier did say, clean up the ESRA mess, and that's exactly what our government did.

It was under this member, the member for Elmwood and his government, who spent \$500 million and they got 50 miles of roads built.

Madam Speaker, in two years—in two years—we got Freedom Road built, which they couldn't do in 17.

Air Ambulance and Water Bombers Privatization Concerns

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Air ambulances and water bombers are as important as the roads we drive on in the North. They're critical tools to keep us healthy and keep us safe. Manitobans need to know that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: –profit considerations don't trump patient and community safety.

Why is this minister rolling the dice on privatization with such critical and essential services?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Every day Manitobans prove that they are very smart shoppers and they expect that of their government. They have a government that is going to do some very smart shopping for a very safe and reliable system.

I would point out to members that this is purely a request for 'reposals,' Madam Speaker, and we will test the market to see if we can get better value for the public money. Until then, no decisions have been made.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Vimy Arena

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I wish to present to this House—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fletcher: I wish to present to this House the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of Assiniboia, St. James and the greater Winnipeg area of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg to use the Vimy Arena site as an addictions treatment facility.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and the City has not considered better-suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface industrial park or the 20,000 acres at CentrePort.

The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addictions treatment facility and has not sought input from the community to consider better uses for this facility which would—consistent with a residential area.

(4) The provincial licensing system is akin to that of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site by the city and the province.

The proposed rezoning changes fundamentally change the nature of the community, zoned as a park area. The concern of the residents of St. James regarding safety, property value, and the way of life are not being appropriately addressed.

(6) The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue-collar, middle-class citizens who are family-oriented toward children and seniors and do not have the financial resources of other neighbourhoods.

(7) This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine Park nor for Heubach park, between Park Boulevard East and West, even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.

(8) The City and the Province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this, quote, unquote, process that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without consultation.

(9) The Province needs to be inclusive in its decision-making process and improve its programs to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provision of drug prescriptions that could lead to addictive behaviour.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Madam Speaker: The member for Assiniboia has not read the petition as printed, and I would ask, is there leave to accept the petition as printed? *[Agreed]*

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

The background to this petition is as follows:

1. *The residents of Assiniboia, St. James, greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg (City) to use the Vimy Arena site as an addictions treatment facility.*

2. *The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes and the City has not considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface industrial park or the 20,000 acres at Centre Port.*

3. *The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addiction treatment facility and has not sought public input from the community to consider better uses for this facility consistent with a residential area.*

4. *The provincial licensing system is akin to that of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site by the city and the province.*

5. *The proposed rezoning changes the fundamental nature of the community, zoned as a park area, and the concern of residents of St. James regarding safety, property values, and their way of life are not being properly addressed.*

6. *The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue collar, and middle class citizens who are family-oriented toward children and seniors, and do not have the financial resources of other neighborhoods.*

7. *This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine park nor for Heubach Park (park between Park Blvd. east and west) even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.*

8. *The City and province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this "process" that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.*

9. *The province needs to be inclusive in the decision making process and improve its programs to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provision of drug prescriptions that could lead to addictive behaviour.*

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.

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

Medical Laboratory Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service. It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

Under the present provincial government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a US company, has acquired Unicity labs, resulting in a

monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

With the creation of this monopoly, there has been the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg.

Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has made it more difficult for some medical offices by changing the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charging some medical offices for collection services.

These closures have created a situation—

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher), on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Fletcher: The member from Kildonan was taking pictures in the Assembly just now while we're in session. And, well, I wonder if the Speaker could tell us what the rules are around taking photos.

Madam Speaker: As I have not seen that happen, I would indicate, though, that if it was occurring, the rule in the House is that there are to be no pictures taken in this Chamber. And I would ask everybody's co-operation in that.

So the member does have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, to continue with his petition.

Mr. Gerrard: These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services.

*(14:40)

Madam Speaker, the situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening based on their individual health situations.

Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all patients requiring immediate results, stats patients,

such as patients with suspicious internal infections be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply collecting the test in their doctor's office.

This new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patient's health. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice which increases cost to the public health system.

Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop service acting as a health-care front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to provide high-quality and complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs and clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

To urge the provincial government to ensure high-quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

To urge the provincial government to address this matter immediately in the interests of better patient-focused care and improved support for health professionals.

Signed by Simone Beaudet, Grace John, Evangeline Cordova and many others.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Would you call the budget motion debate.

BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and the amendment and subamendment thereto,

standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley who has 17 minutes remaining.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Yesterday I had begun my analysis and commentary of this budget document by focusing on the specific negative impacts that it will have on Manitobans, specifically in health and education. I plan to continue with that analysis today so the government members in attendance have an opportunity to get outside of the spin zone that may have captured their own awareness of what they are really doing to Manitobans and to our future.

I think the best way to summarize this budget is it is a reflection of a government that doesn't care and does not listen. We can see this through repeated instances where all of the evidence suggests that making cuts, dangerous cuts, to front-line services is going to harm the well-being of Manitobans and our communities.

This does not seem to matter to this government, nor does the fact that they campaigned on a promise and stated after the election campaign that there would be no cuts to front-line services. The evidence that they are not listening is plentiful as well, and let me provide more than a few sad examples to illustrate the point.

On health care, recently the government's decision to cut the special drug program has deservedly received a lot of attention—and kudos to our health critic, my colleague from Minto, for his role in raising awareness amongst the public of the devastating impacts this will have. Individuals could very well end up spending in the order of \$11,000 in additional costs out of their own pockets simply because this government does not see any value in supporting those individuals.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) just finished waxing philosophic yet again during question period about value for money. Well, if he doesn't value the people, then they're clearly not going to get the money; that is how he sees this world. And at the end of my speech I'm kind of left to wonder, having looked through my notes, who it is he does care about, because just about everyone is going to be negatively impacted by those types of decisions.

Now, the cuts to the special drug program are part of an overall \$9-million reduction in Pharmacare. So anybody who is part of the Pharmacare program, well, you have no value to this

Premier (Mr. Pallister) and you are not going to get any money from him.

This stands in stark contrast to the past practices of our government. We had a policy and a practice whereby the purchase of generic drugs was accelerated at every opportunity. The savings from those wise purchases, which made it easier and cheaper for governments to acquire sometimes life-saving medications for Manitobans—we would buy the generic version wherever we could. We worked with other provinces to do bulk deals, as well, wherever possible, in the absence of any interest from the federal government on a national pharmacare program, and we put those dollars, Madam Speaker, into expanding the number of medications that were available to Manitobans. This government is taking us in the opposite direction because they do not value people who need Pharmacare in Manitoba.

Health-care cuts and negative impacts, tragically, do not stop there.

Anyone who is in need of a personal-care home, well, you have no value to this Premier. Anyone whose family member is in need of a personal-care home, you have no value to this Premier and he's not going to give you the money that you deserve to have or the supports and programs that are necessary. Evidence for this can be found in the fact that there are no personal-care-home beds being built.

This is on top of a cut of \$2.5 million to the long-term-care services, and they've also had the audacity to cut the caregiver tax credit. This was something that was put in place to recognize the enormous amount of work and the expense involved in looking after an individual in one's home, being a primary caregiver to a member of your family but the Premier does not value that type of work, and so it is not going to get the money.

On top of that, he has doubled the fees for seniors who are living in long-term care and he is pursuing—à la the Filmon government—when he was also last year, the privatization of our home-care system, a home-care system that is widely regarded as one of the best or was regarded as one of the best in the country. But he does not value public delivery of health-care services. He would much rather privatize them so that his elite buddies can make more money off of the medical needs of Manitobans, and that is the path that he is pursuing.

In my own constituency of Wolseley, of course, we have had no small number of tussles with this government over the atrocious decisions that they have made to cut valuable existing services and to cancel plans to improve services. We were going to be providing additional QuickCare clinic in the West End of Winnipeg. Well, that got cut. There were the existing QuickCare clinics, including the one across the river from The Forks in St. Boniface, also not that far from Wolseley. Well, that got cut. The Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, well, that got cut.

People now have to plan to be injured or to need urgent care during hours when the bus runs and then pay more money to take the bus all the way out to Fort Richmond to get to the Victoria urgent-care centre and instead, of course, they are ending up at St. Boniface, at the Grace, at the Health Sciences Centre, exactly as we said would happen, and they are not able to get the care in the community where they reside. And the urgent-care centre at Misericordia had the highest patient satisfaction rating of any of the ERs in Manitoba. It also had the highest staff satisfaction rating of any of the ERs in Manitoba. But if you don't value public health care, particularly if you don't care about the inner city, well, it has no value to you and you don't give it any money, and that's where this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government is headed.

Anyone who has diabetes, well, there was a million-dollar cut in Pharmacare for your blood glucose test strips. Might seem like a minor issue, but if you do not have access to the test strips, you may not realize that you could be heading into a major medical incident with insulin levels and glucose test strips are fundamental. But, no, no, that's not important to this Premier, so it gets cut.

The wait times at the Grace Hospital, which I mentioned earlier, up by 51 per cent, and the length of the stay for patients there has increased by 32.

* (14:50)

If this government actually proceeds with what they're now calling phase 2 of the destruction of urgent care in Winnipeg, those rates are going to skyrocket even higher, Madam Speaker. And there's absolutely nothing in this budget or in this government to indicate they have any vision towards prevention. Actually helping people become healthy

and stay healthy in their communities—that has no value to this government. It gets no money.

Let's shift gears to education. Quite rightly, this government is being taken to task for the dramatic changes that it is making to education, both at the K-to-12 level and at the post-secondary level. I've talked about K to 12 previously. Let's focus a little bit on post-secondary now.

On top of the elimination of the graduation tax credit for university students and on top of the elimination of the legislated limit on how much tuition can go up, this government now is trying to claim that they support post-secondary education when they have cut the budgets for universities and our colleges in Manitoba by \$5 million just this year alone.

And heaven forbid if you're an international student. I used to work at the International Centre for students at the University of Manitoba. It was a phenomenal workplace, and you could see first-hand every single hour of every day the incredible value of having international students come to our little part of the world to learn the knowledge that they seek and share the experiences and world perspectives that we would otherwise not be exposed to.

Well, we've now found out this government is looking at cutting the health-care coverage benefits for international students. All of this means that if you are a university student, if you might be a universal student, if you are in the K-to-12 system right now, if you are a parent who might, at some point in time, have a child who would be interested in attending a university or a college, this government is making it more and more difficult for you to be able to do that.

They do not value public services, Madam Speaker. They do not believe that everyone should have access to public services regardless of how much money they may or may not have been born into. They have a different set of values, and it means if they don't value you, you don't get the money from the public, and that's what we are seeing in our university system—never the mind the fact that this government's appalling behaviour during the strike that happened at the University of Manitoba.

Many, I think, have correctly identified this government caused that strike to a large extent. They have now been found in violation of labour practices and labour law in Manitoba and have had to pay a very significant sum of compensation, and quite

rightly so, to the faculty members at the University of Manitoba.

I don't really understand how that's value for money. I have not heard any apologies from anyone from the government benches saying, yes, that was a really dumb move, we're sorry we did it, we're going to try and change our behaviour. No, no, they're going full speed ahead with another round of cuts against our public education system.

If you think that education is expensive, Madam Speaker, try ignorance. That's a bumper sticker. When the government's policy cannot even meet the intellectual threshold of a bumper sticker slogan, you know the future is not too bright for our future here in Manitoba.

When it comes to poverty reduction, Madam Speaker, one of the two main reasons that I decided to seek office is to try and help those facing difficult circumstances to have an easier time of it. This government has dropped the ball yet again. They are legislatively mandated to be bringing forward a poverty reduction strategy, and we still have no indication of when that might happen.

For the past two years—first two years in office, this government froze the minimum wage, so the lowest income workers in our society actually lost spending power. Clearly, they're not valued by this Premier (Mr. Pallister). They're not going to get anybody's money. It's not even provincial government dollars that would be involved in that. And this is not a small number of people, Madam Speaker. On top of the seniors who might not be able to access a personal-care home, might not be able to access Pharmacare anymore, anybody who's working at a minimum wage job—all these people, now, they clearly are not valued by this government. There's 38,600 Manitobans who work for the minimum wage. That's according to Statistics Canada, and over half of them are over the age of 20, proving yet again that this Premier does not have a handle on the facts.

Here's what he was quoted as saying to the CBC on June 3rd, 2017. Quote: You jack up the minimum wage like the left-of-centre Ontario government and the left-of-centre Alberta government are talking about doing, and you know what you do? You reduce entry-level jobs. You stop young people, especially, from being able to get into the workforce in the first place.

It's a complete myth, Madam Speaker. And the evidence shows it. But when you're the Premier,

facts don't apparently matter anymore. It's what he likes—it—what he doesn't like, and he doesn't like a whole lot of things.

And so, once again, minimum wage workers are getting absolutely hammered. They have now legislated the minimum wage to stay at poverty levels in Manitoba, increasing the minimum wage by 15 cents an hour. That's all they've done in three years. That's a nickel a year, Madam Speaker. It has fallen behind the rate of inflation. The living wage is probably at least in the order of \$15 an hour now in Manitoba. And by legislating—legislating—that only the rate of inflation will be used for any future increases in the minimum wage, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has said he does not care about the 38,600 Manitobans who live in poverty, because they simply work for the minimum wage. I would argue that is bad policy and completely inappropriate.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, one of the things that the Premier quite clearly does not care about and sees no value in is the environment. Let's take water as just a simple example. The—most of us would consider water is life. It's the only reason that there's life on this planet and not on any of the others in our solar system. And, lo and behold, this Premier and his government continue not to just be absent on water issues but to actively attack the health of water with unwise, unjustified cuts to services and programs and even laws which have protected water for years in this province.

North Dakota, as well, has received so little attention from this government, it's mind-blowing when you consider that North Dakota right now is contemplating not one but two different massive water-diversion projects. These water-diversion projects, if they go ahead, will merge water systems, water basins, which have not been geologically connected for thousands and thousands of years. They have a different mix of species in them.

And when you do that, you run the risk of foreign invasive species coming to Manitoba. There's over two dozen documented cases of foreign invasive species in the Missouri River basin. Those species could end up here in Manitoba and wreak untold havoc on our drinking water quality, on municipalities' costs as they have to spend more money to try and clean the water before people can use it, never mind the ecological impacts within our water systems or the impacts on the multi-million-dollar fishery industry.

And don't even get me started on what this government has done to the poor fishers in Lake Manitoba.

And don't even get me started on this government's approach to climate change. This government has yet to introduce a single new initiative or program that is going to reduce emissions in Manitoba. It's been all talk. And, Madam Speaker, the closed political spin can only cover a bad policy for so long. Manitobans know it and they're done with it.

Thank you.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): And it is certainly my pleasure to get up and speak in support of Budget 2018.

Having listened to the previous member, it did bring back memories of being in opposition. There are two—being in government is totally different than being in opposition. There's two things, though, that really stand out for me being in government right now.

* (15:00)

First of all, it's sitting—being able to sit in this esteemed House, which is a privilege for all of us. But, really, there's two things. When I sit here and I turn in my chair and I look at all these Conservative MLAs serving Manitoba in such a great way, that's just fantastic to see. And the other thing that I will never get tired of is being in a majority government and winning votes. That always is a great thing to win the votes, because we are—we do have Manitoba's best interest in mind.

And I can remember being in opposition and I can remember those NDP budgets coming in. You knew there was no way they were ever going to hit their targets, which proved to be correct. You knew that they were overspending. You saw the dysfunction that was happening in the NDP, and you could see the damage that the NDP were creating to all of Manitoba.

So it's good to see them retrenching. I am not quite sure how that's going, but I'll leave that up to them. That's not my problem.

And, you know, when we came in the government—*[interjection]*

You know, and I realize the member from Minto is bitter, and I understand that. But it's fine he'll get over it eventually.

But, when we came into government, we had an annual deficit of over \$900 million and growing. We have projections and we've met our projections in the last two years. In fact, we've exceeded our budget projections in the last two years. Had the NDP stayed in government, heaven forbid, Manitoba would now be seeing an annual deficit of over \$1.6 billion. That is not sustainable for Manitoba.

We know now that our—in our own budget projections our annual interest costs to those happy money lenders in Toronto and New York we are now paying over a billion dollars. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I am having increasing difficulty hearing what is being said. There are several conversations that are going on. I would ask those having conversations to please use the loge or the chairs at the back of the room or to at least bring down the level of those conversations so that we can all respectfully hear the member that's got the floor.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

As I was saying, there is—this is a good news budget for all of Manitoba. There are many good measures in here. And I know the previous member was talking about minimum wage. But what we've done, the course we've taken is increase the basic personal exemption. We've already increased it. Over the next couple of years we will increase it by another \$2,020 and by 2020 we'll take over 34,000 Manitobans, low-income Manitobans off the tax roll. This is taking money from the Cabinet table and putting it on the kitchen table where it rightly belongs.

Manitobans know best how to spend their hard-earned dollars, not like the NDP who think only they know how to spend everyone else's money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this—as I said, this is a good-news budget and I—there's lots more things to talk about that.

First of all, I would just like to reflect a little bit on my constituency of Midland. I have such a great constituency to represent here in the Chamber. Being in government and being in Cabinet you spend a lot less time out in your constituency than what we

would all like to. Being in government no matter where you are it's difficult to spend that time. When we do—when we are able to get out into our own constituency, and, myself, for me to get out into Midland constituency it's always great to visit with my constituents.

I know in a couple of different instances I've had where there's been phone messages coming in, my constituents would like to talk to me and I take an evening and I'll phone them. And a couple of different times I've had constituents say, you're too busy to talk to me, you don't have time. I said, no, no, this is how I connect with my constituents, and it's great. They appreciate the work that we have. They are very encouraging on the work that we continue to do in here, and I certainly thank the constituents of Midland for their continued support.

It's also difficult on family. Being in Cabinet is difficult on—being in this job in general is difficult on family. Family sometimes has to wear what happens in here, and that's always difficult on family. I know that just a week or so ago I was away for six days and—away from home and gone to a conference and then in session here, and that's always difficult. So I'd like to thank my wife for her patience—my wife, Dianne, for her patience and certainly my family. I've got some great grandchildren out there that I don't get to see nearly as much as what I would like to, but I still manage to spoil them rotten whenever I do get to see them. So that's—but just the privilege of being in government is certainly something that none of us will ever take for granted.

In terms of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, most—many people, when I speak to groups, they're always interested to hear what is happening in Growth, Enterprise and Trade, and I can guarantee you there is lots happening in Growth, Enterprise and Trade. It's a department that carries many different divisions. We've got the labour, economic development, the resource division, tourism and along with a couple of other departments. Now GET is responsible for the cannabis file, and that's certainly proven to be interesting, but the labour portfolio has been running well. We have good working relationships with groups like the Workers Compensation Board. We certainly appreciate the great work that SAFE Work Manitoba is doing and all the staff within the labour division. They're working hard. We've had good relations going forward here with the Labour Management Review Committee, and that's an ongoing effort to make sure that we're in touch with these groups and making

sure that we know what's going on and that it continues to operate smoothly.

Economic development has taken a huge chunk of our time within the department. We just released last week the Deloitte report on the Framework for Economic Alignment and Growth. Coming out of that Deloitte report there was—and I should mention that we did release the report publicly for everyone to see, which is something the previous government never was very good at, at releasing reports. Under this Framework for Economic Alignment and Growth out of Deloitte, there was really three key recommendations and—which we are now working on. The first one was to expand the program. One of the things that Deloitte found, which we found when we came into government and Deloitte really highlighted, was a lot of duplication across government programs, across departments. We needed to make sure we got a better handle on where all our granting programs, our economic development programs were within government as a whole. So that was one of their recommendations, was to expand the current program to all economic development programs across government to make sure that we knew exactly what we were getting, what we were doing, and have a handle on all of it.

The second recommendation was really we needed to confirm what our economic goals and objectives were. There was no economic development strategy from the previous government. It was—best way to describe it is the way the Premier (Mr. Pallister) described it the other day, was, you throw money at the wall and then you run over there, or throw an arrow at the wall and quickly run over there and paint the target around wherever the arrow landed, and that was their idea of a goal. We need much more precise than that. We need deliverables in this, we need objectives, we need a province-wide strategy, and it's not just Winnipeg and the capital region. We need it all across southern Manitoba, across northern Manitoba. Our Look North initiative is helping for the northern strategy, and we look forward to developing that province-wide strategy.

The third recommendation that Deloitte had, which we have now tasked Dave Angus and Barb Gamey with, is to consider establishing a dedicated, arm's-length economic development organization, something that can deliver these programs and make sure that we're getting return on investment. Those two fine businesspeople are going to be holding public consultations in the coming months here, and they will be reaching out to the business community

and industry leaders, to all Manitobans, just like our budget consultations did. We reached a large number of Manitobans across Manitoba, and this is what we wanted to do again.

* (15:10)

We need their feedback, their expertise on what an economic development program would really look like. So we're quite excited about that, and we know that time is of the essence. We need to get that program up and running it—just to provide certainty to all our business community across the province.

In the resource sector, we have the mines and petroleum departments in there. These departments have not seen a refresh in over 20 years. There's a lot of great people working in these departments. They're working very hard. But there's been no focus, and we need to bring some focus back into these. We will get that focus back into these departments. Industry has been asking for a refresh in both the mining and petroleum industries. We know it's paramount. We know that there's lots of potential both in the petroleum and in the mining industry in Manitoba. Mining has had a difficult turn in the last 10, 12 years, no thanks at all to the former government who really didn't like industry, and when the Leader of the Opposition signs on to the Leap Manifesto saying all natural resources should stay in the ground, that's not really an incentive for industry to come to Manitoba.

But I was recently at the petroleum developers and—conference in—sorry—the—it's called PDAC, P-D-A-C is what it is, and it's the mining conference. It's the world's largest mining conference in—and it was held in Toronto. We were down there. We met with a number of mining companies and mining developers. There—this is the long stage program you need in order to develop a mine. The prospectors go out there. They—and find potential mineral sites. The developers move in and do core sampling and prove out those sites, and then a mining company comes. And on top of that, we've also got—I should say former Chief Ron Evans, because he was the chief of Norway House, he's not now—and Jim Downey doing mined—mineral development protocol so that—involving our first—our communities across the North, primarily across the North, the local community, indigenous communities to make sure that they're involved in mineral development, to make sure that they are able to know what's going on and be involved in what's going on.

There's—that was the—one of the really great things that I came across at the PDAC conference was the—when meeting with these companies, how involved they are with the local communities. They know they have to have the local communities involved in these mineral development programs. There's all kinds of potential labour and skilled labour that they want to train up in in these local communities, and it's a win-win for both—for everyone involved, for the local communities, the resource companies and for Manitoba as a whole as we get more mines actively going here and there.

They're very close to a few—a couple of these mines getting started. There's lots of development work going on in the North. And Manitoba was described as one of the untapped regions of North America in terms of mineral resource development. So we have a lot of potential here in Manitoba to develop our resources which will help our northern communities, which will help Manitoba attain their—our fiscal balance here in the years going forward.

The tourism division of GET is doing very well with our 96-4 funding agreement where they—we take the Statistics Canada amount of money spent on tourism, we take 4 per cent of that and turn that back into Tourism Manitoba, and they in turn have that incentive to continue to build their tourism—to build the tourism industry in Manitoba because with that then they—the more tourism, the bigger the budget, the more they can do. They've been working very closely with both Winnipeg—Capital Region, but all communities across Manitoba—in southern Manitoba, northern Manitoba, and it's about branding your own community. We have so much potential here in Manitoba for tourism, and Tourism Manitoba realizes that and they're working with the local communities to make sure that we can invite not only tourists from outside of North America, but from the United States. But, also, there's lots of tourism potential from right here in Manitoba. Many of us just don't realize the great sights and locations we've got right here in Manitoba. So Tourism Manitoba will continue to work on that.

The cannabis file is coming along. The federal government has decided to legalize cannabis, and Manitoba and the provinces—federal government's decided to legalize it. The provinces carry the bulk of the load on this in terms of getting the process in place. Our Manitoba model, a hybrid model, we feel, is the—one of the best, if not the best model that's happening all across Canada. Right now we've got

liquor—the gaming authority, which will do the licensing, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, which will do the wholesaling—for lack of better description—and then independent retailers will retail the product across Manitoba.

And this is being looked at from other jurisdictions because of the ability of the local retailers to tap into the local markets and know what's going on. And certainly, from our perspective, this is a much better model. Let the retailers do what they do best. They can do it much better than government can, and this will—we will continue to have this process unfold as it goes on. It's a learning process for all of us. There's absolutely no doubt about that—a lot of unknowns in this. Our main focus, though, is keeping our youth safe, and the other focus is on getting the black market out of the cannabis market here in Manitoba. So we look forward to that file continuing to unfold.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is, again, a great news budget for all of Manitoba. There is so much things. I should mention, because it's in my department, our tax exemption for businesses being raised from \$450,000 to \$500,000, that's a great incentive for our businesses to stay here, to continue to grow and build. With that—between that and our economic development strategy going forward, we know that there's lots of potential here in Manitoba not only for new businesses to come, which we know are coming with the recent investments we've had around Portage la Prairie and there's more investments coming. And also—but it's to grow the businesses we've got. The business community continues to tell us it's not necessarily about attracting new business. You have the biggest growth potential of having your businesses right here grow and continue to hire more people and more skilled people as our university—we work together very closely with the Education Department to make sure the skills training is up there to fill these jobs.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were elected to fix the finances, to provide stability for all Manitobans, we were elected to repair the services, that's the services that Manitoba families depend on, and we were elected to rebuild the economy, and that's create opportunities for both businesses and for Manitoba families. That is what we are doing. That is what this budget does.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only thing better than today in Manitoba is tomorrow in Manitoba. Thank you.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): All one has to do is to delve into the finer print pages to see that the items of which this government boasts about are not so spectacular. As a matter of fact, I foresee that we will have an increase in unnatural deaths due to this government's cuts, a thing which should never be applauded.

I'm pretty sure the Finance Minister should know about inflation and that his supposed increases do not even match, never mind allow for, inflation.

We know that this new government took some time in getting used to the fact that they are now in government. Perhaps they are not comfortable with those titles because they are sure on a fast track to losing support. They are costing lives, Deputy Speaker, plain and simple. Their end goal is to look like saviours in their final year. We all know that. But to do it in a manner where Manitobans suffer, especially our most vulnerable to suffer further, it is quite heartbreaking.

*(15:20)

I have a laugh when I hear minister's—the minister's promises of returning all carbon tax revenues to Manitobans, because this government has also promised no cuts to front-line services. Then they refused to defined what their idea of what a front-line service worker was.

So perhaps by the time they invoke the carbon tax law, they will rename it in order to avoid giving it back to the hands that fed into it—a typical PC technique.

Here they are, yelling about federal transfers, fear-mongering techniques that they have the audacity to chastise the NDP for.

Children's special allowances are still going into general revenue, something they once heavily advocated for the NDP to stop. It has not got unnoticed that you have, yet again, neglected this in your budget.

My colleagues across the way should meet any aged-out child to see how they had to live because of this inhumane practice. These young adults, due to the mismanagement, don't even have family to fall back on when they become of age because files have been lost. As their parent, this government should have a nest egg for them to rely on once they age out.

I know not one foster parent having been able to start any kind of education savings plan for their loved foster child.

Let's get this—switching ministers. The former minister of Infrastructure told me in July that in the upcoming session the five-year plan regarding my east-side roads would be tabled. Surprise, surprise, then the Cabinet shuffle, and surprise, surprise, the new minister had no clue as to how to answer me in our question period before Christmas break. We need those east-side roads.

With the announcement that medivacs and bombers have been opened up to the highest bidder, we know that we will now face harsher costs due to the monopoly. We know we will be forever encased in cement when it comes to health, food security and economic opportunity.

Wasagamack First Nation needs a lighthouse. This government must have seen the pictures. Navigating during the night is treacherous, especially in emergency circumstances. That office responded to that—responded that an airport beacon is the better solution, but, again, the good-news budget is silent when it comes to that.

The worst part is that this government continues to leave federal money on the table. Then they have—then they complain about the—about how the feds are not helping. And, ironically, the PC government says we don't want it because it's—has to be earmarked for a certain project. Then they turn around and give the municipalities targeted funds. One or the other ministers, please make a decision. This government should allow for municipalities and for First Nations—that is if they ever give funds to First Nations—to choose what's in the best interests for their own community.

I say to the government, quit using Manitoba Hydro as a piggy bank and save the hundreds of thousands of customers from further increases to rates. Protect Lake Winnipeg. This is so common sense among grassroots, but seems to astound this government.

Send our children home. Generations before have asked for this. Apprehensions are still widely practised today, now in the form of CFS. Allow us to return to our system of indigenous law. That message seemed to have been lost from my question period on Monday. Allow for us to live by our customs and traditions.

The imposed systems placed upon us have failed consistently. When are the governments going to let us determine our own fates? Indigenous people make up 17 per cent of the population today in Manitoba.

We should have a voice at any table because these are our lands.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers?

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak on Budget 2018.

First of all, I know it's been a week since we've been back in session and it's great to be back in the House.

Let me first say, again, I'm very honoured and proud to serve my constituents of St. Norbert. It's been nearly two years since I've been an MLA. I'm very proud to serve with my colleagues within our Progressive Conservative caucus.

Back in 2016 our PC team had one goal: to make Manitoba the most improved province in five priority areas: better jobs, better care, better education, better value, better together. Our plan would focus on concrete results through actions in each of these areas.

Better jobs: Budget 2018 will invest in infrastructure and support for small business. With infrastructure, we will be completing Freedom Road this year and the Waverley underpass. These projects will create jobs. Speaking of jobs, we are also helping the true job creators: small business owners.

I am very proud of my small business background and having advocated for small business when I was a founder and president of the Manitoba Filipino Business Council. Now, as an MLA, I will continue to advocate for small business and that is why I'm very happy our PC government will help small businesses. Budget 2018 increases the small business tax deduction from \$450,000 to \$500,000, effective January, 2019. It'll help our province be more competitive in attracting business and it'll help create jobs.

Better care: Budget 2018 recognizes that health care is a No. 1 priority for Manitobans. And that is why there is over 10 per cent of an increase in spending and results have shown that continued investment has resulted in better wait times. And I'm getting very positive feedback from my constituents in St. Norbert about the great service and treatment they have received at the Victoria urgent care, one of them even describing that the entire staff they encountered was outstanding in both professionalism and the compassionate care they received. One

constituent in particular has even explained to me that the medical process takes a team effort, from the government on down, which, in his view, deserves a grade of one hundred per cent. He and his family experienced first-hand the efficiencies instituted by our government with regard to patient care, and he, for one, approves. Thank you, Mr. Grehan, for sharing us your story in yesterday's Winnipeg Free Press.

My parents are seniors and I'm, for one, very relieved that funding for Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living is the highest level of funding in Manitoba history: \$6.2 billion.

Better care: By adding \$7.7 million for expanded dialysis treatment, Budget 2018 brings great news for those who suffer from chronic kidney disease, and this is a need as we are the second highest province with individuals who suffer from chronic kidney disease. As a former board of director with the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Manitoba branch, I'm sure my former colleagues and those who I met with the kidney—with kidney disease are very, very happy about this investment.

Also, in terms of better care, our PC government committed to lowering ambulance fees, and Budget 2018 reduces it by another \$85 to \$340. We are on track to reach our target fee of \$250.

I also love the fact that our government is investing in paramedics by creating 60 full-time paramedic positions. I've seen, first-hand, by witnessing an emergency happening, calling for 911 and to see them deal with stressful situations and how calm and professional they are on how they conduct themselves is truly amazing. Thank you for your service in your line of work, and Manitobans can be rest assured to have peace of mind with more full-time paramedics.

Let's also talk about better family care addressed in Budget 2018. Our PC government understands that strong families are the foundation of our province's future. Under the NDP, there were 550 fewer family child-care home spaces in Manitoba when the NDP assumed office. Budget 2018 supports more than 700 new and newly funded spaces, including funding for new child-care construction in communities and schools across Manitoba.

Manitobans also wanted better value. Our prebudget consultations were conducted across our province, and I was very happy to be involved in

the process with my constituents in St. Norbert; 34,000 Manitobans came forward with great ideas and your voices were heard. Budget 2018 brings better value in the form of the largest tax cut in Manitoba history. Why? Because Manitobans deserve a break.

Manitobans will save more than \$230 million in taxes over the next two years. The basic personal amount will give Manitobans a total of tax break of \$2,020 by 2020 and removes more than 30,000 Manitobans from the tax rolls over the next two years. Who will benefit from the increased basic personal amount? Seniors living on a fixed income, single parents, students—these Manitobans definitely need a break, and Budget 2018 addresses this. The 'progressive' conservative party of Manitoba, the low-tax party, our Manitoba government, addresses it.

* (15:30)

How else is it addressed? Budget 2018 also includes more than \$2 million in funding for a refundable tax credit, the child-care development tax credit, to encourage private businesses to create new child-care space in the workplace. Tax relief, why? Because Manitobans deserve a break.

Again, I have to mention I had a great time last summer travelling to other parts of Manitoba in the constituencies of Riding Mountain, Dauphin, Interlake, Lac du Bonnet and Morden. I got to experience first-hand riding a combine, the difference between a swatter and a sprayer, the difference between New Holland and John Deere too. But seriously, farmers bring food to the table. If you eat today, thank a farmer, how the saying goes.

And this city slicker, this city boy is happy to see Budget 2018 valuing the importance of the vital role agriculture plays in strengthening and building Manitoba's economy. It is great to see that Budget 2018 has an increase in funding for the farmland school tax rebate by \$3.4 billion, and our government wants to be fair by giving rural municipalities a voice concerning the distribution of funds to projects which affect their communities and areas directly. Better working together—better together, better value.

Over the last number of years there has been a residential boom in southwest Winnipeg. For years residents have been clamoring for the previous NDP government to take action and build new schools that will support the community. It is great to

see Budget 2018 address these issues. It is great to see our PC government keeping our promises with better education. Real progress, which includes five new schools, two of which are in great demand in Waverley West, that is why our PC government is investing in a new K-to-8 school and a new 9-to-12 high school to help the growing need of educational space in the Waverley West area, and which will support the surrounding communities of Bridgwater and South Pointe as well. Great news for my constituents in St. Norbert—and this took a total team effort—so I personally want to thank South Winnipeg St. Norbert Councillor Janice Lukes; Pembina Trails School Division superintendent Ted Fransen and his team of school trustees; Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding); then the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Wishart); and most of all the parents for your input and your patience. Our vision of these much needed schools in the southwest quadrant of Winnipeg will soon be a reality. Better education, better together to benefit your children.

I am proud of being part of a government that is fixing the finances, repairing the services and rebuilding the economy.

Budget 2018 provides the stability over the long term. Budget 2018 provides security to give Manitobans comfort and confidence in their government. Budget 2018 also creates opportunities for Manitobans.

Our PC government has increased spending by almost 11 per cent for Health, Seniors and Active Living; 12 per cent on Education and Training; 13 per cent for Families. These are record investments and a higher proportion of total spending than any other province.

I am very glad to see distinguished Manitobans such as Dave Angus, former president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce leading the next step of designing a strategy aimed at reforming the way to attract more business investment to our province. I personally worked with Dave when I was president of the MFBC, and I know he is results driven and that is why we worked well together. When we led both our respective business organizations we ran on delivering a better plan for a better Manitoba: lower taxes, better services, a stronger economy.

Budget 2018 is a budget I support, and our PC government is up to the challenge. There is more

work to be done and we will continue to do that work for a better Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Deputy Speaker, no surprise, I'll be voting against a very disappointing budget which is presented by a government which in just two short years has completely run out of ideas. All they're running on now is spin.

You know, it's interesting on the front cover of their budget documents, they describe it as Manitobans making choices. And I just want to start talking about some of the Manitobans—*[interjection]* I'm glad that the members opposite are applauding that because I want to talk about some of the Manitobans that I'm talking to that are making choices.

People like Bernie, who lives at Betelstadur Housing Co-op at the corner of Erin Street and Sargent Street. I mentioned him the other day in the House. Well, Bernie is deciding what cuts he's going to make to his modest retiree budget when his CPAP machine craps out—if, indeed, it stops working after next month—because all of a sudden he's going to be faced with his \$1,200 monthly income with a \$500 expense. And he's also got to try to figure out where he's going to come up with the \$350 in supplies that he needs to keep his CPAP machine running to deal with his sleep apnea,

You know, some of the students that are making choices, students over at Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute, the students in grade 12, like my daughter, they're looking forward to graduating, picking out their grad dresses or planning what suits they're going to buy or rent. Well, those students may be looking forward to a grad party, but they're having to make choices now. They're having to decide if they're going to be able to go to school next fall to one of Manitoba's post-secondary institutions or whether they're going to have to delay for a year or two years or maybe longer because this government doesn't have their back and this government has decided to increase the cost of their post-secondary education by 7 per cent per year, while at the same time this government cuts money for universities and colleges. *[interjection]*

You know, another Manitoban who's making a choice, as I hear opposition—or government members chattering, is a senior that I met on Banning Street and the choice he's going to have to make is whether

he actually has a hip replacement, because he knows he's facing a course of physiotherapy after that surgery to regain the strength, to regain the range of motion, to make the hip surgery worth it in the first place. He actually used to work for the Province of Manitoba, but he doesn't have benefits anymore, so he's looking at \$1,200 to \$1,500 in physiotherapy that was covered until this government decided to take that coverage away from people like him.

And I'm thinking of people like Devin, who was up in the gallery just a couple of days ago. He and his girlfriend are Manitobans making choices. They're deciding whether they have to downsize the apartment they're living in. They have to decide whether they're going to postpone even getting married because Devin is living with cystic fibrosis and Devin needs the life-saving drugs that he's received for more than 20 years under the special drug program, which disappears as of April 1st, and then he and his girlfriend are going to have to make choices to come up with thousands of dollars of drug costs that they didn't have before.

What about the Manitobans making choices, the nurses that I meet pretty much every day that I can get to my constituency office? I've had the chance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the past year, to meet more than 100 Filipino-trained nurses who want to be certified so they can practise their profession here in the province of Manitoba. And it's easy. I'm a notary public; I'm happy to notarize their documents and I don't charge them anything. Word has got around, so I meet them and their friends and their colleagues. Well, they're making choices too. And I can tell members opposite that some of the choices that those nurses from the Philippines are making is to go elsewhere because they're having trouble getting their credentials recognized here in Manitoba, and even if they do, they're now uncertain there's even going to be a job available for them. *[interjection]*

And now the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) has decided that he is going to heckle from his seat. I can tell him that those nurses that were being approved within months are now having to wait years to be able to practise in Manitoba. I'm not sure if that's the plan of the Minister of Health to try and slow down prospective nurses from working in the system, or whether that's the minister of immigration as part of the cuts that he's imposing in this budget, or the—whether it's the Minister of Finance simply not wanting to pay more nurses in the province

of Manitoba, but they are making choices. And, unfortunately, I know they're going to make choices with their feet and they're going to leave and they're going to enrich the province of British Columbia or the province of Alberta instead of staying here where their families have encouraged them to come and create a new life.

And I can tell you my colleague the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) said the other day. In the break we were in schools a lot, and I can't begin to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many teachers and administrators, secretaries, wanted to talk to us about what's going on in the education system. There are teachers who are now making choices whether they feel confident in making an investment in a new home or renovations to their home, because they're now facing this government taking away their right to collective bargaining, a government that's going to impose a wage freeze on them, a government which is imposing what is a real cut to the education system in Manitoba, and I can also tell you I'm hearing from Manitobans who are making choices of whether they should just retire and get out of the system because they see that we're going down the same road that we travelled back in the 1990s when a Progressive Conservative government decided to take an axe to the public health—public school system in Manitoba.

* (15:40)

Those are the kinds of choices that Manitobans are making, and I have to say how disappointing it is that this government, when faced with probably the biggest windfall in revenues in a generation, has decided instead that they are going to turn their back on Manitobans who need their support. And we don't have to look any further than page 135 of the government's statements—or Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue.

Now, the Minister of Health wasn't familiar with this book, but I know the Minister of Finance is. And if we turn to page 135, we'll see that the revenue from the Government of Canada has increased 9.1 per cent over the last year. That is an incredible increase. It represents some \$350 million additionally coming to the province of Manitoba over the year before.

Now, why is that money coming in? That money is coming in because other provinces with better governments are doing so much more and so much better than Manitoba that the equalization pool is now increasing for the province of Manitoba. It is the ultimate irony that this Premier (Mr. Pallister), who

tells everybody who'll listen to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, and everyone's just got to work hard—this Premier is benefiting more than any other premier in the province from better governments in British Columbia, from better governments in Alberta, even from somewhat better governments in Ontario and Quebec who are being able to fund this Minister of Finance, who, without this additional revenue, would actually have brought in the biggest deficit in Manitoba history.

Let me repeat: without the additional revenue that this government is getting from the federal government and from this Province's decision on carbon tax, this Finance Minister would have brought in the biggest deficit in Manitoba history, which would have topped the scales at more than \$1 billion. *[interjection]*

Well, and I hear the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) complaining. He can go back, and if he sees that there's a deficit larger, he can certainly put that on the record when he has a chance to speak. But this government—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —has squandered the benefit that's been given to them. And what do they do? Instead, they complain—the Minister of Health, who's cutting services for people with rare diseases who need life-saving drugs, who's cutting benefits for 16,000 sleep apnea sufferers, who cut lactation consultants and who cut physiotherapists and audiologists and occupational therapists, turns around and says, well, but the federal government's cutting our funding.

That is absolute and complete nonsense. Even in the Minister of Health's worst dreams, the federal government is giving this province 3.5 per cent increase over the year before for health care alone. Compare and contrast that with the 0.5 per cent increase in public school funding, which the Minister of Education somehow wants us to believe is a historic increase in funding.

This government is trying to have it both ways. They will complain and they will whine at money being thrust into the pocket of the Finance Minister by the federal government, yet when they turn around and starve our health-care system and starve our schools, they will try to claim that somehow they are doing something historic. It is historic, but not in a way that they are going to want to be remembered for.

So we have had a government now which is in power for almost two years, and what have we seen them accomplish? The answer is very, very little. And I turn first to—the one fig leaf that they try to have is, well, we've increased the personal exemptions. That's what we've done to help poor people. Now, first of all, they froze—*[interjection]*

Well, I'm glad that the member will want to talk about other investments. We can do that.

We know that the minimum wage was frozen by this government, and then when they finally unlocked it, they locked it to the rate of inflation. But, of course, what would they say? They say, well, we've indexed the personal income tax brackets. That's how we're helping people. And we stood up day after day and said this benefit is actually going to work out to \$10 for the entire year for a person.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to put on the record that that was incorrect. That number was not right, and I want to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) on page C-8 of the budget and budget papers for correcting that. As a matter of fact, the impact of that indexing in 2017 for people earning less than \$31,000 was not \$10 for the year; it was actually \$9 for the year.

And in 2018, when they indexed it again, the actual savings for a Manitoban earning less than \$31,000 was a grand total of \$7 for the year. So we've seen \$16 in tax relief in two years, much more, of course, if you have a higher income, because that's what Conservatives like to do.

What does \$9 mean? Well, \$9 would not pay the additional cost of your bus pass for one month in the city of Winnipeg.

So this government has done nothing to assist people of low income and that is all they've had to talk about for the past two years.

And, of course, we've heard them say all the jobs they're creating. My goodness, you know, now we can get the government out of the way and we'll create jobs.

Well, what do we see? And, you know, I have a look at this little document called *The Daily*. *The Daily* is published by Statistics Canada, and every month they come out and they have a labour market report, and it's a very, very good thing to read. And what does *The Daily* for Friday, March 9, 2018, tell us? Well, it tells us—and I'm glad members opposite are listening—that there is no province in Canada

which has had a worse record on full-time jobs in the past 12 months than the province of Manitoba.

Manitoba has lost 5,800 full-time jobs from February 2017 to February 2018. Now, we know some of them are nurses and some of them are other people working in the health-care system but, of course, the government will say oh, no, no, no, that's—we're not cutting, we're not doing anything. So I suppose the majority of those are actually people working in the private sector. But people are voting with their feet. Employers, despite everything that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) wants people to believe and this Minister of Finance wants people to believe, they're actually shedding jobs.

And what are other provinces doing? Well, over the same period that Manitoba lost 5,800 full-time jobs, the province of Ontario has actually added 110,100 full-time jobs. And I would point out, of course, for all of the minimum wage deniers across the way, it seems to me that in this past 12 months the province of Ontario actually made major moves on improving the minimum wage in that province. And yet, despite all the doom and gloom from those who believe that a minimum wage increase must decrease employment, there's 110,000 more Ontarians that have full-time work in that province.

An Honourable Member: Minimum wage makes the government money.

Mr. Swan: Well, and here we go. Well, then, if that's the case—my goodness, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen)—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: He got to talk for an hour the other day—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —and he just can't stop today.

I would hope the Minister of Finance is now learning something and I believe every day in this Legislature should be a learning episode.

But what I say to the Minister of Finance is go to *The Daily* and read the employment numbers because if you look—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

I just want to remind the member to talk to the Speaker and if I can have the members heckling and stuff like that, if we can listen to the speaker and talk and so the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

Mr. Swan: I'm very sorry. I was affected by the incessant heckling of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). I will certainly direct my comments through you.

It would be very instructive for the Minister of Finance, who Manitobans actually count on to be able to hold it together and to make sense when he's talking to people who want to loan money to the Province of Manitoba, people who might invest money in Manitoba, and I hope if that's how the Minister of Finance acts—well, I hope he doesn't act like that outside of this building, because it would be a guarantee for another credit downgrade, which this province under this Minister of Finance has already managed twice.

I would also point that the province of Alberta, which also increased its minimum wage by a substantial amount, has added 62,700 jobs in the past 12 months. Compare and contrast that with Manitoba, where people are losing their jobs, and we know what happens when people lose their jobs. They will once again be leaving, they will once again be departing for provinces with governments that have actually invested in people, that actually care about the people that they were elected to represent.

* (15:50)

And let's go beyond that—and I know last Friday there was an announcement with their friends at Deloitte and sort of lost in a lot of the excitement that this Minister of Finance was trying to put forward and certainly the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was trying to put forward, was that Manitoba is headed for the iceberg, and we heard that the now—the new estimate for economic growth in the province of Manitoba is 0.3 per cent.

That is a remarkably low rate of growth. That will impact, obviously, government revenues. That will impact employment. That will impact everything that we hope to accomplish here, and why is that? Because this Minister of Finance and this Premier have adopted a path of austerity, and by doing that, they have killed jobs, they've killed investment, they've killed projects, and they're dragging down the economy.

And other provinces with better governments, which is just about every province in the country, are going to be eating our lunch and they are going to be taking our young people and they are going to be outdoing Manitoba in every conceivable way.

I hope that that forecast is wrong. I hope that Manitoba does better than 0.3 per cent, but if it does not, we are going to see these numbers continue to decline.

Now, what else did—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Again, I hope the Minister of Finance can be better behaved when he's actually representing Manitoba and trying to make Manitoba look like an attractive place to invest because it hasn't worked so far.

Now, one of the other things that's very important to note is that this government decided that they are not going to include any revenue from the fact that cannabis is going to be legal whether it is on July 1st or whether it's a date after that time. It is only this Progressive Conservative government that could take an opportunity to earn revenue and use it in a way that will benefit addictions, benefit schools, benefit the public purse—it is only the Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba that could be faced with this and throw up their hands and say, you know what? We don't think there's going to be any benefit for the province of Manitoba. We're not going to add one dollar into our estimate of revenue from the legalization of cannabis.

Only this Progressive Conservative government could possibly take a potential source of revenue and fritter it all away. I suppose they want any profits to go simply to the public sector—or to the private sector. I suppose that they don't want Manitoba 'liquory'—Liquor & Lotteries Corporation to earn any benefit from it. I don't suppose they want the legalization of cannabis to have any potential benefit to taxpayers, and that is truly a missed opportunity, but it really just shows us what this government is all about.

You know, we haven't even touched on health care. It is quite apparent, and actually quite embarrassing in question period, that the Minister of Health has received \$40 million each year in targeted funding, which is to be spent on addiction services, mental health services, community care and home care, and the minister apparently cannot find the money. I've now asked him two days in a row to tell us where the \$40 million is being spent, and he won't provide the answer, and it's because he can't provide the answer, because this Finance Minister and this Premier have used that money from the federal government to backfill their cuts so that there

is going to be no benefit to the people of Manitoba from the first investment in these things by the federal government in more than a decade.

And we'll have a lot more time to ask the Health Minister questions because people do not accept what this government is doing to health care, nor education, nor anything else they've got their hands on.

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

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Good afternoon. I want to thank the House for providing me with an opportunity to speak to the 2018 budget.

To quote our Minister of Finance in his speech: Budget 2018 puts Manitoba's economy on the road to recovery and provides a solid plan for making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. Our government is investing in priorities that support Manitobans.

The budget spoke to enhanced financial support in many sectors of our province. Citizens living in all regions in the province are being represented in this budget. First, indexing the basic personal amount will mean that individuals will see an increase in the amount of money they earn before they are taxed. Increasing the small business deduction by \$50,000 will mean that small and medium businesses will get a tax cut.

Six point two billion dollars is being invested into Health and Seniors and Active Living. The Department of Families will be able to invest an additional \$60.5 million for programs that will help Manitobans. Education investment has an increase of \$13.7 million, which supports the construction of five much-needed new schools in our province. This budget continues to invest in needed infrastructure projects.

Deputy Speaker, this budget is for all Manitobans. This budget will raise the basic personal amount by \$1,010. We will increase the basic personal amount again next year. This will remove 30,000 Manitobans from the tax rolls over the next two years. We are putting money back into the pockets of Manitobans.

Deputy Speaker, families who need the most help will be able to keep more in their pockets. Manitobans will have money to invest in their family and in family activities. By removing the most vulnerable families off the tax roll, our government

is supporting those families that need it most. The increase in the basic tax exemption further supports our government's promise to help reduce the number of individuals living in poverty.

Our government is keeping its promise to ensure all can have a better standard of living. Further to the assistance through tax cuts provided to Manitobans, there has been an increase in financial support through the Department of Families. The minister is investing in priorities that support families across Manitoba.

Keeping to his word, there is an increase of \$60.5 million to the programs and families. Young families and single parents will get assistance in their search for child-care spaces. Our government is investing \$3.3 million to increase the number of new and newly funded child-care spaces. This includes support for more than 700 new and newly funded spaces and funding for new construction in schools and communities across Manitoba. This means parents will have access to more affordable daycare so they can either return to work or school.

Our government is dedicated to ensuring the safety of our children, our most valuable resource. An increase in funding by \$35.3 million for Child Protection, delivered through Child and Family Services, will support the agencies and front-line staff as they assist families. Manitoba is a great place to raise a family in, and our government wants families to experience how great our province is.

Deputy Speaker, our government is fair. We are strengthening and building on the social supports that were first introduced by the PC government in the 1990s. Funding to support individuals living with a disability has increased. The increases ensure the health, social supports, independence and productivity of individuals are strengthened. Thirteen point six million has been provided to assist adults with an emotional or mental health disability or disorder. Furthermore, supports are also in place to assist youth whose life has been affected by FASD.

Deputy Speaker, to further augment the social supports in place, our government has increased our financial support for safe housing. Safe housing is key. Housing provides the base from which an individual can begin to reach out to agencies to seek the support and direction to assist them with achieving their future goals.

Growing the economy through our small- and medium-size businesses is key to the success of

our province. The small-business income limit for the small-business tax rate, will increase from \$500,000 to—sorry, increase to \$500,000. This provides greater tax relief to Manitoba small businesses, which are the economic engine of our province. Manitobans with an entrepreneurial spirit can now invest in Manitoba businesses with as little as \$10,000 per investor. A reduction from \$20,000 to \$10,000 allows more Manitobans to support home-grown opportunities.

Deputy Speaker, our government understands that to own a business, it takes commitment, money and dedicated individuals—individuals invested in their future. Many families have businesses which have been passed down to the younger generations. Our government wants to encourage families to stay in Manitoba and to continue to operate the businesses which have grown out of their hard work and dedication, while also encouraging growth through new business investment.

Deputy Speaker, our government believes in protecting the health and welfare of our citizens. Our government is investing a record \$6.2 billion in Health, Seniors and Active Living. We are investing in priorities which support consistent, reliable health-care services across Manitoba.

* (16:00)

In keeping with our promise to support the front-line workers, there is \$3.89 billion being invested into the front-line care being provided to Manitobans through the regional health authorities. Manitobans want to be able to access the health services they need when they need them. We'll ensure that the health services provided will continually support Manitobans.

Deputy Speaker, keeping with our campaign promises, we will further reduce the ambulance fees from \$425 to \$340. This also follows our promise to put more money back into the pockets of individuals accessing health services. In support of front-line services providers, there are an additional 60 full-time paramedic positions being created. This is our government ensuring the needs of people in Manitoba having access to medical care. Our government promised to ensure health care is accessible to all Manitobans. We have also budgeted for additional investment in home cancer care drug program, funding in the renal dialysis program, more funding for rare disease medication and enhancements in Manitoba newborn screening.

To ensure all—to ensure an efficient and seamless delivery service for addiction treatment, Manitoba Health has teamed up with regional health authorities and the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba to develop plans to address both immediate and long-term needs for stabilization treatment and prevention. This includes \$985,000 in new funding to AFM in 2017.

Tamarack Recovery Centre has opened three women's beds to aid with the crystal methamphetamine treatment. Our government has simplified how money is being delivered to these programs by having MLLC give the funding directly to the program. There is no reduction in funding to the program from the AFM. This removes the unnecessary red tape and gives money directly to the program.

Deputy Speaker, we are proud of the talented individuals who graduate from our secondary learning facilities. Our government has made a commitment to build five new schools to further support the needs of our growing population and to ensure everyone has access to education. In addition to this, Manitoba has kept its promise to build our economy and keep Manitoba moving forward. Shoal Lake Freedom Road is expected to be completed by fall of 2018. This is less than two years to complete a road which will provide access to a community that has been isolated for decades. Lake Manitoba outlet project will be launched and our Look North economic development strategy will be reviewed.

Deputy Speaker, this budget makes financial sense. As our government removes the unnecessary regulations and redundant legislation within departments, Manitobans will see a more efficiently run government. By further reducing the deficit to \$521 million in 2018-19, we are making consistent progress toward balancing the budget. Debt-servicing costs have now exceeded \$1 billion per year. If debt servicing was a government department, it would be the fourth largest Manitoba government department in expenditures. The debt doubled under the previous NDP government, and now Manitoba taxpayers are paying the price, robbing them of services so we can pay the interest on this debt.

This budget puts more money towards programs and more money in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans, and we are on a course to reduce the deficit and not having to mortgage the future of our children and our grandchildren. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —say a few words about the government's new budget—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —budget No. 3, I believe, and, well, only a couple more to go before the—this government won't be making any more budgets.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, approximately a week ago, the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) was making announcements at The Forks, I believe, and he was making an announcement on the tendered contract—which they, you know, the people thought it was tendered at the time—to build a road at Lake St. Martin, the beginnings of which would be the—I guess the project to build the road, then, would lead to construction of the inlets and also lead to a half a billion dollars, \$500-million project overall.

Now, at the time, the minister was asked, I guess it's an innocent question about whether or not the Lake St. Martin outlet road contract had been tendered, and his answer was yes. Now, why he would say that is kind of hard for me to understand, because the very next day he was caught misinforming the assembled crowd of journalists there that it had been tendered, and he had to admit that it was a sole-source contract. And, of course, the heavy-construction industry was very unhappy about all that, and they stepped up to the plate right away, and Chris Lorenc said this is not, you know, this cannot continue, this cannot happen. The government had made a lot of fuss about the previous government and sole-source contracts, and the government had certainly promised that they would never do that themselves.

So, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was asked about this he said, well, you know, the Premier said that the mistake was going to be corrected by the minister, and in—matter of fact, what he said, quote: If the minister made the mess, he'll clean it up, not the Premier. So, of course, the very next day we have now the Premier has changed his mind—and it's hard to follow all of this, you know, but I think the Premier finally realized that wasn't the rogue minister after all, that, in fact, his Treasury Board and his Cabinet—Treasury Board he appoints and his Cabinet were, you know, involved in this whole

thing. So now he's in a position where he has to support his sole-source contract.

Now, you know, he claims that the contract is going to save the province money, but we have sources in his own department who say that's not true, that in the actual fact the sole-source successful bidder, Sigfusson construction, is actually going to cost the Province and the taxpayers extra 40 per cent, okay. And the whole argument has been, well, that there is a local component to this and the reality is that the Heavy Construction Association of Manitoba claim, and we know this to be true, that a proper tendering process will guarantee whatever percentage of Aboriginal involvement you want. That is the proper way to do that. And so there is certainly going to be more ink spilled on this story, I can tell you that, because the heavy-construction industry association, they have—they're certainly upset about this, and they certainly want to start investigating how this happened when the government said it would not happen.

And, you know, the Premier, in response to one of my questions the other day, stands up and he's talking about, you know, previous sole-source contracts given to friends, he says, right. He's talking about friends. Well, you know, he has to be kind of careful going there, because what we have here is we have a sole-source contract provided to Sigfusson construction who have very close ties to the government and yes, they do have a contract with Interlake reserves, but that's only, I believe, four bands out of I think 16. And certainly there are people on Fairford who are part of this who are against this. So, you know, the government could save itself a lot of grief if it were to have a proper tendering process.

I understand that on Freedom Road—in the issue of Freedom Road that Sigfusson did have a contract there. I believe he may have had a sole source or wanted to do a sole source there and the government was smart enough, at the end of the day, to put it out to tender and Sigfusson won it. And that is perfectly acceptable. If they—there were four to five—I have the list here somewhere, but four or five contractors tendered and Sigfusson won.

* (16:10)

And you know something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that tendering process, they can build in whatever they want as a requirement. They can say that the Aboriginal involvement in it why stop at 50 per cent, why not say 60 per cent. Why not specify what that

involvement is? We have no way of knowing because we can't get copies of the agreement on this sole-source contract as to what's really going on here.

But the contractors, who appeared here with some road construction equipment the other day, they say that most of the contract is going to be for aggregate and there's going to be an aggregate crushing crew which is going to be like four people or eight people. And so—let's pretend that it's an eight-person crew, well, what you're going to have here is like eight people, and only four Aboriginal people working on it. And there was comments that they made, the people from Fairford, about previous experience working on arrangements like that.

So this should all be put into a tender, spelling out exactly how many jobs are going to be created because these people don't think there's going to be a lot of jobs created here.

We have the additional complication of the municipality of Grahamdale actually blocking the road. They've been blocking the road for a few days now, and Sigfusson is not able to bring his equipment in to the site, and what the government's doing about that, I really don't know.

So, when I look at this whole thing, all I get is more questions. I don't see any answers, and I see a member here who's hiding. And, you know, he's asked a question, he answers it a different way. He says it's tendered the first day. Like how could he not know that? He's the minister. Like that would be the first question you would think is going to come up, and he says, yes, it's tendered. Well, I don't know what you would call that. Is that misleading or is that a little more than misleading? I would say so.

And then, you know, the very next day you got the Premier (Mr. Pallister) saying, well, if he made a mess, he's going to clean it up. Well, okay, so where's this cleanup coming from? Instead, the Premier steps up and starts defending him.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So, you know, we really have got a lot of questions here, and the members—and, by the way, the construction company people who were here the other day, including the members from Fairford, they want a meeting with the minister and they can't even get a meeting with the minister. We had members from this House opposite leave the building the other day and talk to the people as they left, and this was the question that came up. Where is the member?

Why is he hiding? Why won't he meet with them? And why doesn't he answer these questions?

And where is this going to go from here? We can get no clear answers. We understand that, you know, he says, well, they let 11.3 million to the two companies: 3.7 in one; the rest is Sigfusson. And then after that they have another amount of work that totals \$30 million.

So now we have two stories about that too. We have the minister saying—once he was caught—saying, well, that's it, 11.3; that's all we're going to sole-source. The rest is going to be put out to tender. Now what do we hear? Oh, well, maybe just maybe all \$30 million is going to be given to them, because once they get their presence on the site, once they can get that roadblock lifted from Grahamdale, then they move on the site; then all of a sudden they're there. And I'm told that that's just a hop, skip and a jump before they get more sole-source work.

And, once the \$30 million is done, now we're going to look at the power lines. There is a couple of companies in there that want to build the power lines. Well, who is going to get that work? Is that going to be tendered? Of course not. It's going to be once again these friends of the government getting sole source after sole source and probably contributing very little back in the way of—to the bands, because how are we going to know? How are we going to know how much work is actually being done that way?

Now, the total price of this project is going to cost a half a billion dollars at the end of the day. And are we going to see this single-source contract picking up the whole thing? And at a time when they've absolutely, totally misrepresented on how much highway construction's going to occur—they made a promise a year and a half ago. We demonstrated that yesterday. The minister then promised \$500 million in construction—road construction for each year for four years. All of a sudden, just a year and a few months later, and the \$500 million disappeared. It's only 350.

And the minister's trying to explain all this. And he's throwing in his sole-source contract on the road that he just gave out a week ago. That's in there. You know, he is totally confused. And, you know, I know, Madam Speaker, I can't use certain words here, you know, and I have to be careful. I mean, the word I used I didn't think was too bad considering that the members opposite call me the independent member and the member for the Louise Bridge and

all those things, you know. And I like that, actually, but, you know—but it's—I don't really think it's keeping with the kind of decorum that you, you know, alluded to earlier, you know, so I have to look at some of those words that I've got in my little book of not to use here. But I thought, you know, words like bumbling and so on were okay, you know. So I'm going to have to try to check this out a little bit before I ask any more questions, if I get to ask any more questions.

So, you know, I did want to spend a little bit of time here talking about the Health Minister, and I know he's very attentive. You know, he told me this great—and he tells great stories, but last year, he was telling me how after we got all of our signs up on Henderson Highway, those great looking yellow signs—he told me him and his son were driving down Henderson Highway. And his son, I believe, is 11, quite politically involved. And his son said, Daddy, do all those people with those yellow signs hate you? And he said, only some of them, son.

So, you know, I have sent—you know, in addition to the signs, we have sent out some leaflets. And, you know, I did attempt to read from a leaflet before, and I got into trouble over that. But, you know, the leaflet does fold out into a nice, big sign—just so you know that. And there may be more of them coming. *[interjection]* But the fact of the matter is—the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski) wants to see it again, but I think—have to wait till the new version comes out in a few days.

But the—my point is—the point is the government does appear to be backtracking on its plan. And, while it's closed some facilities at this point, and we are hopeful in the northeast that the minister forgets about this closure of the Concordia ER—and he's put it off now for—till next year, so we think the—we think that our—you know, our signs and effort and his son—his son—have some effect on this result that has been—that is being put off until 2019.

And I would submit, with a little bit of help from the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), you know, and the member for Transcona, that we could convince the minister, and they could convince their leader, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), of how bad an idea this is to close the Concordia emergency room, and that it'll be—by the time he gets around to doing it next summer, spring, I guess it'll be a little too close to the election for comfort. I'm assuming, if he's brave and he wants to push ahead with it, we can certainly produce a few more signs and get a few

more up there. And, if he wants to run with this issue right into the election, I'd be happy to help him out with that, because I don't think you're going to get—I don't think he's going to get many federal votes either, if he wants to talk federal for an issue. Or—this is a very hot issue up in our area, in the northeast part of Winnipeg. And, you know, it doesn't make sense to the average person when you try to explain it, and he knows that.

* (16:20)

And so, when he came out with his plan and, of course, he said, well, oh, you know, Peachey recommended it. Well, Peachey never, never specified which facilities were going to be closed. Peachey just made reference to three—three of the six facilities.

So they've—*[interjection]* Well, you know, I'm not going to get into that, Madam Speaker. The—you know, it's my turn to make the speech and I'll listen to him when he makes his speech.

But the reality is that this was a pretty hare-brained idea in the first place, to go and try to shut down—I mean, just think about it, three out of the six emergency rooms being closed down in the city of Winnipeg just because, on a statistical basis, they can look at Calgary and say, well, you know, Calgary has three and it's bigger.

Yes, well, Calgary—Calgary, to the minister, Calgary doesn't have to worry about the Louise Bridge, which is, you know, one lane in each direction, for gosh sakes. And, you know, like, if you're having a heart attack, the heart attack's not going to get any better when you're trying to get across the Louise Bridge to go into St. Boniface, right.

And so these are concerns, concerns of our—of my constituents up in northeast Winnipeg, who concerned about that, who say if they're having a heart attack, they would normally go to Concordia Hospital and they'd get stabilized there and they'd get sent off to St. Boniface, if that's where they have to go, or the general hospital.

But the fact of the matter is that if your roads and bridges are not in good shape, and this government's going to be spending less money. Like, you know, at least the previous government did things. The previous government built things and, you know, if you have good infrastructure then, yes, you can make the argument that you can make it to

the hospital that's a little further off because you've got good roads to get there.

Well, we don't have good roads to get to these hospitals. You have the parking problems.

So, you know, he—you know, he can tinker. He can tinker with the system all he wants, but at the end of the day this is going to be a big loss for him and he, I would think by now, has figured it out.

So, you know, Madam Speaker, we are, you know, claiming victory for—on this move that they have put off the closure of Concordia for a year now and we think this is all going to get lost in the shuffle at the end of the day and they're going to say, oh, that wasn't one of our best ideas; that wasn't a good idea. You know, the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) going to make an announcement up there and he's going to have his MLAs around and he's going to say, oh, yes, you know, we don't want to close it down. We want to keep it open and pretend that somehow, you know, they solved the problem.

Well, you know, they can do it. At the end of the day, we want the hospital to stay open, the emergency room to stay open and we want that Louise Bridge built as well.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows?

I would indicate that on the rotation we do have a government member speaking, unless that member wants to change with Burrows, that's fine. *[interjection]*

The honourable member for Burrows, then.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member from Transcona for allowing me to go first.

You know, it's a pleasure for me to rise before the House in order to put a few thoughts down on the 2018 budget that was released this past Tuesday.

Madam Speaker, we are suffering the devastating effects of the 16 years of mismanagement by the previous administration. The NDP lacked fiscal foresight and, as a result, we have incurred a substantial debt of \$21 billion in just eight years.

I understand that we are in a time of fiscal challenge. We need to get our finances in order so we can ensure stability and security for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, in turn Manitobans are afforded the best services, the best education, and the best opportunities that they can get. Given this context, the Pallister government is forced to make tough decisions on getting our finances in check. While this is understandable, this does not give them licence to make rather irrational cuts all around at the expense of the well-being of Manitobans today and in the future.

Now, that being said, allow me to go through how this budget has undermined Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, let's talk about immigration. This government has cut \$195,000 in its operating budget. Immigration is a key engine to the growth in our economy. It is also a contributor to our population growth and a culturally diverse and tolerant society.

The money being cut lowers the resources available at Immigration Manitoba, and you know, when I asked about this during Question Period, where exactly the money was coming from or rather being taken away from, I received a response not related to the question at all. This puts in jeopardy the resources available to process the applications that the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program is receiving.

What is shocking is the extent to which this government is taking money—also opportunities, Madam Speaker—away from immigrants. This government recently decided to charge new immigrants a \$500 approval fee. Now they are taking away more resources that will help make the program process applications in a better manner? This is unfair for those who have taken the risk, for those whose lives are put on hold and for those who want to come and contribute to our province.

The second issue, Madam Speaker, is the funding for our post-secondary education. I cannot stress enough the importance of education here in Manitoba. It affords Manitobans opportunities later on in life. It contributes to the enriching of minds, and, most importantly, it helps sustain our democracy over time.

I'm disappointed to see that the government takes no initiative in making our education system more accessible. Funding has remained frozen when compared to the last budget. That means that our post-secondary institutions are going to have to find ways to adjust. Tuitions are going to continue

increasing, and we've seen the government pave the way for this.

Last year, this government allowed legislation for post-secondary institutions to increase tuition fees by 5 per cent each year, and, as we've seen from past student demonstrations and we heard many, many citizens and witnesses at committees, this is going to affect the students the most.

It's already stressful enough, Madam Speaker, to study for exams and papers, but this government is adding more pressure by making students worry about where they are going to be getting the resources to fund an increasingly expensive and unknown education. These are the barriers which cause limitations and opportunities for Manitobans now and in the future.

Madam Speaker, we also have to consider that the government's cuts have grossly affected the health of the most vulnerable Manitobans. The special drugs program have been cut, leaving individuals with cancer or cystic fibrosis and other illnesses with additional stress and anxiety as to where they will get the resources for life-saving medicine. This government says that their changes are making health care generous, but cuts like these say otherwise.

Something I have been strongly advocating for, and the NDP recently got on board with, is a national pharmacare program. Allow me to quote one of the ways we are petitioning this Legislature: To urge the provincial government to develop, jointly with the federal government, a universal single-payer evidence-based sustainable public drug plan that contains purchasing power to secure the best available pricing, a list of essential medicines addressing priority health needs and the ability to expand to a comprehensive, permanent plan that would promote the health and well-being of all Canadians.

With the signatures that I've received for my petition, and the recent political support across party lines and throughout Canada, I don't see why this government can't work towards adding a national pharmacare program in their budget.

Madam Speaker, there's so much to talk about in this budget, but the last thought that I would like to share and discuss is seniors. It's disheartening that seniors are being made to feel pushed aside. I know constituents, seniors in particular in Burrows, who are being forced to pay more in rent and laundry.

Some of them are even being asked to leave their homes to make space for larger families. This is not fair.

Seniors' day programs are going up, more than double in price. How are we supposed to encourage seniors to remain active and healthy if we take away their opportunities to do so?

* (16:30)

Madam Speaker, think about senior housing. I have yet, in the nearly two years of being elected, heard this government talk about support of housing, retirement residence, 55-plus homes or hospices, and I'm glad that they're talking about personal-care homes, but this government needs to realize that this is not the only housing facility for seniors, and there are not nearly enough of them to go around.

I could go on about the faults of this budget being based on poor decisions by this government and how it undermines Manitobans, but I'm choosing to end my thoughts with this: This government may have inherited a fiscal disaster, but does not give them licence to make cuts on programs that Manitobans have come to depend on and value. And this is something that they will have to justify to Manitobans when it comes time to go to the polls. Thank you.

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Thank you to the member for Burrows for showing such enthusiasm. I will attempt to bumble through my notes, shall we say, and put some comments on the record supporting our government's budget, a document that some in this House and this Chamber say is the best budget ever for Manitoba. I've heard some people say it's the worst budget for Manitoba. I, myself, am not really quite as prone to deliver that sort of extreme rhetoric one way or the other.

It is a very, very good budget. It is, without a doubt, this budget is a statement that is a statement that shows that our government is on the right path. Absolutely, it is the best budget in a long time. As the member from Minto referenced in the budget documents—you referenced that it says Manitobans making choices. Well, they made a choice to put our Progressive Conservative government in charge of charting the course for our province. It also says on the document we are keeping our promises and we are showing real progress for Manitobans. We will commit to doing that. We will let the Manitobans make their choice now and in the future, and we are

very pleased to table this budget, and I definitely am supporting it.

So, as I said, I'm not so prone to that rhetoric. It is a better budget than we've seen under the previous government for 17 years. They didn't—they initially balanced budgets not so much from controlling costs, but they would withdraw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund—*[interjection]*—and thank you for the tip for the member from Morris—they would withdraw from the rainy day fund, even in years that they had a surplus. They had a surplus and they withdraw from the rainy day fund. They continued to spend revenue—spend beyond the revenues they brought in. They continued, even though. And they showed a surplus, but that was from drawing from rainy day funds. This is the first of the last three budgets we've been able to spend within our means, keep our expenses below our revenues. They continued to set up a system of financial failure. They continued to snowball until Manitobans all made a choice for better governance. *[interjection]* I know, my colleagues on the opposition benches won't agree this budget is better than the ones they offered up in the last few years of their mandate. Where the deficit comes in 'wale' beyond their expectations, I think we can let the facts speak for themselves.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Finance Minister tasked us with going out and talking to people in the community about what they'd like to see in the budget. Those consultations—in those consultations, I was asked, often, is it really that bad financially? Is there some sort of accounting hocus pocus that makes it look worse? So much of my dialogue was, yes, we definitely have to change the way we do things. We cannot continue to run this province the way it was. We need to all pitch in. The amount of money we now are paying to service our debt will continue to impact the decisions we make on services now and in the 'fudgure'—future. We have to make these decisions to ensure health, education and all the services are sustainable for the long-term.

That's one of the things that I'm particularly pleased of in this budget is the support and investment in the Treasury Board Secretariat. It will help ensure that we stay on the right track financially and we will continue to improve tracking of the metrics and projections of our government's spending and services.

This is something I'm very well aware of coming back from a business background, and I

know Manitobans know that you cannot improve if you do not monitor what you were trying to do, if you do not have a target. Business knows it, sports teams know it, schools know it, and governments must know this. The NDP, it seems, ignored this basic tenet of business and, as a result, missed budgetary targets for many years, and, as a result, we are in the deep financial mess that the bond-issuing credit rating companies have had a concern that we can right the ship, but that's what we've pledged to Manitobans that we will do and we are on the path to keeping our word.

At those town hall meetings, there were some people who said we're going too fast. There are some who said you got to go faster, we got to get that deficit in control. So it's almost like the story of the three bears, Madam Speaker. We will strive to get it just right, but it sure would be nice to have the support of the NDP's labour friends and the member from Burrows' federal—personal federal friend in getting, as the Premier says, all hands on deck.

I have spoken in the past of being a local grocer, and I would regularly have informal town halls or budget consultations with my customers. Of course, that was just when they were coming in shopping and we'd be chatting. The budget would come out and people would talk to me. On many instances they would talk about, yes, smokes are going up, eh. Yes, cigarettes are going up. Or, oh, that doozy, they wanted to talk about the PST increase. Oh, they weren't happy about that. But quite often they'd ask me about the minimum wage increase that was coming. Well, as a small-business owner in the service industry whose razor-thin profits were often determined by a head office in a low-tax, sensibly governed province to the west—well, it was at the time, anyways—increasing of retail prices was inevitable. The increase, unfortunately, was usually delayed because decisions were made in Alberta, and it cost me money as my expenses increased.

My response to them, quite often, centered around instead of increasing minimum wage as they were, which created a cascade effect of the people just above that wanting more and everybody wanting a little bit more and the cost of groceries increasing, why not just raise the basic minimum exemption? Why don't we allow people, why don't we allow students, seniors, low-income Manitobans to keep a bit more of their income before we send in the taxman or a taxman? Instead of increasing expenses for businesses, especially service-oriented businesses

where increased costs lead to increased prices, why not let seniors keep a bit more of their money instead of increasing the costs for food and a cup of coffee?

I am proud that our government is moving in a better direction on both accounts. Businesses know that every fall minimum wage may be increasing based on the cost-of-living index and can better plan in advance for those increases, and I'm very happy that every Manitoban will be able to earn an extra tax-free \$2,020 by the year 2020, bringing 30,000 hard-working Manitobans off the tax rolls. We are supporting those families that need it most.

We promised lower ambulance fees and we are delivering on that promise, cutting another 20 per cent to bring them down to \$340, a pit stop on our way to \$250. In discussing our transformative health-care changes with a local paramedic friend of mine in Transcona, he—I am very pleased with the positive comments that he's seen, anecdotally, in the system. He is looking forward to the future changes. He's glad of the direction we're going in, and we know that it'll improve, especially in the country with the changes to paramedic service and 60 new positions being hired out there.

* (16:40)

When we were walking and knocking on doors back in 2016 and—*[interjection]* No, you don't have to. A hot-button issue was Shoal Lake water supply and the access road. Why do we in Winnipeg benefit so much and we can't give them what we need? Well, I'm proud to say we will complete that road this year after so many years of discussions. And a major investment in the Lake St. Martin outlet and enhancing of flood protection will help First Nations, farms and businesses.

Now, of course, people asked when we were at the doors as well about the PST decrease and will you guys really do that? Yes, before we go knock again, we will decrease the PST.

An Honourable Member: Except for some of us, they're already knocking.

Mr. Yakimoski: Well, of course.

Coming from a food supply background, I am pleased that we will continue to grant funding to the northern health foods initiative to work towards food sustainability, food security, food safety and food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is a term that I was not familiar. I was familiar with the first three—*[interjection]*

Yes, sir—the best budget ever—the best budget ever.

I was familiar with—not so familiar with food sovereignty. I have since learned it is essentially the connection between the principles I was familiar with, of food safety and food security, and the ancestral or cultural attachment of foods to people—our traditional diets, as it were—something we will all continue to work toward with Food Matters and different organizations, but we must continue to push toward in the North, because we know we need to improve access to a healthy, affordable food.

Our previous plan for municipalities to have basket funding, so that they can choose their priorities, continues. And I am pleased that we are streamlining the intake for community development funding so that more money flows to projects through programs like community places, home ground Manitoba, Neighbourhoods Alive! and Partner 4 Growth.

I have a friend who reached out to me not that long ago. You may be familiar with the local play *Strike!* and then there was *Strike!*, the musical. Well, now Danny Schur's production of *Strike!*, the movie, is moving forward, and he is very happy with our decision on this, that we're continuing the film credit program that we have. And now they want me to move forward in scrapping daylight savings time, but I don't know—what we're—going to be doing that.

Proud to have the conservation trust of \$102 million to show our commitment to improving the environment for my children and, someday, my children's children.

The announcement of new schools and early childhood learning investments are improving and delivering results for all Manitobans. Our government is moving in the right direction by lowering the operating deficit by over \$300 million from where it was in budget '17-18 down to \$521 million. And, slowly and surely, we'll be fixing the finances, repairing the services and rebuilding the economy.

In summary, Madam Speaker, I will be proud to support this budget. It's a great day for our province, as we are putting money back on the table for all Manitobans while keeping our vision on improving outcomes in education, health care, families and all government services, taking us from the last to the most improved province in Canada. We are well on our way.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

To get us back into the rotation, which deviated a little bit with our last couple speakers, I'm now going to call a government member, the honourable Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I walked out of the House for 10 minutes.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and put a few words in Hansard in regard to the speaking—and the 2018 budget that our government, under the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and financial governments of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) have put forward.

This budget is continuing a forward path towards fixing Manitoba's finances and building a strong tomorrow for the next generation of leaders, many who are not old enough for school yet. But we were saddled with the possibility of a \$1-billion deficit that the NDP continued with their reckless path of unaccountability.

Madam Speaker, budgets don't balance themselves, nor do they magically appear all wrapped in a bow on budget day. This process, to 'deserminate' what needed to be raised, lowered, or eliminated, is done through every government department.

Like my colleague from Transcona, a former 'binnis' owner—a business owner myself, we know that the rate of reckless spending of the previous government was unsustainable.

I'm proud to say that I ran for government to stand with a leader that I knew that would hold the reckless spending and the lack of common sense of the former NDP government and bring it to a halt. I'm proud to work with a Premier that has amazing courage and will not be intimidated. It is up to all of us to do our part to clean up the unbelievable debt that was totally out of control.

Madam Speaker, 2018 budget was performed by the many, many hard-working civil servants in Manitoba, and I'd like to take a moment to thank our Minister of Finance, the Treasury Board Secretariat, as well as all the members on that Treasury Board and all the civil servants that worked hard. And I'd like to thank them for working overtime on many, many occasions as they worked on the budget cycles

that we had the pleasure to work with since taking office.

And to all my colleagues, MLAs and their staff that have worked so hard to steer the debt train produced by the former NDP back on a positive track, thank you for your long hours to get us where we are today. Your hard work is appreciated by all people in Manitoba.

I also want to acknowledge the constituents of Agassiz, which is the finest part of Manitoba, if I do say so myself—second finest. I want to thank them for their patience as I worked to be a part of a team to improve our home, our province and to do my best to serve that I—the best way that I could.

And I've had the opportunity the past few weeks to spend more time in my constituency and I was overwhelmed by the number of people who brought forward positive comments on the work that our government is doing. I look forward to more of these types of meetings with our school boards and others who wish to learn more about the work that our government is doing and that we continue to do a lot more of.

I knew when I joined this 'dynamic' team, to support the pathway of restoring Manitoba's trust in the services each one of us depend on, that it wasn't going to be an easy path, but we're up to the challenge and Budget 2018 attests to our ongoing commitment.

We know this journey continues to be full of twists and turns, bumps and bruises and a few raised voices, maybe even a tear or two, but I knew it was a job that needed to be done and I knew it was a job that would take time and I knew it would be difficult having those conversations on topics that were clouded in despair and pain. But I never avoid these discussions.

We are on the path, the right path, and having respectful and honest dialogue. In my role as Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations, I'm tasked to support our government, ensuring that these conversations happen, to respect our indigenous community with compassion and to understand the need for reconciliation and the help with healing.

I've heard comments that indigenous was not mentioned often in our budget but we've—we've—we've done the work and we continue to do the work with our indigenous partners to create a better Manitoba, one that is built on a strong, stable

foundation. We have spent many hours in dialogue and I know my colleagues, ministers and other departments have as well, hearing what life's journey has led them to this day, to have that opportunity to finally be heard.

This is one item that must always be budgeted for: time—time to listen, time to be heard and time to heal. Our government is working very hard to repair the trust that will make the time.

* (16:50)

While the NDP plundered valuable time afforded to them, nearly 20 years to come together and advance the Shoal Lake road, they never, ever saw it as a priority. I'm proud to say that our government did, and we are proud that working with the community on this is under way and we will support long-term benefits to the communities.

For the Sayisi Dene, our government settled a historic land claim that saw the transfer of 13,000 acres for the creation of new reserve land, laying a foundation on the journey of healing for the Sayisi Dene.

Our government has transferred over 70,000 acres in addition to new reserve land under the Treaty Land Entitlement and land claim processes. 'Compire'—compare this to zero acres in the last three years of the former NDP government.

To ensure our indigenous communities are at the front end of resource development, we have launched a mineral development protocol. This process is to ensure that communities are involved in all aspects of mineral development and share the benefits resulting from projects and all the while protecting Aboriginal and treaty rights.

Our government is engaging with indigenous communities regarding a renewed and strengthened duty-to-consult framework, where, again, Aboriginal and treaty rights are protected, accommodated when necessary, as a pathway to ensure greater inclusion.

We are working with communities to find innovative ways to deal with challenging issues and barriers. Indigenous-led initiatives like the recent checkstop in Norway House that was created only through everyone coming to the table and listening, gathering and understanding and coming together with a purpose of making their community better and safer for everyone.

Stronger communities that are prospering with strong opportunities for young and old to succeed

and have a hope is a Manitoba that I and our colleagues work hard for every day.

Another recent project is the broadband expansion to the North, and it's one that will drive life in the North for all people to the 21st Century. It is our hope that items like this will bring new employment, access to telehealth and other social opportunities to those in rural and remote northern communities.

As a mother, as a woman, I see the pain in the faces of our families, their indigenous leaders, elders and communities involved in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls national inquiry. This is a very troubling part of life for indigenous women and girls as well as all families and friends, one that we must work together to end the disregard for life and the devaluing of women. Families need the closure, they need to heal and they need to—the inquiry to have strong stories—their stories heard. I will continue relentlessly to work with these families, organizations, the chiefs, the grand chiefs, ministers and presidents so that we have peace these victims and families so desperately are looking for.

We value the trust and respect that we have achieved with the indigenous people of Manitoba, and it's an important step forward to reconciliation. I look to—forward to many more successful partnerships between indigenous communities, municipalities and other stakeholders. This is a great opportunity that was waiting to happen, waiting for inclusion. That day arrived on April 19th, 2016, with the election of a PC government, a government that recognizes all people in Manitoba.

And, in close, I would like to 'interate' that the path to restore Manitoba's place in Confederation is not without its challenges, but Manitoba has a great team of people and we have a great leader in our Premier (Mr. Pallister). We are all working together to restore that trust that tomorrow will be a better day for all Manitobans and without a doubt Budget 2018 restores that trust.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): My time to speak today is relatively short, so I'll try not to get myself too worked up, but, you know, I'll actually have a speech written maybe by tomorrow. I doubt it, but I don't need to really write a speech to talk about this government's budget. I can talk about that it's not the

best budget that Manitoba's ever seen. There is absolutely no question that it is not. I agree with the member from Transcona—while I agree with him when his boss is, you know, looking at him.

So, you know, Madam Speaker, what's wrong with this budget? Well, if I only had two minutes to speak, I could tell you what's right with the budget, because there's very little that's right with it. But, as it turns out, I've got five minutes today. So I'll start to point out what's wrong with this budget.

Some members of this House may recall that I come from the North; Flin Flon is north. The member from Thompson doesn't think it's north, but I got news for him. And I've got other news for him. There's other things north of Thompson and other places and other people that have been ignored again by this government, in their budgets, as have his own constituents been ignored. Whether it talks about health care—I've risen a couple of times in the House already since the budget, since we've returned to talk about health-care issues in the North.

You know, you're concerned in the city of Winnipeg about wait times at the ER. Our concern is actually finding a doctor to go and see, because the ER is the clinic. Snow Lake doesn't have a doctor. They went through this last summer where they didn't have a doctor and, well, they just kind of brought in whoever they could find.

This year, Flin Flon is apparently budgeted only for three doctors and three nurse practitioners. I'm not sure when that number changed. I know for many years we had a lot more doctors than that that practised in the clinic, at the hospital, in private clinics. So the number of doctors now is three. Well, it seems we can't keep a doctor to fulfill their contractual obligations. They leave because they don't want to work in the Northern Health Region for some reason. I don't know what that reason is, Madam Speaker.

So we have a budget for three doctors: one has left—no replacement found. My understanding is one

is about to go on maternity leave. I don't know if that's a fact; I haven't confirmed that yet. That will leave us with one doctor.

So let's talk about nurse practitioners that will be available to see people at the clinic. Well, there isn't any—not one. So that leaves us one doctor. One doctor to service the people of Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage, Sherridon, a bunch of communities on the Saskatchewan side who really help fund, to a large extent, the operation of our hospital and clinic in Flin Flon, because it's a border town.

All of these people are being underserved, and yet I don't see anything in this budget that would lead me to believe that things are going to get any better when it comes to health care in the North. And I know from talking to my colleague from The Pas that they have issues there as well—shortages. I don't know about Thompson. I know I talked to some people in the nursing profession a while ago, and they certainly had concerns. I'm sure that the member from Thompson, when it's his turn to speak, will try and address those concerns for his constituents, or not. I guess we'll see.

So, you know, how do we go about addressing the issues in Flin Flon with health care? Well, I've invited the minister to come to Flin Flon.

An Honourable Member: When's he coming?

Mr. Lindsey: Well, it's a good question—when's he coming?—because I haven't heard back from him, so I don't know. So I'm assuming he's not. But I'm certainly welcoming him to come listen to people, actually listen to people in Flin Flon, listen to what their concerns are, and then give them some answers, give them some assurance that—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 14 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Specialized Foster Homes	
Bill 12—The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2018		B. Smith	634
Cullen	625	Fielding	634
Ministerial Statements		Aboriginal Justice Inquiry	
Red Tape Reduction Act		Klassen	635
Cullen	625	Stefanson	635
Altemeyer	626	Investment in Child Care	
Lamoureux	626	Morley-Lecomte	636
Members' Statements		Fielding	636
Troy Scott		Infrastructure Budget	
Guillemard	627	Maloway	636
Siloam Mission		Schuler	636
F. Marcelino	627	Air Ambulance and Water Bombers	
Partners for Life Program		Lindsey	637
Yakimoski	627	Schuler	637
Northern Health Professional Shortage		Petitions	
Lindsey	628	Vimy Arena	
Chief David Crate		Fletcher	638
Johnson	628	Medical Laboratory Services	
Oral Questions		Gerrard	639
Lifeflight Air Ambulance			
Kinew	629	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Pallister	629	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
International Students		Budget Debate	
Kinew	630	(Third Day of Debate)	
Pallister	631	Altemeyer	640
International Students		Pedersen	643
F. Marcelino	632	Klassen	647
Wishart	632	Reyes	648
Mental Health and Addiction Services		Swan	650
Swan	633	Morley-Lecomte	654
Goertzen	633	Maloway	656
		Lamoureux	659
		Yakimoski	660
		Clarke	663
		Lindsey	664

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>