

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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**

**Tuesday, June 19, 2018**

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**Madam Speaker:** Introduction of bills?

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
Third Report**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Chairperson):** I wish to present the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

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

**Meetings**

*Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:*

- *December 19, 2017 (3<sup>rd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Legislature)*
- *June 18, 2018 (3<sup>rd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Legislature)*

**Matters under Consideration**

- *Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature – dated March 2014*
  - *Chapter 3 – Government Deficits and Debt*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015*
  - *Section 13 – Information Technology Security Management Practices*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated May 2016*

- *Information Technology Security Management Practices*

- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2017*

- *Information Technology Security Management Practices*

- *Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)*

- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2018*

- *Accounts and Financial Statements*

**Committee Membership**

*Committee Membership for the December 19, 2017 meeting:*

- *Mr. BINDLE*
- *Mr. HELWER (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Ms. KLASSEN*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Mr. MARCELINO*
- *Mrs. MAYER*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. WIEBE (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. YAKIMOSKI*

*Committee Membership for the June 18, 2018 meeting:*

- *Mr. BINDLE*
- *Mr. HELWER (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Ms. KLASSEN*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Mrs. MAYER*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. WIEBE (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. YAKIMOSKI*

*Substitutions received prior to committee proceedings on June 18, 2018:*

- *Mr. LINDSEY for Mr. MARCELINO*

**Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record**

*Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the December 19, 2017 meeting:*

- Hon. Mr. FLETCHER

*Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the June 18, 2018 meeting:*

- Mr. ALLUM

**Officials Speaking on Record at the December 19, 2017 meeting:**

- Mr. Norm Ricard, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. FRIESEN, Minister of Finance
- Mr. Jim Hrichishen, Deputy Minister of Finance

**Officials Speaking on Record at the June 18, 2018 meeting:**

- Mr. Norm Ricard, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. FRIESEN, Minister of Finance
- Mr. Jim Hrichishen, Deputy Minister of Finance
- Mr. Scott Sinclair, Associate Deputy Minister of Finance

**Agreements:**

*Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Chapter 3 – Government Deficits and Debt of the Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature – dated March 2014.*

*Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 13 – Information Technology Security Management Practices of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015.*

*Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Information Technology Security Management Practices of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated May 2016.*

*Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Information Technology Security Management Practices of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2017.*

*Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Accounts and Financial Statements of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2018.*

**Reports Considered and Adopted:**

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

- *Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)*

**Reports Considered but not Passed:**

*Your Committee has considered the following reports but did not pass them:*

- *Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature – dated March 2014 (Chapter 3 – Government Deficits and Debt – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015 (Section 13 – Information Technology Security Management Practices – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated May 2016 (Information Technology Security Management Practices – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations – dated March 2017 (Information Technology Security Management Practices – concluded consideration of)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2018 (Accounts and Financial Statements – concluded consideration of)*

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Madam Speaker:** Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****Truth, Trust and Integrity**

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations):** I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the value of truth, integrity and honesty and the importance of these values in my life and our government.

Manitoba's a diverse province that prides itself in recognizing and respecting the diversity of culture, customs, religion, ceremonies and celebrations. I was raised in a Christian home where the values of truth and honesty were instilled in me from a very early age. Respect for others was also a lesson taught in our home and especially for our elders.

The seven sacred teachings are values based on cultural tradition that mirrors the teachings in the Catholic faith. Each teaching—love, honest, humility, wisdom, courage, truth and respect—honours one of the basic virtues to help us live a full and healthy life.

Today, I'd like to focus on two of these sacred teaching as we apply them to our roles as representatives of our constituencies as well as this government.

**Honesty:** The highest honour that could be bestowed upon an individual was saying: There walks an honest man. He can be trusted. To be truly trusted was to keep the promises one made to the Creator, to others and to oneself.

**Truth:** To know truth is to know and understand all the original laws as given by the Creator and to remain faithful to them.

Madam Speaker, it is truly an honour and a humbling experience to be in this Chamber, to listen to differing views and honest discussion. However, positive outcomes can only be achieved when there's truth, trust and honesty in the words that are spoken. We must each answer to ourselves in the 'integrity' that we wish to achieve.

I'm proud to represent the people in Agassiz as we work towards making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. I'm also proud to work with colleagues who share the same values of truth, honesty and 'tegrity' that I do. This is the team I want to be a part of.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I would just like to raise a caution again, as I did yesterday, for ministers to be very careful around their wording because they should not be reflecting on their departments or the fact that they are part of a government caucus or colleagues within a caucus. So I would urge ministers to be cautious with their language.

### Concordia Hospital ER

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I rise today to thank the residents of Concordia, Rossmere, River East, Transcona, Elmwood and people throughout northeast Manitoba who continue to fight for Concordia Hospital. Your messages to your local MLAs have been heard loud and clear, and it's your action that has caused this government to begin to waver on their ill-conceived plan to shut down the Concordia emergency room.

Since pushing through phase 1 of their health-care overhaul, the government has been forced to acknowledge the inefficiencies and repercussions these changes are having on patient care. Thanks to pushback from community members, front-line health-care workers and experts, the government has conceded that their timeline for the closure was rushed and poorly planned, and phase 2 has now been—has now delayed the Concordia emergency room closure until June 2019.

The government has also seemingly realized that providing community health-care services close to home should be a priority. But instead of giving the community 24-7 access to emergency services, they now propose another walk-in clinic with limited hours. It's not what the community has asked for. It's too little, it's too late and it's not enough.

The government's own wait times task force report was clear that there wasn't adequate capacity at the three remaining ERs in the city to handle the increased patient volumes, even with the planned renovations once Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs close.

The influx of patients being diverted to Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital has caused nurses to work more overtime to date in 2018 than in all of 2017. Not only is this difficult and unsustainable for nurses, but it puts patient care at risk.

St. Boniface Hospital in particular is already struggling with long wait times and overworked staff. The task force report found patient volumes would rise by 55 per cent once Concordia ER closes.

It's clear that the future of closures of northeast Winnipeg's ER will not make our—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

Does the member have leave to conclude his statement?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

### Truth, Trust and Integrity

**Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale):** I rise in the Legislature today—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Smith:** –to talk about the NDP's abysmal record of broken promises to the people of this province. When asked if he'd be raising the PST, former premier Greg Selinger said it was ridiculous nonsense, Madam Speaker. Yet, in 2013, they indeed raised it by one percentage point. Further to that, there was even talk of them raising it yet another percentage point had they won the 2016 election.

The former NDP government has also promised to eliminate the deficit—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Smith:** –by 2014. Yet another false promise, as the deficit soared in 2011 and continued to 2012, '13 and '14, the very year they promised to eliminate the deficit by. Their spending continued for—over the years until Moody's Investors Service dropped the Province's long-term rating, citing a fast-growing debt load and failure to meet balanced budget targets, Madam Speaker.

It was the first Moody's downgrade for Manitoba in more than two decades. This undeniable proof of failure was contrary to the NDP's promise of a balanced budget. Under the NDP, the provincial debt nearly doubled in the last decade of their governing years.

The NDP also promised excellence in education. Unfortunately, in 2013, Manitoba scored amongst the lowest in education in Canada within reading, science and math test scores, Madam Speaker. They further failed our children of this province, for according to the Manitoba Child and Family Report Card in 2015, Manitoba has—saw some of the highest levels of child poverty in this country.

The NDP made further promises that under their governance Manitoba Hydro would be prosperous. Yet another false promise; instead, they wasted taxpayers' dollars. When Hydro management proposed building a new transmission line, Bipole III, on the shorter, less expensive side of Lake Winnipeg, the NDP government intervened and reversed that decision.

They directed a Crown corporation to build the line on the much longer west side of the lake, even though there was no compelling reason to do so, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

### Canada and Global Public Health Conference

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** On June 12th and 13th—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** –a conference was held in Winnipeg on Canada and Global Public Health: Moving from Strategy to Action.

Achievements by Manitobans were highlighted. In 1980, Dr. Allan Ronald began the University of Manitoba/University of Nairobi World Health Organization Research and Training Program in Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

Dr. Frank Plummer and others worked closely with Dr. Ronald in this work in Kenya and this effort contributed significantly to understanding the nature of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and has led to approaches to address and reduce it.

Dr. James Blanchard and Dr. Stephen Moses have worked extensively in 'Karnataka' and Rajasthan, India and other parts of south Asia on HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention with major funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

With regard to Ebola, extraordinary work has been done at the public health agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg to produce an effective vaccine to prevent Ebola and effective therapy for Ebola using a combination of monoclonal antibodies developed by Dr. Gary Kobinger and his team. These efforts have been supported during outbreaks by a very effective mobile laboratory established by 'noctor'—Dr. Neil Simonsen and others.

At the gala dinner, Mr. Ashok Alexander, with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was emphatic in praising these major contributions.

Congratulations to all who've contributed to the efforts by Manitobans to address public health issues on our planet.

\* (13:40)

### Truth, Trust and Integrity

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** Trust and integrity are not something you are born with. It is something you earn as you go through life, not something you do once and, checkmark, you now have trust and integrity for the rest of your life. You must constantly work at being honest, trustworthy and

having integrity. This is something my constituents of Midland understand.

When I was in business I had to continually work to gain the trust of my customers when buying their product. They had to know I had the integrity to pay them for their product. When I sold my products I had to have the trust of my customers for them to know my integrity was on the line to deliver the quality of product I said I would deliver.

In this business of politics I have seen first-hand a lack of trust, a lack of truth, and certainly a lack of integrity within the NDP. You do not gain the trust and respect of your colleagues by sitting with your back to them and refusing to make eye contact.

The NDP's lack of integrity was evident to Manitobans in the 2011 election—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pedersen:** —when they knocked on doors, looked Manitobans in the eyes and said we will not raise the PST. Nonsense, they said, but their truth of their deceit was clear with their lack of integrity. The NDP leadership revolt, led by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), should be a warning for the Leader of the Opposition not to trust the member again should their political fortunes continue to fail. Be careful where your back is.

The constituents of Midland know the NDP can't be trusted, especially when they refuse to acknowledge the truth even amongst themselves. Manitobans have seen no integrity from the NDP, whose tears mean nothing.

Manitoba—Madam Speaker, building trust, maintaining your integrity and being truthful is something our PC team has done and will continue to do each and every day for all Manitobans.

#### Introduction of Guests

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

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Rajbir Grewal and Navneet Grewal, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes). We'd like to welcome you here to the Legislature today.

Also in the public gallery we have with us today 6 students from Petit Casimir Memorial School from Lac Brochet, Manitoba, accompanied by their

principal, Pierre Bernier, who are the guests of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey). They here?

On behalf of all members, we also welcome them here to the Legislature.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Hudson Bay Rail Line Repair OmniTRAX Appeals CTA Ruling

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, for over a year the people of Churchill and other communities have been hit hard by having the rail line washed out. For over a year people in the North have been calling on their allies to work together to get that rail line fixed.

Now, our caucus stood up on behalf of the North, and to help Churchill we won an order through the Canadian Transportation Agency to force OmniTRAX to repair the line.

Yesterday in question period the Premier, for the first time, admitted that he could and should take action to get the rail line fixed. It's a welcome change. But now OmniTRAX has said they want to appeal the CTA order.

Now I ask the Premier: Will he take the action that he referred to yesterday to get the rail line fixed? Will he commit the resources of government to ensure that OmniTRAX is, indeed, made to follow through on this order, yes or no?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I recognize that the road the member is on, though he does not recognize it, leads to simply more court action against OmniTRAX or its various subordinate companies, and the creative way in which the company has avoided fulfilling its obligations is one that is pretty apparent to all of us and to most Canadians who are concerned about this issue.

That being said, we'll continue to work with our partners to get the rail line built and to get the port reopened.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** So, I'd encourage the Premier to do some research, to look into the situation. It is very interesting. It's a very important one for many people in Churchill and other communities affected by the rail line washout.

Now, what we heard yesterday from OmniTRAX is that they plan to appeal this order made by the CTA to repair the rail line. However, OmniTRAX did also say that as long as the CTA order stands they will abide by it and fix the rail line.

Therefore, if the government were to step in—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —at the appeals level and to ensure that the CTA order stands, then OmniTRAX will make the repairs to the rail line rather than having the taxpayer pay for it. It seems like a pretty clear value-for-money proposition that the government should get involved at this important juncture and stand up for the people of Manitoba in this appeal setting.

Will the Premier therefore devote the resources at his disposal to ensure that the CTA order stands and that OmniTRAX fixes the rail line to Churchill?

**Mr. Pallister:** Our priority is get the rail line open, the port going. And that's why we're partnering with the mayor, people around the North who are concerned with this, First Nations and the federal government to get the job done.

The member's concerned about looking like he's getting something done. We're concerned about getting something done.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Just take a quick second to remind the Premier: while his backbench and Cabinet talks about us during this extended session, we've been doing the real work of standing up for the people—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Kinew:** What's important at this point is to ensure that the Canadian—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —Transportation Agency order stands. It's—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —very important that the CTA order stands because even the respondent, OmniTRAX, said that as long as the CTA order stands they will respect it and they will repair the line.

Now, we know the company is planning to appeal it. However, if they're unsuccessful in that appeal, they've given every indication that they will

fix the rail line themselves. So, obviously, we want to see the rail line get returned to northern ownership.

However, in the interim, will the Premier commit the resources at his disposal to ensuring that the appeal stands and that OmniTRAX is forced to repair the rail line to Churchill?

**Mr. Pallister:** What's been on display here for the last couple of weeks, Madam Speaker, is the lack of a work ethic by the NDP: an unwillingness to work evenings, an unwillingness to work Fridays and a willingness to call it 5:00 when it's not yet 5:00.

If bell ringing was work, Madam Speaker, that was worthy of praise, then I'm sure Quasimodo and the NDP would have a lot in common. But the fact remains that they have not demonstrated a willingness to work for the people of the North or the people of Manitoba, in this session or in any other.

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

#### **Emergency Room Services Request to Stop Closures**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, you know, the people of Manitoba, the question that they've been asking during this extended sitting is: why was it the opposition party that the—got this order made and not the government? Government has no answers for that one.

Our commitment to public health and the health care in Manitoba—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —is held to be universal, that health care should be our family, should be for our children, for be—should be for our older relatives as they approach the end of life.

Now, since October of 2017, when the Premier started to close emergency rooms and urgent care in the city of Winnipeg, wait times have only increased. What's more, wait times are effectively the same as they were last year, when the government announced their plans to close emergency rooms right across Winnipeg.

The data is clear. The Premier's plan to close emergency rooms is not improving wait times. All along, it's been about one thing and one thing only: saving money.



Will the Premier listen to front-line workers? Will he listen to patients? Will he listen to his own experts? And will he abandon his plan to close emergency rooms in Winnipeg?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** The member likes to claim he likes to work, but he doesn't like to work on new questions, Madam Speaker.

He says it's all about the money, Madam Speaker. He says it's all about what Manitobans are asking themselves. Well, they're asking themselves, after 17 years, how come the NDP couldn't get that Freedom Road built? They're asking themselves, how come, after 17 years, how come they couldn't get a floodway built out the north end of Lake Manitoba? They're asking themselves, how come, after five years after communities got moved out en masse from their community homes, did it take a new government to get them back to their homes? That's what they're asking themselves.

They're asking themselves, how is that after 17 years the NDP couldn't do anything for Internet access to the North, and now dozens of northern communities have Internet access? They're asking themselves questions like, why would it be that we would flag—that we would slide down in the mining ratings, but now we're moving up because we're developing a mineral development protocol partnering with First Nations. Partnering with First Nations, the federal government, and the people of our province is what we do. It's not what the NDP ever did. It's not what that member will ever do in the future either.

\* (13:50)

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Lacking from the Premier's words was any mention of health care, the No. 1 priority for the people of Manitoba.

Manitobans want health care to be close to home. They also want it to be accessible. And no Manitoban remembers voting in the last election to have less emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg. No Manitobans that I speak to understand how they're going to be seen more quickly if they have to drive farther to get to an—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —ER.

We heard from the Premier's own hand-picked experts that they should back off their plans to 'close' Concordia and close the Seven Oaks emergency department, and now we're seeing that the Premier's record is very poor.

Since they started closing emergency rooms and since they started closing urgent-care centres in the city of Winnipeg—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'll repeat for the member from Lac du Bonnet: since the Premier started closing emergency rooms and started closing urgent-care centres in the city of Winnipeg, wait times have only increased.

Will the Premier now listen to patients? Will he listen to the experts? Will he listen to people across Manitoba who are telling him a plain and simple message: back off his plan to close emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg? [*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

I'm having increasing difficulty hearing, so I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, Bill Murray at least knew that he was saying the same things over and over again, Madam Speaker, and he changed his tune when he realized his story wasn't working.

And the fact remains that the member's story isn't working either, no matter how many times he says it. Health care is getting better in this province. And after 17 years of miserable failure, the member says my record's poor. He has to do a little bit of research, Madam Speaker, has to become aware of the failures of his previous administration. If he doesn't study the history of those failures, then he's condemned to repeat those same failures.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Public health care is what makes Manitoba a compassionate society. And what Manitobans want from the future of health care in our province is we want it to be close to where people live. We want people to be able to access their health care close to home so that they can live in the community for as long as possible.

Now, the Premier's cuts are making it harder for patients and families to get the care that they need, and we—now we also see that the data shows that since the Premier started to close emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg, wait times have increased.

Since the Premier started to close urgent-care centres in the city of Winnipeg, wait times have started to increase.

Now he plans to close more emergency rooms, which is going to put even more pressure on the remaining ERs like the one at St. Boniface or at HSC.

His plan is not working, it is making patient care worse. His plan is driven by money, it is not driven by the people.

Will the Premier back off and cancel his plans to close the emergency rooms at Concordia and Seven Oaks?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member speaks about compassion, Madam Speaker, but doesn't demonstrate it. If he wanted to demonstrate it, he would then go on the record and state that every other major centre in the country has concentrated their emergency room resources more effectively than this province has under the NDP. He would say that. He would say that every other jurisdiction has shorter wait times so that people didn't have to wait in pain and in fear for services. He would say that. If he was compassionate, he would say that.

He would also say that top-heavy administrations in health care aren't helping the front line. And their government never took anything in the—in—resembling action, Madam Speaker, to address the top-heavy nature of the government's structures in health care, except to enlarge it.

We're taking action to make sure the resources are concentrated and focused on delivering better care and sooner. And, Madam Speaker, we'll continue to stay focused on that goal.

#### **Poverty Reduction Plan Need for Support Services**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** According to a Campaign 2000 report, Churchill faces the highest child poverty rate in this country. We know that job losses and rising costs of basic needs has made life unaffordable for families. We also know these problems worsened after the rail line was destroyed for more than a year.

The provincial government failed to take any action on the rail, but it's not too late for them to help Churchill families.

Will the minister commit today to making real investments in programs that help parents provide for their children?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** This government takes priority ensuring that children are brought up in a environment where poverty isn't an issue. We know what the NDP did in terms of child poverty, where you had some of the highest—in fact, the highest child poverty rate in the country.

Our government has made progress on that in terms of programs and policies like the Rent Assist program, where we're going to have over 3,000 more people supported. We're very proud of that investment. We think that will help low-income individuals work their way out of poverty.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Child poverty rates in central Winnipeg and northern Manitoba are among the highest in Canada. This minister has admitted that, under his government, there are more people on EI than ever before. We know low-income families are struggling to survive after the minister made cuts to Rent Assist and hiked up Manitoba Housing rents.

Low-income families deserve a minister that makes investments in front-line programs.

Will the minister admit that he has failed low-income parents and their children and make real investments to improve the lives of children in Manitoba?

**Mr. Fielding:** This government has made substantial progress on the number of children that are living in poverty, going from 10th under the NDP to fifth, middle of the pack.

We're not done yet. We're not done yet, Madam Speaker. We don't think that's acceptable. We need to move that up.

We know that over 31,000 people will be taken off the tax rolls altogether, and what's important about that, the 31,000 people—which, by the way, could fit into the Investors Group Field right now, the amount of people—they won't have to pay taxes. That will allow them to have more taxes to help them, lift them out of poverty, Madam Speaker. We think that's important.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Well, it's unfortunate that this government continues to take credit for what our government did.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** The minister promised to bring—  
[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Point Douglas, to continue her question.

**Mrs. Smith:** The minister promised to bring in a poverty plan by the end of last year. He's now six months behind.

Manitoba's child poverty rates will not only get worse while this minister ignores this report; without a strong—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —plan to address poverty, Manitoba families will continue to fall behind.

Parents need investments so they can access quality housing, education and good jobs. Instead of taking action, this minister delays reports and disputes the data and media.

Will the minister stop making excuses and release his poverty plan already?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, I agree with the member's one assertion, that credit should be given when credit is due, Madam Speaker, and so she needs to understand that the Campaign 2000 study that was just released that cited the high—and unacceptably high—poverty levels in central Manitoba and in Churchill was based on 2015 numbers, and so that would be, I believe, when the NDP was in power and had been in power for 16 years previous.

We've been making progress on this. We were handed a mess, Madam Speaker. Where they got it wrong, we're going to get it right.

#### **Education System Capital Project Funding**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, this government's cuts to K-to-12 education continue across the board in both operating and capital, and it's this minister's own department's documents that lay out the facts. In 2016, the previous government spent \$48 million for major capital projects at public

schools. But under this minister, that was cut down to \$28 million, a \$20-million cut to our schools.

And what was cut? According to the documents, playgrounds and green space development were deemed not a priority.

\* (14:00)

We know playgrounds and green spaces are, in fact, essential parts of any school.

Why is the minister cutting supports for our students? [interjection]

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** I thank the member for the question.

Certainly, he must be willing to admit, then, that under their government they accumulated a deficit in infrastructure maintenance of \$450 million, which they did not address with their spending plans.

Our government's priorities have been safety and security for students and access for students, something they did a very poor job of. [interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The honourable minister of—the honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Wiebe:** It's clear that the minister isn't disputing that the cut is real. So we know what that tens of millions of dollars in cuts to playgrounds and green space means for young students. For instance, at schools like École Précieux-Sang. It means that they will go yet another year without a playground that they desperately need. These are the investments that parents are calling for, and these are the projects that the minister is cutting.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) refused to turn on the taps for a splash pad. And, you know, it's another beautiful summer day out there, and now the Minister of Education won't make those essential investments in our schools.

Why is the minister breaking his promise to students and parents? [interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wishart:** Perhaps the member would care to explain to these very same parents, then, that while they were in government we had a record number of portables in use because we couldn't get the schools built down—they were in government.

Our government priority has been to build schools. We've announced seven new schools.

There's more to come in the future. Perhaps their priority should have been building more schools.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, this cut is just a great example of how little this government values K-to-12 education.

Class sizes are getting bigger, teachers are getting less resources and school divisions are getting less funding. Under this government, students and teachers are learning to live with less. Schools have had to touch-cut teachers, educational assistants, vocational supports, and yet this minister has even failed up—to live up to his only promise so far, and that is to release a literacy and numeracy strategy by March 2018.

Now we see this minister has even cut capital projects by tens of millions of dollars, cancelled plans to build playgrounds and green spaces for students.

Why is this minister not reversing his cut? Why won't he build playgrounds in our schools and support our children?

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member for the question.

He knows that we have spent a record \$1.323 billion on funding the K-to-12 education, far more than their government ever did. And now we see, yet again, their government dealing with priorities of want-to-have verse need-to-have.

And one of the things I found most disturbing when I came in as the Minister of—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wishart:** —Education, that when we talk to capital items and we went through the whole process of prioritizing the coming needs, they turned to me and said, now, what would the minister like to change? Because previous ministers had changed the priorities to suit political needs.

#### **City of Thompson Job Training Plan**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** The Pallister government is refusing to help the people of Thompson in their time of need. The minister doesn't speak with local officials. Instead, he goes in the media with excuses why he can't help the city of Thompson. Jobs are being lost, retraining is needed now.

Will the minister stop the games and invest in retraining and a jobs plan for the city of Thompson?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** Madam Speaker, this new-found concern about the North and about Thompson is another sign of the lack of integrity of the members opposite, because for 17 years they did absolutely nothing in the North. The only thing they ever did in the North was discourage mining, chase away businesses from the North.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** According to the mayor of Thompson, the Province doesn't seem to care about anything north of the 53rd parallel.

This government put every project on hold when it came to power. Now it's refusing to provide funds from the mining reserve fund. We don't know why because the minister's excuse seems to change every day. But the people of Thompson need help now.

Will this minister create a community adjustment fund so that workers can get the education and training they need?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Madam Speaker, the Look North initiative led by Onekanew Christian Sinclair and Chuck Davidson is doing fantastic work all across the North.

The difference is with the—our government compared to the previous government, it's the people of the North who are actually providing the input into the Look North, not a government of—like the previous government did, imposed their ideas on the North.

There is a tremendous amount of good ideas coming out of the North that are contained in the Look North strategy that will continue to build on the North because the people of the North are the ones who know the North best and we will help build that North with them.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** The City of Thompson is already having to make cuts because of the jobs crisis they are facing, cuts to camps for kids and youth. When that's combined with the job losses of hundreds of workers, that's a real hit in that northern community.

Thompson should be able to look to this government for help, but all they get is excuses and

evasion and a plan maybe to have a plan to have a plan.

Will the minister stop the political games and find a way to help the people of Thompson?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, again, Madam Speaker, this newfound concern for the North by the NDP is so disingenuous. They've known—the NDP government knew since 2010 that the smelter in Thompson was closing, but they did absolutely nothing. Only thing they did was sign the Leap Manifesto, which says leave all resources in the ground. How would that ever help Thompson?

The great—one of the great things that Thompson's got going for it is a great MLA; such a change—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

#### **Shared Health Services Prevention Services Plan**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, the record of the provincial government falls short when it comes to preventing sickness and improving wellness in our province.

In the announcement last week about shared services Manitoba, the section on the function of shared services, which I table, talks of developing a clinical services plan but fails to provide plans to develop a prevention services plan to optimize the health of Manitobans as a central role of shared services.

Why does this government repeatedly fall short and shortchange prevention efforts when it comes to health care?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, Shared Health is going to be critical in co-ordinating many of the services that happen in health care in Manitoba that really should be planned provincially and delivered locally, something that's been recommended for many years.

In fact, when Dr. Brock Wright came to my office and laid out his vision for Shared Health, he did so in about an hour, Madam Speaker. He isn't always brief in his explanations. So I said to him, you seem to have been planning this for a long time. And he said, we've been planning it for 20 years, but nobody's been listening.

\* (14:10)

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** And, Madam Speaker, the minister laid out the plans last week, and it was quite clear that prevention was forgotten.

Madam Speaker, though the minister can talk about prevention, he only provided the clinical services plan. I table his prevention services plan. It's an almost blank piece of paper.

Transformation needs to include moving to much more effective—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —prevention.

Is the Pallister Conservative government going to be like—

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

I would indicate to the member that including all of those three words together in reference to the government is not a—allowable phrase in the House, so I would ask the member to rephrase what he's just saying.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, is the Pallister government going to be like the former NDP government and talk about prevention but never put in place an effective plan and implement it?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I've taken a lot of slings and arrows in this House, but that's the most insulting thing I've ever been compared to, Madam Speaker, is the former NDP government,

Because when you look at the record of this government—and let's just look at wait times: when we compare May of this year compared to May of last year when it comes to wait times in emergency rooms in Winnipeg, there's a 5 per cent decrease over last year. In fact, it's a 14 per cent decrease over May of 2016 and it's a 26 per cent decrease over May of 2015.

This government is making improvements to health care because we have the courage to do it. He can sit there and shoot slings and arrows all he wants, Madam Speaker. We're going to be courageous and make the changes that need to happen.

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, the government needs to face up to the fact that they forget prevention. Preventing sickness and optimizing health care can improve society and reduce health costs and needs to be part of any health transformation, as the article I table shows.

The NDP were so ineffective that the number of people with diabetes doubled and hospitalizations for mental illness rose in their time in government. The inability of the Pallister government to lay out an effective preventive services plan shows they are no different than the NDP: lip-service words but no action.

Is the Minister of Health going to do what every NDP minister of Health did: leave the preventive services to the next minister?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I plan to leave nothing to the next minister. I'm going to finish it all, Madam Speaker.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Goertzen:** But when—Madam Speaker, got a lot of applause over here for that, eh?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Goertzen:** But when it comes to transformation, Madam Speaker, let's look at what code is for transformation when it comes to a Liberal. Because that member opposite sat in the former Chrétien government, and his idea of transformation of the health-care services was to cut: to cut hundreds of millions of dollars of funding to Manitoba.

Now, when it comes to transformation now, the current Liberal government, when it comes to health care, we've seen that too: cutting \$2 billion over 10 years, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to stay in this position and fight the federal Liberal government for as long as I can.

#### **Retail Cannabis Stores Municipal Plebiscite**

**Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans know that the federal government is rushing to legalize marijuana. They are dumping the majority of associated costs and safety measures on the provinces.

Can the Minister of Municipal Relations please inform the House what local communities can do if they feel cannabis retail isn't a right fit for their communities?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations):** I'd like to thank the member for that great question.

Our PC government, Madam Speaker, has consulted with municipalities throughout this process. And some have indicated there may be a desire to prohibit retail cannabis sales within their communities. By allowing municipalities to conduct plebiscites as soon as possible, we are providing everyone with fair say throughout this process.

If a plebiscite to prohibit the sale of cannabis is held and approved, retail cannabis store licences may not be issued, and any licences in effect are cancelled within six months, Madam Speaker.

Municipalities have a unique perspective and integrity, Madam Speaker, to offer—how they offer legal regulatory framework for cannabis use. Our PC government wants to make sure municipalities have their tools to implement cannabis-related changes in the way—in the best way—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Wolseley. *[interjection]* Order.

#### **Fishing Industry Regulations Government Record**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** One of the hallmarks of the Pallister government is their complete inability to acknowledge when a mistake has been made and they keep repeating it over and over again.

Let's take the fisheries file, for instance. They ignored the advice of their own fisheries envoy. Fishers who trusted them ended up losing over \$1 million. The government failed to enforce their own law that fishers be paid within seven days, and the fish was exported in contaminated containers.

The government's incapable of admitting a mistake. So is it the fisher's fault for trusting them, the federal government's fault or the previous NDP government's fault for this fiasco they've created? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development):** This member opposite, he talks about hallmarks. And let's look at the hallmark of the NDP government. They knew that they had no ability to reach their targets on climate change, and they failed to act for five years.

They continued to have inactivity for 17 years, they failed to make any movement on protecting our fisheries, protecting our waterways, on doing anything for the environment.

And I understand why this member opposite is filled with angst when he comes into this House today. It's hard for him to watch a government take real, serious action on the environment. But where they failed, we're going to get it done.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, continuing with our theme of the inability to acknowledge mistakes, this government has gone and done it again. They have again changed the fisheries regulations without consulting with fishers. They have removed the seven-day payment requirement altogether, putting all commercial fishers at risk. They've eliminated the requirement that a fish dealer provide a price to the fisher when sale happens, so the fisher has no way of knowing if they've been ripped off again. And the government's no longer going to track quotas. They've returned the middlemen to suck even more money out of the economy. They haven't bonded fish dealers; there's no initial payment requirement and no fines to ensure proper behaviour.

So is the minister going to launch a personal attack or ignore the question completely and talk about smack that don't matter? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** Speaking of smack that don't matter, this is something that member knows a lot about. Their entire environment plan was smack that don't matter. It failed to produce any results on the environment.

Our government is working with the fisheries, and we did consult with Lake Winnipeg fisheries on making sure that we got it right and we are protecting the fisheries.

I only wish that that member opposite stood up for the fisheries when Gord Mackintosh said that Winnipeg–Lake Winnipeg was a lost cause, but that's okay, we have a 100,000 other lakes in this province. What did that member do? Did he go into the minister's office and say, no take it—you'd better stand up for Lake Winnipeg. No, I—he had no voice then. I only wish he had his voice then and now he should get on board with our plan for protecting the environment and the fishers.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, that answer deserves a daily double, Madam Speaker. She blames somebody else who had nothing to do with it and she ignored the question.

Here's a quote from a fisher: I'm not at all surprised that this government changed these regulations, removing protections for fishers again without care or consultation with anyone within the industry. They did it again while most of us are too busy working to even address it. I firmly believe the Province and the Department of Sustainable Development want to destroy, ultimately eliminate, the commercial fishery. This is a personal communication from commercial fisher Kris Isfeld.

So I'll ask the government: Is it his fault for trusting the government, or is it time for more smack that don't matter?

**Ms. Squires:** You know, again, on that topic of smack that don't matter, I wish that this member opposite would've found his voice when they were warned that Lake Winnipeg was going to become the most threatened lake in the world in 2014. What did he do? He sat silent.

\* (14:20)

When Dr. Eva Pip had warned in 2012 and 2013 that zebra mussels were coming to infest our lakes, what did that member do? He sat on his hands and he did nothing.

He has absolutely no credibility when it comes to the environment, and I wish that now he would just get on board with our plan to protect the fisheries, enhance the fisheries and have meaningful action on the environment.

### **Bridgwater Lakes Operation of Splash Pad**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan):** Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Families if he would turn on the taps for the people of Bridgwater. How can there be no water for Bridgwater?

The Minister for Families refused to answer the question, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) trivialized the issue by talking about movies.

The Minister for Families has had a day to talk to his department and the City of Winnipeg.

Will the minister turn on the taps for the Bridgwater splash pad?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** On this side of the House, we'd like to find solutions to problems. We have been having very productive dialogue with the City of Winnipeg, and we believe we have an agreement in principle. We think that's progress.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** Students will soon be done for the school year, and the temperature will soon rise to 30° on a daily basis. It shouldn't matter if the Province is in dispute with the City of Winnipeg. Residents of south Winnipeg should be able to go to a splash pad for their kids. The residents of Bridgwater want the taps turned on.

The question for the minister is simple: Will he turn on the taps, yes or no?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations):** Let's talk a little bit about relationship with the City of Winnipeg, Madam Speaker. I'm sure—I'll remind the member opposite and they—and the member may want to talk to—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wharton:** —the member directly behind, but the member from Elmwood had said in this House, Madam Speaker, and I quote, that the City of Winnipeg simply can't even manage their own affairs.

Now, that's not a good sign of integrity, Madam Speaker. We are out to get this right. We are working hard with the City of Winnipeg. Where they failed in integrity and trust, we'll get it right.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** That was a clear no.

Madam Speaker, the community fountain in Bridgwater provides recreation for thousands of residents in south Winnipeg. Area resident Kala Subramarian feels cheated by this government's decision to turn off the taps. People like Ms. Subramarian didn't care about disputes between the Province and the City. They just want what's best for their children, which includes activities all summer long.

Can the minister promise Ms. Subramarian that the taps for the splash pad will be turned on this summer?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, the people—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —of Bridgwater, like the people of Manitoba, know that we inherited a mess from the previous regime, and they do want what's best for their children, Madam Speaker, which is why after a decade of debt, they want us to fix the finances of the Province. They're tired of ever-growing taxes and getting less for their money.

And they're also, naturally, wanting us to repair the services that were left in such disarray. They want us to build new schools. They want us to repair the schools we have. They want us to fix the roads that we have, and we're doing all those things, Madam Speaker, by developing solid working partnerships with others. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** Part of that obligation we have, Madam Speaker, is to respect the ability of local governments to address their situations, and so we encourage the local government to address this one. But I encourage the member to understand that the priorities that Manitobans have are being addressed by this government in a way that they were never addressed in 17 years by the previous government.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Gender Neutrality

**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:

Gender, sexuality and gender identity are protected characteristics of human rights, both federally and provincially, in Manitoba, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and soon will be in Saskatchewan, Yukon and other places in Canada. These governments have realized the need for this option on identification for the benefit of people who identify or who are identified by others as intersex, third gender, transgender, genderqueer or non-binary.



Identification and government documents should reflect gender neutrality to prevent issues that may arise from intentional bias on gender and misgendering. The people described above face anxiety and discrimination in many aspects of day-to-day life, such as: (a) interactions with health-care professionals; (b) interactions with persons of authority; (c) accessing government services; (d) applying for employment.

Gender neutrality describes the idea that policies, language and the other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles according to people's sex or gender in order to avoid discrimination arising from impressions that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than another.

Many newcomers to Canada may already have gender-neutral ID. Many indigenous persons are coming to identify as two-spirit as the effects of colonization are lessening, and this needs to be addressed in the process of reconciliation.

Being forced to accept an assigned gender affects children and newborns as they grow and become part of society. There are many psychological benefits for transgender and non-binary people to be allowed to develop without the constraints put upon them by having their gender assigned based on purely physical attributes.

The consideration to have a third option like X or Other on documents was on the previous provincial government's radar for several years, but the current provincial government has not taken steps to implement it.

The City of Winnipeg is actively making its forms reflective of gender neutrality in respect to all persons who work for or come into contact with that government.

The federal government now issues passports and is educating personnel about the correct language and references for non-binary persons.

An Other option existed on enumeration forms for Elections Manitoba in 2016, was easily accepted, and provided a framework to provide accurate statistics of those who do not identify under the current binary system.

The foresight, along with training and making changes on required forms, acknowledges and accepts persons who fall outside the binary gender so that governments and people can more effectively

interact with one another and reduce the anxieties of everyone involved.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately begin implementation of plans to convert systems and forms to be more inclusive of two-spirit and other non-binary individuals, whether it be to include a third gender option or no requirement for gender on forms unless medically or statistically necessary, including health cards and birth certificates.

(2) To urge the provincial government to immediately instruct the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation to offer a third gender option or no gender requirement for licences or any other form of provincial identification.

To urge the provincial government to instruct Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living to offer the option of Manitoba Health cards with no gender in order to reduce the anxieties of transgender and non-binary persons accessing the health-care system as a first step.

To consider revisiting legislation that may need updating to meet the needs of its citizens in this regard.

Signed by Naomi Finkelstein, Sandy Jamault, Burt Jamault and many others.

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

#### Vimy Arena

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface industrial park, the 200–the 20,000 hectares at CentrePort or

existing properties such as the Shriners Hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

\* (14:30)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

### **Seven Oaks General Hospital Emergency Room**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) These cuts were placed–will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in north Winnipeg and visit the emergency room frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or are low income.

(5) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in north Winnipeg regarding the closure of their emergency room or to consult with health officials and health-care workers

at Seven Oaks to discuss how this closure would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Frederick Tabuyo, Joe Dizon, Bernie Abello [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

### Rural Health Care

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) All Manitobans have a right to access quality, timely emergency care, no matter where they live.

(2) The provincial government has launched an attack on rural health care in Manitoba, imposing cuts to facilities and services that are counted on by rural communities.

(3) Without any consultation, the provincial government announced the closing of 23 rural ambulance stations across Manitoba despite proof that these stations have high call volumes and rapid response times.

(4) These closures come after the Premier ordered \$42 million in cuts to rural and northern health authorities, forcing them to cut the front-line services relied upon by families and seniors.

(5) The Premier is planning to close rural hospitals and convert them into other facilities but has refused to be upfront and transparent with Manitobans as to how, when and why these closures will happen.

(6) The provincial government has made deep cuts to funding for personal-care homes, making it harder for communities to build much-needed beds for their seniors.

(7) The provincial government has ignored the declining number of doctors in rural Manitoba, which has caused longer wait times and forced emergency rooms to close, and it even cancelled a

recruitment program that encouraged doctors to practise in rural Manitoba.

(8) The Premier cut outpatient physiotherapy and occupational therapy for rural families and seniors, forcing them to pay out of pocket to recover from injuries and surgeries.

(9) In its latest budget, the provincial government failed to increase health spending at the rate of inflation, which will force regional health authorities to make even more service cuts.

(10) The Premier has broken his promise to protect rural front-line services and has instead made deep cuts that will awaken rural health—that will weaken rural health-care services and drive doctors and nurses out of communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately reverse these cuts and invest in rural health care in order to ensure that rural families and seniors have access to quality and timely health- and emergency-care services.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I move, seconded by the MLA for St. Johns that, under rule 38(1), the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the urgent issue of the cruel and inhumane policy of the US administration to separate migrant children from their parents when entering the United States to claim asylum and the importance of condemning this inhumane practice on the part of the US administration.

**Madam Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable member—or the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, I should remind all members that under rule 33(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beauchesne's citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on

whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

\*(14:40)

**Mr. Kinew:** So, Madam Speaker, I would note, first of all, that we have been called back for an emergency session of the House, and that's why today I'm bringing forward an emergent issue, an issue that has broken through in the media recently over the past few days, and I would note that people from all political stripes have been moved by, very emotionally, and are demanding immediate action, and that this crosses partisan lines both in the United States and in Canada, as well.

Now, I think it's important in order to properly lay out the argument regarding the urgency of this matter, just put a bit of background on the record with respect to the issue that I'm proposing that we debate here this afternoon. So, it has been recently announced in the United States of America that their Department of Homeland Security is now enforcing a zero-tolerance policy with respect to people who may be crossing the southwestern border in order to claim asylum—in order to claim refugee status in the United States of America. What this zero-tolerance policy approach means is that, when adults cross that southwestern border, they are now charged with a criminal offence and taken into custody immediately. And if they have children with them, those children are apprehended by the Department of Health and Human Services in the United States of America.

So, as a result of the Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy on the southwestern border, kids are forcibly being separated from their parents. What has 'broughten' this issue to, I think, such an urgent place in the national public discourse of the US, but also into the international sphere, is the very heart-wrenching images that we've seen. We've seen children incarcerated in cages. We've heard about this Walmart that has been retrofitted to house many, many children. We have heard that, since this zero-tolerance policy was brought into place, that some 2,000 families have been separated and so any number of kids who are part of those families are being impacted.

Now, it's also important to note that the issue continues to develop. It is a developing issue. And that speaks to the urgency. I'd share just a few details that I think have been released over the past few days

that just highlight how this issue has become so much more prominent, and therefore is a truly emergent issue. The public interest investigative journalism outfit ProPublica has released recordings of some of the children who are being housed in these detention facilities: children, again I would mention, who are separated from their parents. Now, the ProPublica release—and I'm quoting here from ProPublica—said of their recording, quote, many of them sound like they're crying so hard they can barely breathe. They scream mommy, papa over and over again, as if those are the only words that they know. End quote. They also note that this is a result of the zero-tolerance policy.

The Washington Post has reported very recently some of the facts that I shared recently about the 2,000 children who are being separated from their parents in the recent days. And the Washington Post shares a description of the cages in which the children are being held. It says, detainees are being kept in bare-boned cells surrounded by tall metal fencing, inside a sprawling facility with high ceilings. Now, certainly not the type of environment that any of us would want our children to be housed in, even in emergency situations. So it is very heart-wrenching.

Many of these news articles and outfits like the New York Times, the Washington Post, again, they outline how there is bipartisan calls, you know, both from the left-leaning party, but also the right-leaning party, to end this practice. And we know that this has—it's a policy, according to this New York Times article on June 16th, that George W. Bush and Barack Obama—so again, different sides of the spectrum, the political spectrum—regarded this as a nuclear option. Meaning, this is an option that they would not consider humane, to be used with respect to people trying to cross the southwestern border, many of whom may have legitimate claims to refugee status in the United States of America. And it's only recently with the more hard-line approach of the current administration that this nuclear option is now being, I guess, put into practice.

So I don't doubt that our colleagues on all sides of the House do not want to see children in these conditions and they do not want to see, I guess, our close ally, and our largest trading partner behaving in this sort of way. And I believe that if we come together, now in this very crucial moment, this emergent moment when this emergent issue is arising, that we can speak as one voice here in the Legislature and send a powerful message south of

the border that not just in their own backyard, but again, internationally, people are watching and people are willing to stand up on behalf of children.

And this is a point that I would really choose to dwell on for a second because, you know, over the years that I've participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, as I've observed church groups and others participate in the journey towards reconciliation in this country, as many Canadians come to terms with the legacy of residential schools in this country, where for more than 100 years it was the policy to separate children from their parents in the name of a mistaken government policy, I have seen many Canadians, many Manitobans from all walks of life react with horror. And what I've heard time and time again, and I'm paraphrasing here but I think this accurately captures the gist of what I've heard shared many times, is people say, well, we wouldn't tolerate that, we wouldn't allow that to happen if we would have known about residential schools at the time. We would have spoken out; we would have done something; we would have done everything at our disposal to ensure that kids were not going to be separated from their parents.

And I've meditated a lot on that. I've thought a lot about that, and, you know, in some quiet moments of contemplation I have asked myself, what if I were a public official a hundred years ago? If I were an elected official a hundred years ago, would I have had the courage to stand up and call out the residential school era's policy of separating children from their parents at that time?

And while I cannot answer that question a hundred per cent, I can tell you that a hundred per cent today, when I have the opportunity to stand up against children being separated from their parents under my watch as a public official today, I can say with a hundred per cent confidence that I will stand up on behalf of those kids and on behalf of keeping families together.

And so that is a humane argument that this is an urgent issue that we must set aside debate for in order to address here, and I believe that all of my colleagues, regardless of their partisan stripe, whether or not they are independent members, would feel the same way, that when we reduce this issue to its most basic human terms, that there are few things as urgent as, you know, talking about ending the wholesale separation of families strictly for political

purposes and strictly for partisan gain on behalf of the President of the United States of America.

And so to me this is a personal test and it's an important test that I think all members of the Legislative Assembly should respond to and I think there is a very important opportunity for us here to send a message, that maybe we can't get the President to respond immediately or the Prime Minister, but at least here in Manitoba, at least here in the Legislative Assembly, we're sending a clear message about how we want the rule of law respected but also how we want children to be able to grow up with their well-being looked after.

With respect to, you know, MUIs sometimes being dismissed because they could be raised in other venues such as question period, I would just share, for your consideration, that because this is a motion it allows for action on the part of this Legislative Assembly to come together and speak in a united—with a united voice, which is different from the other venues available to us at the Legislative Assembly, such as question period. Often question period becomes unnecessarily adversarial and there's a tone of divisiveness which begins to settle on the deliberations.

However, I think that a MUI, being that it is a motion, creates a unique opportunity where perhaps we could speak on an issue in a more cross-partisan, trans-partisan lens, again, with an eye towards standing up for the well-being of the kids.

So, at the end of the day, I think that most Manitobans reject this policy of separating kids from their parents along the southwestern US border. Most Canadians, I believe, want to see this practice halted and I do believe that it is an emergent issue that requires the urgent attention of this House to deal with today.

So I'd submit those words for your consideration.

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding this application to—or, this motion to have a MUI regarding the number of children that have been removed from the care of their parents, and in many ways I believe it's cruelly ironic that it would be coming from an NDP government who, during their 17 years of government, set a record in terms of the number of children that they removed from their parents through Child and Family Services across the

province, something that I think many people found appalling at the time and continue to find a problem that we must deal with.

But, that said, no one's trying to make political gains out of this particular point. I think we're all very much onside with the fact that we do not want to see the practice of separating children from their parents continue in the US, and certainly something that we as Canadians, we as Manitobans, do not want to support.

\* (14:50)

We have made very good progress in Manitoba and—in dealing with people that come across the border as asylum seekers here in Manitoba, and we have been actually complimented by the federal minister for our handling of the issue of asylum seekers as they come across the border here in Manitoba. And I know we don't get the numbers that some other provinces do, but we have been able to handle them very, very well and to help them get the resolution and to make sure that the families get the kind of supports that they need.

So we are not in favour of having an emergency debate on this. We're not trying to score points, to play politics with this issue, but we do recognize that it is a very serious matter to separate children from their families, and we look backwards, and I can cite many hundreds of examples of children that were separated from their parents here in Manitoba through Child and Family Services over the years—some of which, frankly, will haunt me, I think, to the end of my days, from my period of time as critic. I can never, I think, forget the one family whose child was taken from them at birth simply because Child and Family Services of the day didn't want to bother to bring in an interpreter, didn't want to bother and therefore could not understand what the mother had to say because she—English was not her first language and she struggled a bit in communicating with them. And so they decided that they should take the child and put it in care, and, of course, a newborn requires an awful lot of care.

And they came to see me to see if I could help them out with the issue. They were Colombian in origin, so Spanish—we had to find good interpreters to help with that, and we managed to help them out a little bit, and they were getting visitation rights with their child. And, of course, the child was being transported on a daily basis—or rather, a weekly basis, to—for this—them to visit. And during one of these transportation times, care was not taken and the

child actually died during—in transport. And we could not get any resolution for the family on this. We could not get an inquest. The government of the day would not—was not forced to do—to have an inquest on that. It was not in the mandate of the child advocate at that point in time, something that we have moved to resolve because we want to make sure that there was—would be a proper resolution for these types of incidents.

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Wishart:** So not only did—was it not resolved, but—

#### Point of Order

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, the point of order—the minister is supposed to be addressing the urgency of the debate, and he is launching into all manner of, like, I guess, secondary considerations, but if he could return to urgency. [*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Education and Training, and I would ask the minister to zero in—oh, is the member speaking on the same point of order?

So I would indicate, then—I would ask the minister to continue with his debate. And I would encourage him to speak to the urgency of this particular debate. So, technically, the member does have a point of order.

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**Mr. Wishart:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will certainly attempt focus a little bit more on the separating of parents and children.

But I thought, actually—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Wishart:** —I was very much speaking to the issue that it can occur—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Kinew:** You just ruled on a point of order, Madam Speaker, and immediately following, the minister said that he was going to focus on a policy

issue, not on the issue that you directed him to focus on.

**Madam Speaker:** On the same point of order, the honourable Government House Leader.

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader):** On the same point of order, I think, you know, you made your point, Madam Speaker, to this. And I know the member had 'hounly' about five words out of his mouth before the member stood up to—on a point of order. I think the member has direction.

**Madam Speaker:** I would indicate that the minister, when he stood, hardly had any words out of his mouth, so it was hard to determine what he was actually going to say. So I would indicate that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) does not have a point of order on this one.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Wishart:** I will certainly continue on talking about the issue of separating parents from their children, which I thought was—that was what the MUPI was about. But I guess it only applies in certain circumstances, according to the members opposite.

Certainly, we are very concerned that this type of practice would occur in any set of circumstances in any jurisdiction, Madam Speaker, and we are certainly very, very much concerned that someone would decide to play politics with this particular point in time, particularly when there is politics here in the province, over in the past number of years on a vast number of cases, that in many ways are frighteningly similar to what the member is talking about.

But we will continue to support Manitobans and make sure that here in Manitoba these types of circumstances do not occur, and we will continue in particular to pay attention to the issue of asylum seekers and their children as they come across the border, which is probably the most relevant comparison. And as I said earlier, the federal minister has been very complimentary regarding the handling, by Manitoba, of situations here that involve families coming across the border—the safety, security of those families—and to make sure that they are well looked after.

So we do not feel that this matter represents a matter of urgent public importance at this point in time, and we do not support the concept of having a MUPI on this issue.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to this MUPI.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member for River Heights have leave to speak?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member for River Heights have leave to speak to the urgency of the debate?

#### Point of Order

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, I believe the member from River Heights, as an independent member, has the right to speak without leave.

**Madam Speaker:** I would urge the member, if he's going to raise points of order that he check the rules, because he is incorrect in what he just put forward. An independent member—all independent members—need to seek leave to speak to the urgency of the situation. That is a clear rule in our House, so the member for Assiniboia does not have any point of order.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for River Heights to speak to—*[interjection]*—I was waiting for him to ask—finish fully asking for leave to speak. So I would ask the member for River Heights to ask for leave to speak to the urgency of this debate.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, I ask to—for leave to speak to the urgency of this debate.

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, as we talk today, there are on the US-Mexico border, children who are being separated from their families. I believe that the urgency of this issue and the importance of this issue speaks to that particular concern, and we, in Manitoba, know probably better than almost anywhere else the adverse effects of children being taken from their families. We have more than 10,000 children, even today, who have been taken from their families and put into the care of Child and Family Services and the government's care.

We have heard the discussion over the last number of weeks and months, that perhaps as many

as 87 per cent of those children are children who could be supported, their families could be supported in ways that those children would not have to be taken into care. We have seen the adverse effects of children being taken from their families in this province and some of us have spoken up time and time again about this concern.

And so it is right and proper that we rise today and speak in urgent framework of what is happening on the US-Mexican border where children are being taken from their families. It is an issue which I believe—as has been mentioned—all parties and all MLAs could come together on and that we could speak forcefully to this because of the history that we have in our own province.

\* (15:00)

And so I believe that there is a good rationale for the urgency of this and I believe there's a strong case that can be made and that we are making to have this debate today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Fletcher:** I—Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak to this issue.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member of Assiniboia have leave to speak to the urgency of this issue?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

I thank honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) should be debated today. I would advise that proper notice of this matter, as required by rule 38(1), was provided in a timely fashion and I thank the member for Fort Rouge for that.

I do not doubt that this matter is one that is of serious concern to members of this House, as the question of asylum for migrant children entering the United States of America is an important global issue. However, I have some concerns.

First, I would note that there are other avenues for members to raise this issue, including questions in question period, or raising the item under members' statements or as a grievance.

Second, on page 699 of the third edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Bosc and Gagnon note that when the Speaker is

determining whether or not a matter should be brought before the House for urgent consideration, certain criteria must be weighed, specifically, and I quote, "The Speaker determines where the matter is related to a genuine emergency and could not be brought before the House within a reasonable time by other means . . . . To do this, consideration is given to the importance and specificity of the issue and the degree to which the matter falls within the administrative responsibilities of the government or could come within the scope of ministerial action." End quote.

This sentiment is supported by rulings from several Manitoba Speakers, including Speaker Rocan and Speaker Phillips. While this is certainly an important global issue, I would rule that it does not fall within the administrative responsibilities of the Manitoba provincial government, and accordingly, the motion is out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, would you call Interim Supply?

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider Interim Supply this afternoon.

The House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

#### Interim Supply

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

We have now before us the consideration of two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill. The first resolution respecting operating expenditure for the Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that the sum not exceeding \$10,444,404,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set forth by part A, Operating Expenditure, of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2019.

**Resolution agreed to.**



The second resolution respecting the capital investment of Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$593,438,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2019.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This concludes the business for—before the Committee. The committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

**IN SESSION**

**Committee Report**

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has the—considered for the—adopted two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), that the report of the Committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

\* \* \*

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of \$10,444,404,000, being 75 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part A, Operating Expenditure, and \$593,438,000, being 90 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B, Capital Investment, of the Estimates, laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature.

**Motion agreed to.**

\*(15:10)

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 33—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2)**

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox), that Bill 33, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2); Loi n<sup>o</sup> 2 de 2018 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, if you thought the first Interim Appropriation Act was good—*[interjection]*—what's that? Comments on the bill—first reading—*[interjection]*

**SECOND READINGS**

**Bill 33—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2)**

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 33, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2), be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

**Motion presented.**

**Mr. Friesen:** I am pleased to rise and put a few brief words on the record in respect of this second Interim Appropriation Act. If you thought the first one was good, this one's even better.

Essentially, of course, Madam Speaker, what this does is it gives the Legislature the authority to spend. In respect of the current fiscal year, of course, we do not yet have an appropriation act in place in this province, and so this gives us a capacity in interim authority.

The first one, of course, that we passed in the Legislature sought authority on part A of 35 per cent and on part B of 75 per cent. So, essentially, if passed today or if passed in the near future, this bill would supersede the former one, and it would provide additional authority: 75 per cent of part A authority and 90 per cent of part B authority.

Madam Speaker, I do want to recognize the civil service, those civil servants, for diligent work that they perform in preparing budgets and Estimates of Expenditure and guiding legislators through this process. I've seen this process as an opposition member. I've seen this process as a critic of Finance. And now I see it as the Minister of Finance, and I'm so impressed with the quality of the people who undertake this work. I'm so impressed with their work ethic and their focus on this very important activity, and we want to recognize their efforts.

This is sometimes an imperfect place in terms of the sequencing of events. Nevertheless, we are well supported by those whose work it is to guide this particular part of the work on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, briefly, we made a promise to Manitobans to fix the finances, repair the services, rebuild the economy. We're facing the challenges.

We're getting results. This budget is about keeping our promises, managing expenditures and keeping more money in the pockets of Manitobans. It's about building a brighter future for all of us.

Madam Speaker, we are making progress. We know that in the two short years that we have been in power as the government of Manitoba—and we're so pleased to have the opportunity on behalf of all Manitobans—we have arrested the out-of-control expenditure growth that was leading, as officials in Treasury Board Secretariat said, to a \$1.6-billion deficit by the year 2020.

Not only did we arrest that growth, but we constrained it. We focused on a results-based approach. We gave departments strong mandates. We held all departments and ministers accountable for getting better progress because it was clear that the previous path of higher taxes and higher deficits was unsupported.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, as you remember, the debt service charge has gone up dramatically even in the course of just three years, from just under \$850 million per year sharply escalating to where, this year, we are saying in this budget that for the first time in the history of Manitoba, debt service charge is projected to run above \$1 billion. That differential of more than \$150 million is the investment that we cannot make as a province in all the things we need, in education, in health care, in infrastructure, in affordable housing.

But we are making progress. As I say, Madam Speaker, I would just list very briefly that we're on track for the summary deficit for 2017-18 to reduce the deficit by more than \$114 million. But the real evidence of progress is really from the budget to budget, from last year to this year, showing a summary deficit of—reduction of more than \$300 million. And, at the same time, we continue to make good investments in Manitoba. We are stabilizing the finances because Manitobans deserve to have that stability in this province.

We're delivering on our promise to be the most improved province. Not only are we delivering on deficit reduction, we're putting more money on the kitchen tables of all Manitoban homes: a personal income tax relief for Manitobans that is historic by raising the basic personal amount. In the space of two calendar years and two taxation years, we'll raise that threshold by \$2,020—essentially \$2,020 by the year 2020. It's the largest tax cut in Manitoba history.

It removes more than 30,000 Manitobans from the tax rolls altogether. It's helping all Manitobans: seniors, students, families who are just buying a home or getting started, small business.

And we're also helping small business by raising the basic small-business taxation rate from \$450,000 to \$500,000, essentially making it parallel with all other provinces.

Other tax measures, of course, include our significant work we're doing to undertake to review tax credits, extending other measures. Of course, this year, we make a legacy investment by contributing \$102 million in a conservation trust and making it irrevocable to make sure that we have the ability to protect our ecosystems for future generations. We give permanent autonomy and independence from government to all this amount.

\* (15:20)

We are making health care our No. 1 priority because health care is Manitobans' number one priority, and we are making progress, reducing wait times, making good investments, relying on evidence, relying on research, relying on the experience of other jurisdictions that have gone this route before. And why have we gone this route? Because we must.

We know from the evidence. We know from the Conference Board of Canada. We know from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that if left unaddressed, health-care increases will eclipse all other areas of appropriations in government. We must do this work because it is important to have the right care sooner in Manitoba, not just today, but long into the future.

We are protecting the most vulnerable. We are increasing the Department of Families funding, keeping our word on Rent Assist. We are creating new child-care spaces. We have committed, in this budget, to build five new schools in addition to the two we announced last year.

At the same time, as the Minister of Education reminded the House today, that we are focusing on the maintenance and preservation liabilities left unaddressed by the previous government. And indeed, there are so many challenges left unaddressed by the previous government.

These are just a few highlights, Madam Speaker. We are focused on what really matters to Manitobans. We're delivering real progress. We

know there's more work to be done. I would say to all members of this House today, we are here debating an interim appropriation because we do not yet have an appropriation act.

This work that we do today is on behalf of all Manitobans. This should not be the point of disagreement that we have today, because this work is about actioning those expenditures on behalf of all Manitobans.

Now, I would caution all members here that we do not make this a political debate too much, because it was the previous Finance minister for the NDP party who said that if interim appropriations acts aren't passed, it leads to a fiscal cliff. And I can recall Jennifer Howard saying it would lead to a fiscal cliff.

So let us understand that, while there will be plenty of opportunity in this House for debate—there will be opportunity for debate on the budget implementation and tax statutes act; there will be opportunity for debate in concurrence; there'll be opportunity for debate on the legislative agenda that we have brought in this session, Madam Speaker, and the one we will bring in the fall when we recall this House.

But all that said, today, this is about doing the work of the Legislature. It is about voting in favour of Manitobans, to make sure that we can continue to pay civil servants, to make sure that we can continue to build roads, to make sure that we can continue to build schools and deliver portable classrooms and repair roofs.

This is about creating child-care spaces in the province of Manitoba. This is about making sure that we have affordable housing for Manitoba families. All of these are the initiatives that we heard from Manitobans that they want to see delivered in this budget. Let all members of this House understand that to blockade an interim appropriation act is to blockade the will of Manitobans.

I would call for—I welcome the debate that we will have on these interim appropriations and I would welcome support for these measures, which I believe will be to the benefit of all Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Do members wish to ask questions on this bill?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

## Questions

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

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** The question to the minister is with regards to infrastructure, and this minister has been fairly clear that they've broken their promise to spend \$500 million on infrastructure year over year. Instead they're at about \$350 million in this budget, a 35 per cent cut.

Why did the minister break his promise and has he calculated the cumulative impact that this will have on Manitoba's GDP?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I'm looking for clarification from the member of Concordia, whether he can confirm today that he is indeed the new critic for Finance for the NDP party. I'll be looking for that response from him the next exchange.

In the meantime, I would tell him our government made a commitment that we would spend no less than \$1 billion on infrastructure, and we are keeping our promise, actually exceeding that threshold. We know that it—under the NDP, the NDP underspent one area of government each and every year, and that was infrastructure, promising one thing and delivering amount much, much less, except in one year. That was the election year.

We won't do that, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I'm interested in the Minister of Finance's take on what his Minister of Health is doing by creating another layer of bureaucracy—the shared services—and thus creating two organizations in Winnipeg which will be managing hospitals instead of one.

*Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

All the extra costs associated with this and creating an organization which initially was supposed to deal with a preventive services plan for Manitoba as well as a clinical services plan, but now has been revealed as one which is only going to be concerned with a clinical services plan. So there

looks like there's going to be financial issues here, and I'm interested in the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Friesen) response.

**Mr. Friesen:** I'm happy to answer the member for River Heights' (Mr. Gerrard) question.

He understands that last week, our Health Minister announced the next stage of the transformation journey that we have taken Health on, undoubtedly the most significant undertaking in health to transform it and modernize it in modern history.

The member is wrong in his assertion that somehow this will make the system more complex. He will know from the research, including the David Peachey report, that the evidence indicates about Manitoba that we have a health system that is needlessly and excessively complex for the size of the jurisdiction. What this is about doing is actually organizing the system in a better way so that central agency can be responsible for all health in the province.

**Mr. Wiebe:** As to the minister's question, I think he can consult with the clerks. I think they keep an updated list of all critic portfolios and he might want to pay closer attention to that.

This minister is cutting funding for post-secondary education by millions of dollars shortly after his government passed legislation to increase tuition by 7 per cent for post-secondary students. The government's already cut the tuition tax credit, health-care coverage for international students and frozen operating grants. Now students will pay more than 6 per cent—6.6 per cent more in tuition.

Why is this 'inabanding'—abandoning Manitoba students, and what will be the long-term impact on Manitoba's future workforce?

**Mr. Friesen:** There were several questions in there from the member of Concordia. What I did not hear is a confirmation of whether or not the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) is the new critic for Finance for the opposition party. Still looking for that clarification. Indeed, the minister—the member for Concordia was the individual who drove the Estimates process for days on end in Finance, so we're going to assume on this side of the House, and we welcome the member to his new role.

He's wrong about health—about education. We're actually investing in education more. I don't have time to address all of the inaccuracies, but I can say

this: the tuition in Manitoba for international students is half of what it is in Alberta and one third of what it is in Ontario. We are keeping tuition low for all Manitoba students.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Does the honourable member from Assiniboia have a question?

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Sorry—oh. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd simply like to ask the Finance Minister what, if any, resources in this interim or budget has been taken from the agricultural sustainability corporation insofar as any funds that may have been transferred from that corporation into general revenues. See, it's not quite clear in the financial statements and I'd like the Finance Minister to explain any transfers from that agricultural sustainability fund—

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

**Mr. Friesen:** I thank the member for Assiniboine for the question.

I didn't find his question quite clear. Now, I'm assuming that he had opportunity in the Estimates—the Committee of Supply—to ask these very specific questions of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), and I would assume that they had a very robust and extensive conversation there.

\* (15:30)

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

If the member is implying that there's somehow been a change subsequent to the spring budget, he is mistaken. There is no change in the appropriations to agriculture subsequent from the original interim appropriation act to this one. If he's looking for additional clarification, I could ask him to submit a question, be happy to respond to it.

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** The budget papers suggest that the amount of equalization this government is getting from the federal government is increasing by \$216 million in this year. Why is the Minister of Finance taking credit for the damage that he and his government have done to the Manitoba economy?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, that's a pretty political question, but I'm happy to answer it for the member for Minto.

This government is actually repairing the damage left behind by the NDP government. That

member knows that his government left behind—and they never have an answer for this—an almost \$1-billion deficit in the final last gasp by the NDP. But that was a year in which the NDP committed to Manitobans they were on track for a \$422-million deficit. They missed it by \$400 million, and Manitobans all paid a price. We're cleaning up the mess.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) started, as he has admitted, with a very, very large deficit. The first thing that he did was, as he's already explained, have a tax cut of largest in Manitoba history so that his revenue would be down and so that he would be forced to cut all sorts of services in health care and education and to freeze wages for people, and this was his excuse in order to try and bring us closer to balancing the budget. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** So why did the minister have this huge tax cut as a way of dealing with a huge deficit?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) asks the question, why a tax relief for Manitobans. We would answer and say because Manitobans deserve a break. Manitobans are among the highest taxed individuals in all of Canada after 17 years of NDP. Our path ahead is not one for higher taxes. If the member for River Heights is advocating for higher taxes in his jurisdiction, he should be clear. What are we standing up for? Lower taxes and affordability for all Manitobans regardless if they are seniors, working families, students, all of us.

**Mr. Swan:** So we know that the provincial government is receiving an extra \$85.7 million from the federal government under the Canada Health Transfer. The minister confirmed that about three months ago and hasn't suggested that number is incorrect. The same time, the Health budget is only increasing by \$56 million. So, in fact, every penny that's being received from the federal government is being used to backfill PC health cuts.

Question for the minister is: How can a 0.5 per cent increase to Education by the Province be considered an historic investment, while a 6.3 increase in the Health transfers to Manitoba from the federal government is a cut?

**Mr. Friesen:** The member for Minto (Mr. Swan) knows that he stands offside of all the other Canadian provinces. With one voice, Canadian

provinces said that the federal government refusing to come to the table with a more adequate Canada Health Transfer arrangement is bad for all Canadians. There was a time in this province, even not long ago under the NDP, when the federal share of health funding in our province was in excess of 20 per cent, and now 19 and 18 per cent is the path ahead for the federal government's participation. We say it is inadequate; all experts agree that it will take a more robust federal investment in order to keep the lights on in health care. Nevertheless, in the meantime, we are making good investments in health care and building back what the NDP beat down.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, one of the problems that this government has had is that they still have not brought in a strategy on—implemented it to help people who are low incomes. As the minister well knows, people who were below the level where they were paying income tax got no benefit whatsoever from the cut in the—or the increase in the personal income tax exemption because they weren't paying income tax to start with. And so the minister has completely left out a whole lot of individuals who are at the lower end of the income, and they are now worse off under his government.

**Mr. Friesen:** The member is quite wrong. The people in Manitoba who are at the lower end of the spectrum, especially the earning spectrum, are better off. His last question was about why we would provide tax relief. We would provide tax relief because Manitobans deserve tax relief. We are doing that.

The act of raising the basic personal amount essentially helps all income earners, but disproportionately, one might argue, helps low-end income earners because those—it might be a bigger part as an expression of their overall income.

We're standing up for all income earners: keeping costs down; focusing on efficiencies, effectiveness; finding cost savings and delivering better savings and services to Manitobans.

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** The minister has desperately tried to 'impose' a double-digit hydro rate on Manitoba families. His Premier (Mr. Pallister) refused to meet with the board of Manitoba Hydro to discuss this rate application for so long that every board member and the chair resigned in protest. This application was denied by the Manitoba Public Utilities Board. And this budget has failed to offer any support for Manitoba families paying hydro bills.

So, my question is, why has this minister failed to protect the pocketbooks of Manitoba families?

**Mr. Friesen:** I would want to correct the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) who just put inaccurate information on the record. He should go back to review the Public Utilities Board's decision in respect of the Manitoba Hydro rate application. He might want to correct the record. There is no double-digit rate hike.

However, as we all know, what we are now all grappling with as Manitobans is the sad legacy left behind by the NDP of \$20 billion in Hydro capital projects that we must all pay for.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Just to follow up on the last question, it's the Agricultural Services Corporation—the issue again is the allocation from the reserves in that corporation into general revenue. It might appear, and I'm hoping to be corrected, that it's about \$100 million that seems to have been transferred from the corporation to somewhere else.

Perhaps the minister can clarify for me.

**Mr. Friesen:** I fear that the 45 seconds allotted to me in this particular format will be inadequate to properly address the member's concerns. Nevertheless, I would invite a conversation following this exchange with him to further explore the nature of his questions.

He seems to be pointing to a \$100-million transfer from MASC. I would need to have more information. We're not going outside of MASC, not going outside of the agricultural support program. Our MASC is a success story, and we're very pleased at the way that that particular area continues to operate.

So I believe that the member's facts may be wrong. I know he will have explored this theme with the Minister for Agriculture. But I'd ask him to give me questions if he has other ones that we could clarify for him.

**Mr. Lindsey:** The Finance Minister's budget includes no supports or protections for Manitoba's trade-exposed sectors: trucking, manufacturing and agriculture.

So I guess my question is: During this time of all the upheaval with concern around NAFTA and what may or may not happen, and free trade agreements that this government has signed here in Canada that offer no protections for anybody in this province, can the minister explain why his Premier (Mr. Pallister)

and himself have refused to do their part to ensure Manitoba continues to have strong trade and business economy? Just why have they ignored the Manitoba advantage?

**Mr. Friesen:** Once again, the member for Flin Flon is just wrong. It was his party who advocated to tear up trade agreements. They said that they could go it alone. They wouldn't sign the new west trade partnership. They had their feet dug in on the Agreement on Internal Trade. We care greatly about our trading partnerships. Manitoba has the most balanced and diverse economy of any of the Canadian provinces. It is the best performing economy measured over a 10-year span.

We care deeply that the current US protectionist attitude would be addressed. We are hoping for a quick resolution on NAFTA. We are talking with manufacturers and exporters to understand what the effect of this will be. Clearly, this has a knock-on effect on our economy and we want to see resolution the challenges being raised.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for the—this question period on this bill is over.

Are there any members wishing to debate the bill?

\*(15:40)

### Debate

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** My pleasure to rise this afternoon to debate the interim supply bill that has been brought forward before the Legislature today, and to begin my remarks by praising and thanking our wonderful civil servants in this province and really letting them know the support that they have, certainly, from our caucus, in the work that they are doing.

As members of the government know, and as they get to know individuals within the departments better and understand their roles better, I think there's certainly an appreciation. I heard that from the member for—sorry, the Minister for Finance. I know he certainly appreciates the staff he has around him, and he also knows that I spent every opportunity praising those staff during the concurrence process because I do think that they do amazing work. But that certainly is the case throughout the entire civil service.

And I also do want to mention that, you know, the minister mentions Jennifer Howard, who, I think, again, everyone in this House can respect as a

minister of Finance, did good work here in the province. Whether you agree with her politics or not, I think members would agree that she certainly brought a lot of thoughtfulness and certainly a professionalism to the role of minister of Finance.

And so it's interesting now to hear the minister on board with Jennifer Howard, saying there is a fiscal cliff that needs to be addressed, that we need to make sure that the business of government can carry on. And now, all of a sudden, when he is in the chair of the minister of finance, now he's all for this and says that, yes, there's no reason why we should hold this up. And I will check the Hansard, I think that's what the minister is saying—the Hansard at the time. Maybe it was just all of his colleagues around him and he was the island of sanity within that opposition caucus who was saying—calling the bluff of the government at the time, saying there's no such thing as a fiscal cliff and this isn't important to move forward.

But our caucus does understand this to be important and, in fact, this was—as we enter, I think, day 8 of this emergency session which was presumably called to discuss important financial matters. This is, in fact, the first opportunity we've had to debate a financial matter before this Legislature. And it's about time that the government saw the necessity to bring these issues forward and to debate them.

However, I will note that as we debate this interim supply, it is in the vacuum of not knowing what this government plans to bring forward in this year's budget implementation and statutes amendment act which, you know, the members opposite may want to play off as being not important or, you know, don't worry, this year we're not going to try to pull out the rug out from under Manitobans.

But we've seen this movie before and we don't want a sequel. We saw what happened last year when this government said, you know, here's our budget. Here's everything that we want to do in the next upcoming fiscal year. And then, at the last minute, brought forward their budget implementation act and in there hid some of the biggest cuts to municipalities that we've seen in a generation. And it wasn't just us that said whoa, where's this coming from, it was individuals within the municipalities themselves—but more importantly, maybe, Manitobans from all walks of life who said this is going to have a major impact on our day-to-day lives and on our pocket books. And so we

saw—as that bill moved through the process, we saw, you know, folks coming down talking to this government about transit, talking to them about the impact that a hundred-dollar bus pass would have on their day-to-day lives. And yet, this government continued on their path and rammed through their BITSA bill last fall.

Well, here we are again, Madam Speaker. We are, as I said, day 8, I believe, in the emergency session and this government refuses to bring forward the BITSA bill and now asks us to move forward with interim supply.

Now, I—we have been very clear right from the beginning: there's no intention on the part of the opposition to hold up this process. As I said, this is a very important piece of—a very important bill in terms of making sure that we support our civil servants, so we will continue along that track to do that.

But we won't do that, Madam Speaker, without putting some very clear facts on the record with regards to this government's cuts to services in Manitoba. And they are very deep; they are long term; they are cuts that will take a generation to reverse at the rate this government is going, and they are cuts to the services that Manitobans count on, namely health, namely education, and infrastructure jobs. And, you know, even with this government having record revenues already budgeted for, already in the bank as far as they're concerned, from the carbon tax, from the gas tax that they've proposed to bring forward to Manitobans, they are continuing to make these cuts.

Now we have stood up very firmly on the side of Manitobans to say no to this government's gas tax, to hold it up, to hold up implementation of that, to give Manitobans a break for as long as we can, but we know that at every turn this government is taking money from the pockets of Manitobans. They are raising taxes and they're, at the same time, making those cuts when Manitobans are telling them that is not what we elected you to do.

We know that funding for acute health care is effectively frozen, while long-term care is being cut. All the while, record federal investments in federal transfers are being wasted on endless reports from high-priced consultants in the private sector on behalf of this government.

Our unemployment rate, Madam Speaker, is above the Canadian average for the first time in a

generation. It's at its highest rate since the 1990s, and instead of a jobs plan, instead of coming forward with a clear plan on how to get Manitobans working, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is gutting the roads budget; he's cutting funding for training and apprenticeships and, at the same time, making it more expensive for our young people to get a good education here in this province.

We know that funding for post-secondary education is being cut by millions, while costs for students and parents are rising. Tuition, as we know, Madam Speaker, will go up nearly 7 per cent this fall while the Premier freezes his operating grants.

So, this is all contained in a budget that Manitobans did not vote for. They did not ask this government to cut those services that they rely on. And we know that when health-care spending, when health-care investment in this province is on the decline, when it's less than the rate of inflation this year, in fact, Madam Speaker, it essentially imposes a de facto cut on Manitobans' most important priority.

And, you know, Madam Speaker, I hear the government chirping from their seats, but, you know, the fact is the numbers don't lie. They are starving the health-care system. They've underspent their health capital budget by \$175 million and this is affecting ER expansions, important projects in this province, personal-care-home beds, all issues that Manitobans said yes, these were important to us. These were the priorities we wanted you to focus on, and instead all they've gotten from this government has been more cuts.

The Minister of Health has gone out, he's targeted specifically seniors' health, which is an area that they, in fact, campaigned on. They campaigned on it and said we want to build more PCH beds. Their first action, Madam Speaker—cut those projects that were already underway, including those in Transcona and in—I think the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) has also mentioned that it's been cut there as well.

They laid off 200—and at least now—228 front-line health-care workers since they've taken office. All this under the guise of making, you know, health care somehow better by providing less service to Manitobans. But Manitobans understand. They see right through that. They see that this government has been cutting and the proof of that, Madam Speaker, is that they're now pulling back. Phase 1 was rush through, was push through, and

now phase 2, they say whoa; let's put on the breaks; let's slow down the cuts; let's slow down the cuts to our ERs; let's backtrack, and all the while still moving forward, and that's not what Manitobans are asking for.

\* (15:50)

Now, you know, I could go on all day, Madam Speaker, with regards to cuts to capital spending in education, cuts to operating funds for universities, cuts to operating funds in the K-to-12 system. This government's obsession with wanting to move forward on private-public partnerships, which they now have backed off, said, you're right—the opposition was right all along, these projects aren't good for Manitobans and they won't get these projects built faster. So now they're backtracking and we're finally moving forward.

Madam Speaker, the list goes on and on and on and on, and yet this government refuses to be accountable; they refuse to come forward to debate these issues. They don't want to move forward on these issues, while we do. And you know, as I said, we've been very clear, interim supply is something we've always said was something that we would move forward on and what we want to see is we want to see this government's budget implementation act. We want to see more transparency from this government on the true finances and where the cuts are coming from next.

We will continue to push them for that. We will continue to push for real time for Manitobans to see what this government is planning, where the cuts are coming next and that's really what Manitobans are asking us to continue to push for and we are happy to do that as an opposition that works every single day in this Legislature to hold this government to account.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I believe the member for Assiniboia had indicated he wanted to speak to this debate.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Thank you Madam Speaker, and I appreciate your due diligence in locating my location.

In regard to the budget, I have to say, first of all, it's a difficult task. It is absolutely, and we need to recognize that. And the government inherited a very difficult situation, both in the annualized debt of the Province, but in a variety of Crown corporations, and



decisions made in some Crown corporations—and I'm thinking of Hydro—still haven't been booked on the Manitoba–Province of Manitoba ledger and this deals with accounting practices and project completion and so on.

So, we are in serious trouble and this issue of the budget as a whole needs to be dealt with seriously. I'll make a few observations, Madam Speaker, and I'd just try and look to solutions rather than the problems, but I will acknowledge that in 2008, at the federal level, we ran a campaign, federal campaign, on no deficit. We—I found myself in Cabinet, and not only in Cabinet, on Treasury Board—one of five with Rona Ambrose, Jim Flaherty, Vic Toews—and we had the financial crisis. And, in large part, it was Treasury Board and the civil service, to their credit, helped us as Canadians get through that in conjunction with the rest of the world.

Now, I only bring this up, Madam Speaker, in the context that we have to learn from past experience. And we are very lucky to be in Canada because our financial position is such—or was such—that we could afford to spend \$40 billion on stimulus and do our part to put oil in the wheel, and so I just mention begrudgingly, yes, it was tough, absolutely. But there was a key item that the prime minister of the day, Stephen Harper, made very clear: that this excess spending was temporary, and it must not, it can not, contribute to the structural deficit. What is a structural deficit? What is a structural deficit? That is legislated or statutory expenditures that the government must make, and since it's a deficit, it means that the revenue does not meet what is statutorily mandated.

So you end up, over time, if you're not careful—and we can name some countries here, but I won't mention Greece—whoops. And that's an extreme example, but we're no exception. And if we look at what's happening in Ontario, it—Ontario has the largest sub-national debt in the world. Wow. What does that mean? It means it has more debt than California or any other state or any state in Brazil or Australia; take your pick. That's Ontario. That's supposed to be our wealthiest province overall.

Manitoba is heavily reliant on the transfer payments, about a third, maybe 40 per cent. I will note that—and I'm sure I'll be—I believe it was when Premier Filmon began, it was about 29 cents, and under the next government, it was about—just over 40 cents on every dollar that the provincial government spent came from Ottawa.

Well, Manitoba—and I'll—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Cabinet and the Finance Minister are in a tough pickle because we do have a structural deficit in Manitoba. And this year, if you can trust the numbers in the accounting, it's over half a billion dollars. So each year, we spend over half a billion dollars than we bring in. And then you add on top of that the interest payments, and interest rates are going up.

So when we have these votes in this place, it's easy to, you know, just say, yea, it's summer; you know, it's blue skies, puffy clouds, nowhere better in the world to be than Manitoba in the summer. But we have a job to do as MLAs, and I'm quite pleased that we are having this debate. And, again, I'd like to thank the Speaker for being inclusive in this.

\* (16:00)

So we have this structural deficit. So what do you do? What we're debating today deals with Interim Supply, not the final budget, but monies that will allow the government to operate until the budget is passed. But there's a problem: the structural deficit. So it doesn't matter, in reality, how much money or much we tax if we don't deal with the other side of the ledger: the expenditure. And expenditure does not mean cuts. It seems, as so many people try and say, it is a reallocation of resources, a reallocation. And, again, in '08, on Treasury Board, learned that fast and furious because some cuts or reallocations can end up causing more than the original expenditure. But then there are deficiencies that can be gained. There can be a realization that, you know, there may be assets that can be liquidated or sold. I remember one occasion where the feds tried to get rid of St. Andrews locks on the Red River at Selkirk. But the Province wouldn't accept responsibility, probably correctly, because it would've, in the long-term, cost more than it was worth. In the macro picture, and let's face it, the government has—federal government has deeper pockets. But that's a small example, and the reverse can be said.

Now, Madam Speaker, one of great—one of the great economic levers that Manitoba has had since Duff Roblin, when he brought Bipole I and Bipole II down from the Nelson River, connecting Winnipeg to the, at the time, what seemed to be 'infinite' power, and there's still a lot of development that can go on the Nelson River. But notwithstanding the fact that we have, as a province, made many billions of dollars by selling hydroelectric power, that market

has collapsed. We used to be able to sell, say, for 10 cents a kilowatt hour on the spot market; now, we're lucky to get 1 and a half. And that's even if you can sell it. And this is due to all sorts of things that are beyond the control of the government, provincial government, including shale natural gas, energy efficiency programs, like solar panels and windmills because that reduces the demand for our 100 per cent clean hydro power.

So we have a situation where we are, in fact, continuing with these projects, even though they are costing us many millions of dollars. And I don't think Manitoba's in a position, financially or otherwise, to mess around. Let's focus on the essentials.

Now, Madam Speaker, I'd like to go through this quick example of why we need to focus. If you take Efficiency Manitoba, it has—in part 2, section 4(1), there is the mandate. The mandate is to reduce the electricity supply by a certain amount every year, using alternative methods of power.

The second point is to reduce the use of natural gas. And remember, we have a double monopoly here in Manitoba when it comes to energy. Manitoba Hydro controls the electricity supply and the gas supply.

And then it goes on, Madam Speaker. This new Crown corporation not only will deal with all those additional costs associated with a new Crown corporation, it also regulates potable water and transportation.

And I'd like to ask the government, where did we say we were going to regulate potable water or transportation? And the government hangs its hat on a 2014 Public Utilities Board hearing saying some entity needs to be—create—on demand-side management. But what they don't—what the government doesn't acknowledge, the—what Public Utilities Board in '04 was—or, in 2014 was suggesting was you reduce the demand or you increase the supply. It wasn't—and increase the supply and reduce demand, because that would be crazy. Who does that? Especially when there's—reducing demand for your product. But somehow in Manitoba, that is what is happening: we are reducing the demand for a product in which we have too much of and more coming online.

And what is more, Madam Speaker, is the people who pay Manitoba Hydro rates are going to be paying for this new Crown corporation in the order of \$100 million at least. And then, if the

government is saying, well, we ran on this Public Utilities Board hearing, well, what about the Public Utilities Board hearing from last month saying to get out of these types of Efficiency Manitoba projects? Or the one before that, or the one before that, or the PUB hearing before that? Or what about—the original PUB hearing said do not build a dam and then pursue reducing your demand. You can reduce demand or build a dam, but not both. We're doing both.

Now, what advantage is there to reducing electricity demand in Manitoba? Manitoba Hydro—and I think everyone in this Chamber agrees that hydro power is about 99 per cent green. It is, in fact, the greenest power that exists in the world. Lake Winnipeg is the reservoir. And if you supply—and even when it comes to solar panels and wind power, if you follow the supply chain, including the mining of the rare earth minerals, where they are mined—most often in China—and the cost of expenditure and manufacturing—and remediation because these are nasty pieces of—some of them are toxic. So when you consider that, Manitoba Hydro power is—looks even better.

\* (16:10)

So why—what advantage is there to reduce power? Does it save—does it help the environment? No. No, it doesn't. It will not. Reducing electricity consumption in Manitoba does not help the environment. That is a scientific fact. It is an empirical fact. And I hope the government will remove that out of their Crown corp. because there's another cost here, and that is, when you reduce demand for something that there's too much of, you actually decrease the revenue that all Manitobans benefit from when Hydro does well.

But Hydro's never going to do well. The supply is always going to exceed demand, according to the Public Utilities Board and Manitoba Hydro, until mid-century. Most of us, with maybe a possible few exceptions, will not be here when that equals out.

Now, Madam Speaker, you may be pleased to know that I plan to be an MLA until at least Canada's 300th anniversary, and I will be looking for volunteers. Maybe it'll be Parliament, but maybe, given the Leader of the Opposition's comments during the matter of urgent public importance, there'll be 50 additional provinces that will be part of Canada. God save the Queen, by the way.

In regard to the—

**An Honourable Member:** Well, you said God save the Queen. You should finish with God save the Queen.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Oh, yes, maybe I will. Madam Speaker, the efficiency reduction in that one line item, that one initiative by government, reduces the revenue, doesn't help the environment, increases bureaucracy and therefore adding to the structural deficit that I've been talking about.

And then you take the mission creep and add the other points, including putting a price on water. Like, what is that about? When—who creates a Crown corporation to do that? That is just—and what about aquifers? And what is the definition of potable? Is the water in the Red River potable? I don't know. Depends if you're a fish or not. I don't recommend drinking any water from the river. So is that potable?

But this is what the Crown corporation that is being created is doing, and I'm afraid—and I wish proper due diligence was done on that legislation because all these flaws would have been exposed. And that brings us to the elephant in the room—the elephant in the room—and that is the made-in-Manitoba carbon tax.

The budget includes this tax that's been imposed by this Legislature on the people of Manitoba at 250 per cent of even what Ottawa is asking, and this money is going into consolidated revenues, which helps mask the true dire nature of Manitoba's financial situation. And this carbon tax comes with additional spending.

This \$100-million conservation fund, which by the way, I think in itself is a good idea, but I don't think it should come from carbon tax. It should come from efficiencies in the structural deficit, re-allocation. The carbon tax, as a revenue source, is disingenuous. It will not reduce—there's no evidence that it will reduce GHGs, especially in Manitoba, where, by the way, it gets quite cold and the distances are quite far, and quite hot. There's also issues around heat. So the carbon tax is going to reduce GHGs. Not by one molecule.

But Manitobans are going to be stuck with a tax and it's being incorporated—that revenue is being incorporated into the structural deficit. And the structural deficit is the problem. So, by increasing taxes, in no way does that deal with the fundamental problems that we have in Manitoba.

We have, in our province, a situation where the government is pointing to Ottawa and saying, Ottawa

made us do it. Well, actually, no they haven't. Will they impose a carbon tax—say it's \$50 a day. I say, go ahead, make our day. Go ahead. Because the Premier of Ontario, the Premier of Saskatchewan and the future Premier of Alberta are all against the carbon tax and—but they're for the environment.

Now, I have a positive suggestion, Madam Speaker, for everyone. But I really want to underscore the hypocrisy and silliness of increasing taxes. By this—and by the way, let's get something out, straight out on the floor right now. In the budget, or in the platform that the government and I ran on, said carbon pricing that reduces greenhouse gases. Fair enough, but it's an oxymoron, when you talk about carbon tax. Because carbon taxes do not reduce GHGs. Oh, that's a zinger. Now, you go to the other side. There may be other kinds of carbon taxes that would achieve that goal. But we know that carbon taxes don't.

So, Manitoba's caught half-pregnant. But you can't be half-pregnant. You're or you're not. And we are in a very difficult situation. And we're relying on a tax—by the way, Madam Speaker, the tax, I don't think it's going to survive the next election because there's going to be a federal Conservative Party in power. And then what do you do? Not you, Madam Speaker. It's you and me—royal we—context.

What do we do? Because we're not going to be mandated to have that carbon tax. But we're going to be stuck with the tax and the associated spending and this is a party that ran on lower taxes. I ran on lower taxes. Where are the Conservatives? Where are the Tories? Send in the Conservatives, Madam Speaker. Where are the Conservatives in Manitoba? Why are the Conservatives increasing taxes when it was clearly stated on the cover of the platform that we would have lower taxes, but that was our policy.

And, according to the budget, which still isn't been implemented by the Province's anticipating about \$250 million in tax revenue, which hasn't been realized. So I was at work. There was the false issue of the cannabis revenue. The fact is, the government doesn't know if—how much it's going to bring in or how much it's going to cost. But that's no reason to stop a budget. It might be plus or minus \$10 million. What's that over a hundred billion dollars?

\* (16:20)

Madam Speaker, I would make a helpful suggestion for everyone. Let's book the cannabis revenue at zero and get on with passing the budget.

Madam Speaker, I'm just bringing forward common sense Conservative principles. I understand the government is in a pinch because it inherited a financial mess, but it doesn't give a moral licence to increase taxes, doesn't give a licence to do what is in the interest of Manitobans. And I give the federal example of '08, because things change and we have to recognize that, but things haven't changed like that in Manitoba. The only thing that has changed is the government, but taxes are still going up with the made-in-Manitoba carbon tax. And no, Ottawa is not going to be able to stick us with that carbon tax in the future, because there's going to be a Conservative Prime Minister after the next election. And then what does the government do?

And our neighbours to our east, to the west, to the south, they're not going to have the carbon tax, but our farmers, our industries, our homeowners are going to have the carbon tax. We're already taxed. Let's focus on reducing the structural deficit. Let's focus on reallocation. Let's focus on efficiencies. Let's focus on growing our economy, which is opposite—which increasing taxes on everything will amount to.

Madam Speaker, this is why the budget process is important. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, a few comments on this interim supply bill. As the government has emphasized that there is a very large deficit, it is unusual for a government with a very large deficit by—starting by reducing revenue by having tax cuts. The result is that this government is forcing itself to make major cuts in services so that we're seeing a lot of cuts to services in health care, in education, in francophone services and in other areas. The government is forcing itself to freeze salaries but hasn't listened to people who have suggestions about how you can operate things more efficiently. We heard at committee level and I've heard from many, many people that they have ideas to—of how to operate things more efficiently, but this government just doesn't want to listen. It just wants to cut people's salaries and cut services.

This government has brought in a personal income tax exemption increase, which doesn't help those who are on low incomes, who are not even paying any tax currently, because it won't benefit them at all. And those who are such, on low incomes, will have increased hydro costs, increased all sorts of other costs and so—that their budget will

disproportionately be bad for those who are least well off, those who are poor.

The government has said, well, it has an answer: it's going to rely on research. But the prime—Finance Minister said—has already told us that he's dramatically cutting the budget for research, so he won't have the research which he needs in order to rely on it. And so he's getting himself into a bit of a pickle. He needs to thank the federal government for all the dollars for child care and early childhood education, because that's essentially where the increased funding has come from. He needs to thank the federal government for the increase in the Child Benefit, because that has probably done more to reduce poverty in Manitoba than any other measure. He needs to thank the federal government for the increase in health-care transfers. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen)—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Order. I'm having increasing difficulty hearing the member. There are several conversations going on here, so I would ask everybody to either go to a loge or to bring down the level of noise here so that we can properly hear the member that's in debate.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The federal government has increased the transfers for health care, but the Minister of Finance is taking some of that increase of transfers to make tax cuts, and so, instead of improving mental health services, instead of improving home-care services for which he's received additional monies from the federal government as well as the federal health transfers, he's spending a lot of money on reports and the reports were clearly written by people who were not all that familiar with our health-care system.

The KPMG report said that CancerCare Manitoba isn't doing a good job. Well, that's clearly wrong and the KPMG people didn't understand what is happening in our province.

The fact that the government cut Misericordia urgent care, the Corydon primary care, which has impacted a lot of people, has resulted in increased numbers of people going to St. Boniface Hospital emergency room and I've repeatedly heard of chaotic situations at the St. Boniface Hospital emergency room, and I repeatedly hear of poor morale because of the way that this government has been managing change in health care, and if you don't have people who are interested and excited and want to do their job and want to do a good job, and if you're

undermining morale, it's really hard to get good services delivered. And so that is what's happening in this province.

Add to this that the government has put on the carbon tax, but it's using the carbon tax to reduce the deficit. It's not—and to lower taxes for rich people, but the problem is that there's no money going to compensate people who are disproportionately affected.

Truckers have come to us, many of them, to say that they're going to be paying a lot more disproportionately in carbon tax but they're not going to be getting any benefit, and when you have a government which is not paying attention to one of the major industries in this province, we have a problem, and we have a problem with this government and the way that it is operating.

It's a government which is going to see increased income as a result of the cannabis business and sales. There's clearly going to be increased taxes coming in from businesses operating, increased personal taxes as well as the retail sales tax from the sales of cannabis.

And yet the government is not going to account for that and is going to say, at the end of the year, that oh, look how much better we're doing than we projected, but all because they didn't include any of the taxes that they're going to be bringing in on cannabis.

So there are a lot of problems with the financial management of this government, as I have already said earlier today. They have a lack of a prevention services plan, an area where, clearly, there are a lot of potentials for savings. They are adding more bureaucracy with the shared services Manitoba, and so we are seeing more and more problems instead of more and more solutions.

So, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I will pass on so that others may speak if they desire. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

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

The House will now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 33, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2), for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

\* (16:30)

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

#### Bill 33—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2)

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk):** Will the Committee of Supply—of the Whole please come to order.

We will now consider the—Bill 33, the interim appropriation act, 2018 dash 2, and we will now proceed with the consideration of the bill clause by clause.

The title of the—enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; clause 7—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The committee concludes—that concludes business before the committee.

The committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

### IN SESSION

#### Committee Report

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 33, the interim appropriation act, 2018 dash 2, and reports the same without amendments.

I move, seconded by the honourable member from Emerson, that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

#### Bill 33—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2)

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Sustainable Development, that Bill 33, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2018 (2), reported from the Committee of the Whole be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

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

#### Recorded Vote

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 33.

#### Division

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

#### Yeas

*Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.*

#### Nays

*Allum, Fontaine, Gerrard, Klassen, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Swan, Wiebe.*

\* (17:10)

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Yeas 36, Nays 10.

**Madam Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\*\*\*

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

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point—oh, it is indicated to me that as it's after 5 o'clock, points of order cannot be raised.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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