

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 23, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

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

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Indigenous and Northern Relations, that Bill 4, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 4, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act. This legislation will create a fairer and more competitive bidding process for publicly funded construction projects by ensuring that public sector entities' tendering processes are unbiased with respect to the unionization status of bidders and their employees.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 205—The Official Time Amendment Act (Daylight Saving Time Abolished)

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I move, seconded by the MLA for Maples, that Bill 205, The Official Time Amendment Act (Daylight Saving Time Abolished).

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Emerson, seconded by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), that

Bill 205, The Official Time Amendment Act (Daylight Saving Time Abolished), be now read a first time.

Mr. Graydon: I believe that it is in the best interests of every member in this Chamber, regardless of political stripe and affiliation, to support the bill, as a disruption twice a year of daylight savings time has been documented to affect the health and the safety to all Manitobans.

And a very successful businessman once told me that the most valuable asset for any business were their employees. As the founding member of HyLife, he has been proven right. I'm sure that every member in this House wants to see all Manitobans safe and healthy, as all businesses in Manitoba can then grow.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

John and Bonnie Buhler

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, in recognition of National Philanthropy Day, it gives me great pleasure to honour John and Bonnie Buhler, who are a Manitoba philanthropic power couple.

To find what inspires and motivates their generous hearts, we need look no further than the family and friends of John and Bonnie Buhler. When tragedy touches those that are close to John and Bonnie, it also touches their own hearts. It inspires their great generosity towards those who are in need. That generosity not only benefits their family and friends but also benefits many other Manitobans in need.

But more than tragedy motivates Bonnie and John Buhler. Perhaps it is because they are self-educated that they are truly—they truly understand the value of education. Their giving has expanded to include education projects that supports others to gain the learning that they need to succeed.

Music also fuels their passion. It is not only their great love of music but also the musical abilities and achievements within their family that influences the hearts of John and Bonnie. Their lives have been enriched by a passion for music. Through their generosity they endeavour to enrich the lives of others.

Together they have donated more than \$60 million in charitable gifts to a laundry list of Manitoba institutions, including Seven Oaks hospital, St. Amant Centre, St. Boniface Hospital and Research Foundation, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Red River College, both the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba and many others.

Among their many awards, they have been honoured together by one of the greatest children's charities with the Variety Gold Heart Humanitarian of the Year Award.

Both Bonnie and John have been individually recognized by Queen Elizabeth with Jubilee Medals.

Today in the Manitoba Legislature, we, again, honour John and Bonnie Buhler who are in the gallery with us here. Their generosity has helped many Manitobans in a time of need, while others have benefited from their passion for music and education.

On behalf of all Manitobans, we extend our heartfelt and sincere thanks to you both for your great passion and your great generosity.

I would ask if you would please join me in recognizing Bonnie and John Buhler.

Madam Speaker. I request leave to add the names of our guests to the Hansard record.

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

Peggy Barta, Harold Bergen, Sharon Bergen, Bonnie Buhler, Doug Buhler, John Buhler.

Madam Speaker: Further member statements?

Paws N Taws Square Dance

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I think you'd really enjoy square dancing. And, you know, I think the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), you would really enjoy square dancing too. And the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux)—she's nodding—I think she'd enjoy

square dancing too. Perhaps even the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). What do you think?

I suspect that the clerks and the pages and the Legislative staff and almost every MLA here would really enjoy square dancing, because, if you can move around and listen to some simple instructions, I'm pretty sure you'll find that square dancing is a lot of fun.

So I recently discovered this first-hand, because one of the oldest, and oldest continuously running square dancing groups in Manitoba recently celebrated their 60th anniversary, and they invited me to join their celebration.

Paws N Taws square dance club has been active in Windsor Park and the surrounding area ever since the community was first established in the late 1950s. A number of couples in the area wanted to get together and enjoy each other's company while staying active and meeting new people, because that's what Paws N Taws is all about.

And like so many square dance clubs, Paws N Taws' membership numbers have risen and then fallen but, more recently, risen again. And today they are a healthy club with dozens of members coming out every Thursday night to the Norwood Legion, on Marion Street, to dance. And, if you want to come check it out, Madam Speaker, and everybody else here, you are welcome to do so. The first three dances are free, and they run from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

* (10:10)

Square dancing is for people of all shapes and sizes and ages. Paws N Taws' oldest active member, Hilaire van der Kerkhove, is 88 years young. Their youngest member, Liam Baskerville, is 13, and even better is that Liam's partner is his great-grandmother, Yvette Baskerville, who has joined us in the gallery today, and her age shall remain unnamed.

As you can see, many members of the Paws N Taws square dancing club on their 60th anniversary.

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetrics Services

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Once again, this government is neglecting northern Manitoba. Obstetrics services in Flin Flon General Hospital are suspended and this government has made no commitment to reinstate them.

Flin Flon General accommodates residents in Flin Flon and surrounding communities in both northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In the past year 150 babies were delivered—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —there, even with staffing issues. Now expectant mothers are being forced to travel to The Pas a week or more before their due date in order to have access to a hospital that can help them.

Travelling and arranging accommodations in The Pas is a physical and financial burden for mothers. Many of the partners and families of women giving birth will be unable to attend or take time off to accompany them. The result is that pregnant women in Flin Flon and area are stressed and scared to give birth.

The government has already made it more difficult for people in northern Manitoba to access quality health care. The budget for the northern regional health authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively impacted doctor retention programs and Northern Patient Transportation Program. When it comes to the current health-care crisis in Flin Flon, the government has not put forward a single solution.

There is no proposed timeline to reinstate services. There's no plan to place—to actively recruit obstetricians to staff the hospital. There's no clear procedure for what will happen if a women goes into labour ahead of schedule. There has been no commitment from this government that the mothers and their escorts will be covered by the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

Having a baby is stressful enough without being deprived of supports. This government has a responsibility to support vital health services for all Manitobans, including those in the North. It is ridiculous to put the onus on women to accommodate a failure in the health-care system. The health care of northern Manitobans needs to be prioritized by the government, not ignored.

This government needs to work with the federal government and the Saskatchewan government to fix this problem now because this is not just a Manitoba problem; it's a problem. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* * *

Mr. Teitsma: Seeking your indulgence, Madam Speaker, and before my guests leave, I just wanted to

request leave to have all of their names included in the Hansard.

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

Paws N Taws: Yvette Baskerville, Jeanne Campbell, Claudette Carrière, Sam Dunn, Joan Fleury, Betty Kernoski, Lavern Manson, Grace Melnyk, Karen Mozden, Jean Pelletier, Lucie Pelletier, Lois Saunderson, Dale Will.

Take Your MLA to Work Campaign

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Madam Speaker, each October, as part of Disability Employment Awareness Month, organizations like the Manitoba Supported Employment Network initiate a Take Your MLA to Work Day campaign to celebrate the contributions Manitobans with disabilities are making to healthy, productive and inclusive workforces in Manitoba.

The objective of this campaign is to raise awareness about the benefits of hiring Manitobans with disabilities and to illustrate that employment and careers should be the expected and preferred outcomes for these Manitobans.

The ultimate goal of the Take Your MLA to Work Day campaign is to illustrate that when people with disabilities have integrated jobs in local businesses at competitive wages, everybody wins.

Madam Speaker, last week, I got to see first-hand an example of how everybody wins.

I want to thank hotel manager Donna Wilson from the Quality Inn & Suites in Thompson, Brenda Davidson from the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities and Natalie Lagace from the Thompson Supported Employment Program, for organizing bring your MLA to work day in Thompson and introducing me to Danielle Hrabliuk.

Danielle took time in her busy schedule to show me around her workplace at the Quality Inn & Suites, demonstrating the tasks she performs and explaining her various growing responsibilities as a full-time employee.

Danielle works in housekeeping and laundry. She likes her job, and her supervisors, co-workers and the hotel guests all appreciate her dedication and commitment to doing a good job.

As Danielle is working away at her job in Thompson right now, she continues to be a wonderful example of the contributions people can

bring to organizations through the Manitoba Supported Employment Network.

Madam Speaker, when people are given the opportunity to reach their potential, everybody benefits, and I hope many more employers discover the value people like Danielle can bring to workplaces throughout our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Preventative Health Forum in River Heights

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Sunday, November 18th, I hosted a River Heights Community Forum on Preventative Health; specifically, preventing addictions, mental illnesses, HIV/AIDS, diabetes and lung diseases.

We need this knowledge to help keep ourselves and others well and to have a sustainable health-care system.

Jane Meagher, founder of 100 Women Who Care Winnipeg, talked of addressing traumatic events in early childhood and being able to help children develop and build their confidence and self-esteem as important to preventing addictions and mental illness.

Robyn Priest, internationally known for her work on peer support, spoke of such support as critical to preventing and treating mental illnesses.

Dr. Paul Sandstrom, director of the National HIV and Retrovirology Labs of the Public Health Agency of Canada addressed HIV/AIDS. He spoke of treatment as prevention because current treatment lowers the viral load to undetectable so that individuals can no longer transmit HIV/AIDS to others.

Michael McMullen spoke of Diabetes Canada's 360-degree approach to reduce the incidence of type 2 diabetes. Complimenting his talk were remarks by endocrinologist Dr. Margaret England who talked of the importance of screening using hemoglobin A1C to detect diabetes.

Lastly, Neil Johnston, president and CEO of the Manitoba Lung Association, spoke of preventing COPD and other lung diseases to improve health and save costs.

Thank you to all the panellists and to all who came to discuss and share ideas on developing a preventive health-care plan for Manitoba.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Changes to Health Care Impact on ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, wait times have gone up at emergency rooms across Winnipeg, and I wonder why? Oh, yes, maybe it's because this Premier is closing emergency rooms in our city.

Now, wait times have gone up. Patients and families are now waiting 20 per cent longer in emergency rooms than they were before the Premier ordered them to close. That's not progress; that's not most improved. It means that health care is getting worse in our city and province.

Wait times are up at the Grace, at St. Boniface, at Concordia, at HSC, even at Victoria's urgent-care centre. Across the board, it's clear that the Premier's plan to close emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre is failing.

Will the Premier cancel his plan to close more emergency rooms and stop his cuts to health care?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'd just like to, if I could, just quickly, say a thank-you to John and Bonnie Buhler for their tremendous example—the example of caring and giving and the example of pulling themselves up by the bootstraps, too, which is something Manitobans have a good reputation for doing—that means leadership like John and Bonnie have provided. So I—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pallister: Leadership also means confronting the challenges that we must face, Madam Speaker, not backing away from them. Wait times in emergency rooms were worsening for years under the NDP. They had the information; they could have used it to address the problem. They refused to face the challenge of addressing the problem.

We are facing that challenge. Wait times are not up; they are down. Since the NDP left government, health care is getting better. They broke it; we'll fix it.

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

Mr. Kinew: Every time this Premier tries to fix something he just ends up cutting the program. Unfortunately, now we see the results. He's trying to

fix the emergency rooms by closing them right across the city of Winnipeg.

What's the impact? Well, since October of 2017, when this Premier started closing emergency rooms, wait times have gone up 20 per cent, Madam Speaker: a 20 per cent year-over-year increase.

What is the difference over that past year? The difference is this Premier started to close emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre.

The verdict is in. The data continues to point out that this Premier's plan to close emergency rooms is failing.

Will the Premier now back off his plan to close the other emergency rooms that he's targeted and, instead, come back with a real plan to improve health care in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the fact that the member relies on depression, fear and fear mongering to advance his political career, Madam Speaker, but he should rely more on the facts.

* (10:20)

The facts are these: Dr. Peachey was commissioned to do a report by the previous NDP government and, in it, he said this: Cities such as Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa have fewer emergency departments per capita, yet have shorter wait times than Winnipeg. Clearly, more is not better.

The NDP had that advice; they didn't act on it. Every other major city in the country has acted on that advice, and their wait times are going down. And Madam Speaker, ours are going down, as well, and we're excited about that. And so are Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Twenty per cent—20 per cent increase—that's how much wait times have gone up since this Premier started closing emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg. You don't need to believe me, Madam Speaker; you just have to listen to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and their data.

Now, the thing that the Premier always likes to gloss over when he talks about comparisons to other cities is the number of acute-care—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —beds. Nowhere will the Premier ever confirm that there are going to be the same number of acute-care beds in the city of Winnipeg after he continues his failing plan to close emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg.

The reason he doesn't want to talk about acute-care beds is because this plan has never been about improving health care; it's always been about controlling costs.

With ER wait times on the rise as a result of his closures, will the Premier commit to not closing the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia and stop his failing plan to cut health care in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: To have a successful plan, Madam Speaker, one must get to step 1. Step 1's admitting you have a problem. The member's admitted that on the personal level, but he refuses to admit it on the health-care level.

Madam Speaker, people in Manitoba have grown tired of waiting long times to get—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —emergency care. Under the NDP, they were waiting longer and longer and longer. The longest wait times—four of the top five wait times in the country in terms of length—were in the city of Winnipeg under the NDP. Now we're addressing the problem, Madam Speaker, that they ignored and that was worsening under their watch.

Madam Speaker, the other problem is, of course, more acute-care beds are needed when people are shipped off from one acute-care bed in one facility by ambulance again to another health-care facility. A thousand fewer people are being transferred between emergency facilities and acute-care beds under this government than was the case with the NDP. Talk about reducing human suffering; that's what we're doing.

They broke the system. They failed to address it. They failed to take the challenge of healing it. We're addressing that challenge and the system is beginning to heal. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Cellphone Plans Affordability

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, before I move to that new question, I'd like to thank the Premier for confirming that there won't be the same number or an increase of acute-care beds after his closures of emergency rooms in Winnipeg.

Truly is a condemnation of his failing plan.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Acute-care beds are needed to guarantee the same level of service in Winnipeg. Manitoba families know they won't be seen quicker in emergency rooms with less acute-care beds.

Another question I'd like the Premier to ask, since he's—or, answer, rather. Can he confirm that cellphone bills are too high in Manitoba? On this side of the House we say that they are, and we know that there's a ton that the Province can do to make life more affordable, to make cellphone bills more affordable for the people of Manitoba.

We ought to ensure that more money is staying here in the pockets of Manitobans and not going to the big telecom providers in Toronto. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Will the Premier stand with us and work towards making cellphone plans more affordable for the people of Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy an NDP member getting up and talking about how they care about affordability for Manitobans. I really enjoy hearing that because there's just absolutely never been any evidence they actually do. They just like to talk about it.

But talking about caring, Madam Speaker, doesn't mean you do. The member talks about health care—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —as if it was descending when it is actually improving. By having 1,000 fewer patients—acute-care patients—have to move from one facility to another. We alleviate the concerns of the patient themselves, of course, but also their family, the people around them who are suffering while they wait and then suffer more with the dangerous

knowledge that they will be transferred to another facility at a time of acute illness or injury.

But, Madam Speaker, that is a positive step that we have taken to make sure that Manitobans are safer and that Manitobans get the care they deserve sooner.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, the question was very simple: Are cellphone bills too high in Manitoba and should the government act to make them more affordable?

What was the Premier's response? Well, he skates, he dodges, he delays—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —he hesitates.

Now, contrast that with his actions when it came to the big telecom company taking over a Manitoba phone company. Was there any delay or dodge or hesitation? No. This Premier rushed out to stand shoulder to shoulder with the big telecom firm that is massively profitable and charging higher and higher cellphone bills to the people of Manitoba.

Now, we know that cellphone bills in Manitoba are higher than they are in the United States. We know that people here are paying twice—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —what they pay in the United Kingdom. *[interjection]* I can hear that our plan to make cellphone bills is very popular amongst the backbenchers on the other side, but we need to hear from the Premier himself.

Will he act to make cellphone bills more affordable for the people of Manitoba?

Madam Speaker: I know it's Friday, but—I would ask for everybody's co-operation. The level of heckling is quite high, and we do have some guests in the gallery.

We do have hundreds of guests watching online, and I would encourage everybody, please, maybe we could just step up the improvement in terms of the level of heckling and diminish it so that we can actually hear questions and answers.

Mr. Pallister: I do, again, Madam Speaker, thank the member for raising the issue of affordability for Manitoba citizens. The increases that the NDP

brought forward in their time in government, when they had the opportunity to address affordability for Manitobans, were increases not in affordability but increases in taxation.

And so, as they promised in the '11 election, when they went door to door, knocking, walking and talking, they promised people—looked them in the eye, and promised them—that they would not raise their taxes. And, Madam Speaker, they did. They did. And so I encourage the member to recognize that he is on very thin ice when he talks about caring about affordability when his party has never, ever failed to demonstrate they could care less about affordability for Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, this Premier, in the '90s, went door to door in the province of Manitoba, knocking on those doors, telling people, there's no way we're going to privatize MTS, and then he was part of the government that privatized that phone utility.

He spent two decades in the political wilderness before coming back to this Chamber, and what is one of the first things he does when he comes back? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: He oversees the sale of the surviving Manitoba phone company to a big telecom firm based out of Toronto, and now we know the results: that phone bills are getting higher and higher in Manitoba, and it's all because of the actions that this and past Conservative governments have taken in this province.

We, on this House, know that there's a chance, using The Consumer Protection Act, to take immediate action to make cellphone bills more affordable in this province.

Simple question once again for the Premier: Does he believe cellphone bills are too high and will he act with us to make cellphone bills more affordable for the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: I recognize the NDP shipped a lot of their staff back over to Alberta a few years ago, but I didn't realize that Greg Selinger was still writing the questions over there.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, the NDP's never demonstrated that they care about Manitobans'

affordability, except by claiming they do as a desperate election gimmick, and that's exactly what this is. That's exactly what this is. It's an attempt by the member to say he's going to lower cellphone bills while Manitobans are asking themselves, well, how could we possibly trust the NDP when they raised the taxes on our beer and our benefits at work and on our cars and our cottages and on our haircuts and our home insurance? And then it wasn't enough for them, Madam Speaker. They had to raise the PST too.

Let the member keep talking about how much he cares. Manitobans know how little the NDP care.

* (10:30)

Safe Access to Abortion Services Support for Legislation Request

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Bill 200 will protect women and girls accessing abortion services, while at the same time protecting front-line workers and doctors who provide abortion services. No woman or girl should be stopped or harassed accessing abortion.

We need to know if this Premier, Madam Speaker, will take action to make sure that women and girls have proper access to health-care facilities no matter what other people think.

Will the Premier put aside politics and support Bill 200?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite. Realizing that she introduced legislation yesterday, it would appear that that particular legislation may take, actually, rights away from Manitobans to express their opinion. We certainly, on this side of the House, will review the legislation that she's put forward.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Actually, if the minister had read the bill, he'd realize that there's no impact on protesters in respect of their freedom of speech. They are still welcome to protest. They're just not welcome to protest where women and girls are accessing Manitoba health care. It's as simple as that.

Madam Speaker, I want to share a quote with you. It's not only women and girls accessing abortion services—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: –but women and girls entering facilities in general. I quote: When my twins were born, they were premature and they had to stay in the hospital. I was emotional and their fragile—their health was fragile. I hated walking through the protesters. It was a horrible experience.

Will the minister put aside politics and support Bill 200?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, just by the premise of the question, it sounds like they will be restricting access to people being able to voice their opinion. Clearly, you know, where does the NDP want—party want to go, in terms of restricting people's ability to protest or to picket? Where else do they want to go?

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

Ms. Fontaine: I'll tell you where the NDP want to go. We want to stand on the side of Manitoba women and girls, who have the right to access abortion services no matter what people think.

Madam Speaker, respectfully, I say to members opposite, people are not allowed to protest and picket in this Chamber. Are we infringing on their freedom of speech and their rights? You can't have it both ways. We have a responsibility on this side of the House—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: –to ensure that Manitoba women and girls and all women and girls accessing health care here are free from harassment and 'melostation'.

And so the question is, Madam Speaker: Will the Premier stand with Manitoba women and girls and support Bill 200?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, the freedoms of citizens are precious things and should be safeguarded. They should especially be safeguarded when we recognize we may disagree with the people doing the protesting.

The member is playing politics with this issue because she disagrees with the protesters. Madam Speaker, she has to ask herself, if there was a protest to expand abortion rights, would this bill also be applied and would people be restricted in their ability to voice their opinions on that? Giving away freedoms is something we should be very, very careful not to do.

And so she is addressing a problem that, in her mind, exists for one group, while failing to recognize that there's a slippery slope here in taking away the freedoms of citizens to exercise their rights to express their views that we should be very, very careful about. And I'd ask her to give that consideration and reflect on it, perhaps over the weekend.

Public Sector Construction Legislation Changes to Project Labour Agreements

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The government has reintroduced bad policy into this Legislature, namely Bill 4, which will ban project labour agreements. This government has already attacked collective bargaining rights in Manitoba, and the Premier interfered with the University of Manitoba, losing an embarrassing and costly labour dispute.

The upset and turmoil that this Premier has created demonstrates that this government isn't about listening to front-line workers and their rights.

Will this Premier finally listen to workers and throw out Bill 4?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, Manitobans elected a government that would bring fairness to the marketplace, and Bill 4 will do exactly that.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Workers across Manitoba were opposed to bill 28 when it was introduced, and they made their voices heard, loud and clear, at this Legislative Building. Project labour agreements are about providing Manitoba workers with good training, good job opportunities—including women, First Nations, new Canadians. They're also about keeping workers safe. Private sector companies as well as both Conservative and Progressive Conservative governments across North America recognize the value for money you get with project labour agreements.

Why is this government so determined to ban what has proven to be good policy?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, the NDP so disrespected working men and women that they wouldn't even debate bill 28, and they wouldn't even let it get to committee. Now, all of a sudden, they find their voice.

If it's that important, why don't they debate it?

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

Mr. Lindsey: Now we get blamed for their incompetence when they forgot to call it.

Madam Speaker, project labour agreements have been used by Conservative and NDP governments since the 1960s to protect workers and ensure the quality of construction projects. Their old friend, Duff Roblin, used PLAs to build the floodway, and we used PLAs to expand the floodway—on time and \$38 million under budget.

Will the minister listen to working Manitobans? Throw out Bill 4 today.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, the member may not have been here that day. The bill was called, and it was not debated by members opposite. They had a choice and they chose not to debate the bill.

They want to stand up and talk about bill 28, now Bill 4. We will give them opportunity. We will call the bill. Let them get up and debate it, and let's send it to committee, and let's hear the public.

Internal Investigation Unit Annual Reporting Oversight

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): There's no good explanation for how this government and the Justice Minister could lose track of two years of annual reports from the internal investigation unit.

The 2017-2018 report shows a sharp increase in officer-involved shootings, from two to seven; 74 notifications; 40 investigations—all while the IIU was seriously short-staffed. The charges laid included assault, impaired driving, dangerous driving causing death, three shootings involving deaths and a death in custody. These are, quite literally, cases of life and death and nothing is more important.

The IIU oversees the police. The Department of Justice oversees the IIU, but the minister wasn't reading the reports. Instead, he blamed his staff for an administrative error. This is not responsible or accountable.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) take responsibility for this colossal failure of oversight, or will he just blame somebody else?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Again, I want to compliment the police forces across our province for the great work they do.

In fact, Madam Speaker, just last night I was at the Attorney General's award, where we actually recognized 12 individual police officers for going above and beyond the call of duty. So I want to congratulate those 12 individuals, and I want to thank each of the members of the police forces across the province for the great work they do.

Certainly, we recognize there's potential gaps in the NDP legislation before us. We've made a commitment to review that legislation, and that is exactly what we're going to do.

*(10:40)

Lead Contamination in Soil Annual Reporting Oversight

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, the IIU was submitting and reporting to the NDP. It was under this government that it wasn't happening.

But this isn't the only important report this government has waylaid. There are multiple reports of lead contamination in the soil in St. Boniface, which were first denied and then turned out to be true. The Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) blamed her staff.

It turned out there was a decade-old report on lead contamination in Weston and Point Douglas. It sat under a shelf under the NDP—sat on a shelf under the NDP and it sat on a shelf under this government.

Accountability flows upward, Madam Speaker. If ministers won't take responsibility for their failures, will the Premier take responsibility when his ministers don't do their jobs?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, we have complete confidence in the police forces across the province. We have complete confidence in the Independent Investigation Unit there.

Certainly, in this regard, when the two reports came to my desk a short time ago, I asked the same questions: why was this last year's report just coming to my desk at this particular time? We were able to drill down and figure out the administrative issue around that and certainly advised my staff that this isn't acceptable. And we will certainly do everything we can to make sure reports are tabled in a timely fashion.

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

Infectious Disease Notification Annual Reporting Oversight

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): It appears there's a third series of reports that are no longer being produced or made public. Judging by Manitoba Health's website, it appears the Manitoba Annual Summary of Communicable Diseases hasn't been updated since this government was elected. There are no annual reports since 2015.

The Province's epiSummary report, which is a different report which covers outbreaks of STDs, including HIV, as well as measles, mumps and rubella, stopped being published on Manitoba Health's website in June 2017. They haven't been updated for more than a year. If there are any reports, I hope the Minister of Health will release them.

So, on police oversight, this government is flying blind. On lead contamination, they're asleep at the wheel, and on infectious diseases, we just don't know.

Has the Premier (Mr. Pallister) considered spending a little less time on vacation and a bit more making sure his ministers are doing their jobs when it comes to the health and safety of Manitobans?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite talks about health and safety, and we take the health and safety of Manitobans very seriously. I mean, we're facing some challenges with illicit drugs. We're dealing with that on a number of different fronts.

We've invested more money than ever before in front-line police services. We've invested in police services dealing with illicit drugs, including meth. We've invested over \$200,000 with the Bear Clan Patrol and some of the great work they're doing around the city—in fact, around the province.

We've invested several hundred thousand dollars from the proceeds of crime, dealing explicitly with illicit drugs. The list goes on. We've—for Municipal Relations we've invested thousands of dollars as well.

So health and safety is paramount for Manitobans.

B&L Foster Care Agency Investigation into Abuse Allegations

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Allegations of sexual abuse are always a concern,

especially when it concerns children in care. According to the director of a for-profit foster care company, and I quote, they dragged their heels big time in failing to stop children from being sexually abused.

That's an admission of negligence, of failure to do their No. 1 job, which is to protect children.

We are still learning facts about this case, but until we know all of the facts: Will the minister stop all contracts with this foster agency?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Certainly the safety of children is No. 1 priority for us in the Department of Families and for us as a government. And it would be inappropriate, Madam Speaker, as you know, to comment on the specifics of a case.

The member opposite will know, having worked in the child-welfare system herself, that the system was changed back in 2003, giving the four authorities the authority over the agencies who oversee these—the welfare of children in the province. Those were changes that were made by the previous NDP government. We have committed to making changes to ensure the safety of children is protected in Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Smith: These allegations are from 2016. This government since then has paid this agency millions of dollars, upward of over \$10 million to be exact, and yet, this minister has taken no action. She has ordered no investigation. Rather than getting to the bottom of how these children were allowed to stay in this house with their abuser and who knows if the abuse continued—and this company even said it themselves. They dragged their heels and allowed this to happen.

She is trying to avoid responsibility. It's her job to make sure that children are protected and that the system is working.

Why won't this minister order an investigation today into what happened to the children in this very home?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, the safety of children is of the utmost importance for our government and for our Department of Families.

The Metis authority is the oversight body responsible for this. They are investigating and we

will continue to support them in their role. It is the legislation that was put forward by the previous NDP government giving them that authority. We respect that authority. We respect the process.

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

Mrs. Smith: This child's family needs answers and it's this government's job to make sure that this family has answers.

This agency dragged their heels, which allowed children to be abused. That should be this government's No. 1 priority: to find out exactly why that happened and not continue to pay this organization that knew this was happening.

So will this minister commit to an investigation, commit to releasing the findings and commit to making sure that this never happens to children in care again?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think it's important that we respect the Metis authority and their obligation to ensure that—the safety of children under their purview, Madam Speaker. We will continue to support them on the—in their role in this matter.

I'm not—I'm hoping that the member opposite is not suggesting that we circumvent the legislation that was put together by the previous NDP government and deny the Metis authority their statutory right and obligation to ensure that we get to the bottom of this very important issue.

I know the children's advocate is also looking into it, Madam Speaker. We will continue to work with the Metis authority to ensure the safety of all children in Manitoba.

Workplace Harassment Legislation Code of Conduct for Municipal Governments

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Under the NDP many municipal codes of conduct ranged from inconsistent to unenforceable, and municipalities demanding change saw none.

It is clear that our government is committed to listening to municipalities and also ensuring workplaces are respectful and harassment free.

Can the Minister of Municipal Relations tell us how Bill 2, The Municipal Amendment Act, will help deal with the issues of harassment and bullying in the workplace?

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

Our government carried out extensive consultations, Madam Speaker, with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, elected officials, municipal administrators, to develop proposed amendments to the code of conduct requirements.

Madam Speaker, the legislation sets a foundation for respectful behaviour by assisting local governments to establish a clear, meaningful code of conduct with minimum standards and values that are consistent across all Manitoba municipalities.

The bill dictates minimum requirements with respect to mandatory training, standards and values that must address—must be addressed in the code, as well as compliant procedures and an appeals process, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we'll be continuing our consultations in the coming months to develop key regulations. I look forward to discussing this more at the AMM convention this weekend.

Thank you.

CancerCare Manitoba Project Cancellation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, CancerCare Manitoba is an extraordinary institution with outcomes that are as good or better than anywhere else in Canada or, indeed, in the world.

* (10:50)

When I toured the province earlier this year, while Manitobans had many concerns, their feedback on CancerCare was very positive. It offers the best specialist service in Manitoba.

CancerCare had been promised a new facility that would have taken cancer treatment in our province to the next level, and this government cancelled it.

As part of their review of CancerCare, I ask: Will this government measure how many years Manitoba has been set back by the cancellation of this project?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The member is correct that there is a review ongoing on CancerCare Manitoba. I recall it was only about two or three

weeks ago that members of the opposition tried to suggest that it's a terrible idea to actually look at the operational standards and operational procedures of CancerCare.

And then the CEO for CancerCare stood up and said this is exactly the work that we must all be engaged in doing. If there is an advancement in Quebec and BC and Saskatchewan in cancer care, we want to know about it.

We take the side of evidence to get better results for Manitobans. What do they do? They continue to throw up their hands and try to agitate and create fear.

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

Industrial Pollution and Cancer Contaminated Site Cleanup

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, lead and heavy metals are associated, when ingested, with a higher instance of gastric cancers. Lead is listed as a probable carcinogen. We are all deeply concerned about contaminants from industrial pollutions, whether it's at northern mine sites or in St. Boniface or in Weston.

Madam Speaker, one of the best ways to help prevent cancer would be through clean up of contaminated sites.

And yet, there is no reference whatsoever to cleaning up contaminated sites in the Throne Speech or, indeed, in the review of CancerCare Manitoba.

Is this because the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is only interested in cutting costs and has no real interest in the health or health care of Manitobans?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): In typical Liberal fashion, this member continues to put incorrect information on the record. In fact, our government is investing a historic \$20 million in cleaning up contaminated sites left behind by the NDP.

Our government is taking real, meaningful action on cleaning up contaminated sites, abandoned mine sites throughout the province and lead contamination in St. Boniface, in Point Douglas and in Logan and throughout the province of Manitoba.

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

CancerCare Manitoba Government Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, if there's one part of Manitoba's health-care system that works well, it is CancerCare. It is effective at saving lives. We know where the systems are failing, where there are problems: mental health, in addictions, in diabetes prevention. We know there's not enough care for women when it comes to heart and stroke. We know there are too many people in Manitoba who struggle to pay for their medication.

CancerCare works. Why doesn't this government leave CancerCare, which is working well, alone and focus on what's broken instead of what they're doing: focusing on what's working well and breaking it?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, that's quite the assertion from the member. The assertion is that the system is just fine exactly the way it is, don't change a thing.

Except that, in the experience of Manitobans, what they understand is that while we've had one of the most expensive systems in Canada for years, we've failed to get the results. And the evidence says it's because we failed to locate and organize our resources to help doctors and nurses deliver better services.

And that is why yesterday we gave a \$5.3-million investment for more hips and knees and cataracts, harnessing the efficiency in the system, putting—into better system delivery for Manitobans. And why? Because Manitobans deserve better health care sooner.

Crown Land Leasing Auction System Concerns

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The government's move to an auction system for Crown land will mean real challenges for our young producers, especially as the minister has opened the door to out-of-province multinational corporations.

Why is the minister making life harder for our young producers?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): I'd love to get the member from Tyndall Park out into rural Manitoba and talk to farmers. It could be quite rewarding. I would encourage the member to do so.

Actually, in consultation with the Manitoba Beef Producers, in consultation with the Keystone Ag producers, this is where this report came from, and we're going to deliver on that promise for all ag farmers

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

Mr. Marcelino: Farmers understand that the minister's new system will mean real challenges.

Keystone Agricultural Producers president Bill Campbell is sounding the alarm, and he's got a question for the minister: Who is going to take over our farms when farmers retire?

Mr. Eichler: Actually, I would like to inform the House—and, actually, we—having a consultation right now as we speak at—across the way, and I'd like to encourage all members that remember to the fact that we're here to help young farmers and have agriculture grow and be the most improved province in all of Canada.

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

Mr. Marcelino: I got lucky. I have the third question.

The list of Crown lands for rent is usually released in the fall. Last year's closing date was November 17th, but now the list of properties is not online. In fact, the Agriculture Minister's website is down, and what? There are no lands available.

Why has this process been delayed and why has the minister abandoned the point system?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member's not the only one that got lucky, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to close this very historic week here by referencing the progress we've made.

Not just the broad-based progress or the number of files, but specifically for rural Manitobans and for farm families, we've, of course, led the way in opposing federal proposals that would have made it more difficult for farm families to transfer their farms to their own children. We made it easier for them—or forced them to sell to others—and we did achieve some positive changes there which the agriculture community is very pleased about.

We're advancing rural paramedic investments so that people can get care sooner and better care. We've lowered ambulance fees by 35 per cent and

we're on the way to reducing them by half. We have advanced conservation trusts. We're advancing water management projects that rural Manitobans strongly support and have seen very little progress on over a number of years.

So in terms of advancing the lives of rural Manitobans, Madam Speaker, I think this team deserves a tremendous amount of credit for the work they've done.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Concordia Hospital Emergency Room

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

* (11:00)

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request that the provincial government consider establishing a cross-departmental team to provide leadership on a culturally appropriate,

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

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

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

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

This petition is signed by Trent Bartley, Amber Torrance, Tyler Bachewich and many other Manitobans.

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The background to this petition is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —as follows:

(1) Access to quality health care is a fundamental right of all Manitobans, no matter where they live.

(2) The Premier has slashed budgets and cancelled projects for northern communities, making it harder for families to get the primary health care they need.

(3) The budget of the northern regional health authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the northern patient transportation program.

(4) With limited services in the North, the Premier is forcing families and seniors to travel further for the health care they need.

(5) On November 6, 2018, the northern regional health authority announced that obstetric delivery services at the Flin Flon General Hospital would be suspended, with no discussion regarding when they will be reinstated.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Dreen Hartery [*phonetic*], Noreen Wilson, Roger Morin and many, many other Manitobans.

Addictions Services— Brandon and Western Manitoba

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) It is well known that the number of people addicted to alcohol, drugs and other substances is on

the rise in Manitoba, with a notable increase in the use of methamphetamine and opiates, two highly addictive and very destructive drugs.

* (11:10)

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

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

This petition is signed by Suzanne Cullen, Rick Cullen, Jim Ramsey and many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Gender Neutrality

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

The background for 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: interactions with health-care professionals; interactions with persons of authority; accessing government services; 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 other.

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:

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.

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 Richard MacKinnon, Kera MacKinnon, Susannah Mueller and many others.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Under rule 47(2), I'd like to interrupt the address in reply to call government business.

Can you please call second reading debate on Bill 3, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee)?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the debate on the address in reply is being interrupted today under rule 47(2), and the House will be dealing with second reading of Bill 3.

SECOND READINGS

**Bill 3—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act
(Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee)**

Madam Speaker: I will now recognize the honourable Minister of Justice on second reading of Bill 3, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee).

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 3, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education, that Bill 3, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Mr. Cullen: I am pleased to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record in respect to Bill 3, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (the Cannabis Social Responsibility Fee).

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

From the very beginning, we have responded to the federal government's decision to legalize recreational cannabis with a thoughtful, balanced approach designed to protect the health and safety of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to say that our approach is working. It has been just over a month since legalization began and we are already achieving our goals. Our hybrid public-private retail structure is providing cannabis at a reasonable price, while at the same time allowing for robust regulatory oversight by the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority.

With Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries overseeing the purchase and distribution of cannabis from federally licensed producers, we can ensure that cannabis sold in Manitoba is safe for consumption and meets federally regulatory requirements.

Our government's strong impaired driving laws, including The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act and The Impaired Driving Offences Act, are protecting Manitobans on our roads. Legislative changes to prohibit the smoking and vaping of cannabis in public places are also helping ensure that cannabis consumption never becomes normalized in our province.

Finally, Madam Speaker, our public education campaigns have helped Manitobans to understand the laws when it comes to cannabis, and make responsible choices about their consumption. All these actions have been based on our government's dedication to the principles of social responsibility with a focus on protecting the health and safety of Manitobans.

* (11:20)

Bill 3 continues that commitment with the establishment of a social responsibility fee to offset the social costs that come with selling and using recreational cannabis. Applying the social responsibility fee to the retailers who sell recreational cannabis ensures that those who participate in the economic opportunities stemming from cannabis legalization will also help pay for its costs. The cannabis social responsibility fee is already recognized in the agreements between our government and individual cannabis retailers. Bill 3 will provide assurance to all future retailers that they will also be obligated to help pay for the social costs of recreational cannabis use. The social responsibility fee will be applied beginning in

January of 2019, and the first payment by retailers will be due in June of 2020. This approach provides flexibility to retailers in setting prices as the recreational cannabis market develops.

Madam Speaker, our government understands that keeping prices for recreational cannabis lower, coupled with strong police enforcement, will help rout out the black market for cannabis. Bill 3 sets a single common rate for the cannabis social responsibility fee at 6 per cent of a retailer's annual gross revenue from the sale of cannabis. We understand that there are concerns among retailers and consumers about whether the fee is flexible enough to respond to market pressures and changes. That is why the legislation includes a mechanism to adjust the amount of the fee by regulation. Our government will constantly monitor the recreational cannabis market, and we will be able to adjust the level of the social responsibility fee as the market evolves and as social costs are identified.

Mr. Acting–Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government takes the social costs of cannabis legalization very seriously, and we believe that retailers, not taxpayers, should be obligated to help pay for those costs. A retailer that fails to pay the social responsibility fee risks losing the right to sell recreational cannabis. Their agreement with Manitoba could be terminated and their licence could be cancelled.

In Budget 2018, Manitoba was cautious about projecting revenues flowing from the legalization of recreational cannabis. That is because we know that the sale and use of cannabis will have social costs. Those costs will take many forms: public education, safety measures, health-care needs, addictions programming and treatment. Some of these costs are already being incurred and others will only be recognized over time, but we know they are real and we know that we need to address them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting this legislation so that we can continue to make our communities healthier and safer for all Manitobans.

Thank you.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by the member of–for the following sequence: first question by an official opposition critic or designate, second question by a second

opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by each independent member. Remaining questions may be asked by any opposition members, and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This government, you know, really had a problem figuring out what kind of revenue would be generated from the sale of cannabis.

Has the minister figured that out yet, and can he provide us with those numbers?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do appreciate the question from the member opposite.

I think the member will know that cannabis retail is an ongoing and a growing market here in Manitoba, and, certainly, across the country. We're not sure what the–what that market is going to look like over the course of time. It is certainly a new area, and we're learning as we go.

So we know there will be social costs. We don't know what those social costs will be. We believe, through this legislation, we've established a mechanism to hopefully offset some of those social costs and what they will be. Clearly, we will have to follow–

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

Mr. Lindsey: As the minister admitted in the press, the world didn't end the day after cannabis became legal, as most of us knew that it wouldn't. But, still, the minister can't seem to figure out, based on even the early sales that have taken place, what kind of revenue the government expects to have from cannabis, but they were, apparently, able to figure out what the expected costs would be.

Somehow that doesn't seem right. This government continued to deny that they had the actual revenue numbers, but–

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

Mr. Cullen: You know, clearly, this is an evolving market. I mean, we're just one month into the legalization of recreational cannabis. Clearly, no one really knows what the market will bear. And we have 12 to 14 retail stores established at this point in time. Obviously, there's an online component there as well. We're optimistic other stores will be opened up in Manitoba. Of course, that also will be based on the

federal government being able to supply product into the market.

Certainly, other provinces have recognized there's a supply issue. We obviously, as a Province here, are monitoring that issue, and really the market will—

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

Mr. Lindsey: It seems both of us are a little long-winded this morning.

We know, from a FIPPA that we've presented, that this government actually did know what the revenue projections were, so will the minister finally stand up and tell us what the revenue projections are from the sale of cannabis?

Mr. Cullen: If the member opposite has those figures and he wants to provide those figures for us, I would certainly welcome that. I'm not sure where he would have got those figures from, if he pulled them out of the air or there's some NDP crystal ball over there that's giving them some of these numbers.

This is a brand new market to Manitoba and brand new market to Canada. I don't think anyone can really anticipate what the sales volume will be across the province over a given period of time.

As I said, it's an evolving market. It will be subject to stores opening. It will be subject to people wanting to purchase, legally, the cannabis. We think we've provided—

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

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): My question for the minister is, he talked about how the revenue from the 6 per cent will be going into departments like health care and Education and Justice, but in this bill, it talks about how all the revenue will be going into the general revenue budget.

How can he assure Manitobans that it's going to be used for these departments?

Mr. Cullen: I do appreciate that question from the member.

Clearly, we don't know what the social costs will be in the respective departments. We do know we're providing education to Manitobans. We've invested in education already in Manitoba. That certainly will be a cost. We expect there will be health-care related costs going forward, especially more pronounced,

probably, when edible cannabis comes to market. So we've asked each department to peg their respective expenses related to cannabis use as we go forward.

The revenue will flow to general revenue. Obviously, we will have a reckoning in terms of what the revenue will be from cannabis, and we will be also, just as importantly, monitoring each department's expense relative to cannabis.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): The seeds of marijuana, cannabis, spread on places like floodways, and I've seen this happen in India. Then that will be obtained free of cost by users.

How is the minister planning to collect free-fee on free marijuana?

* (11:30)

Mr. Cullen: The question is relative to monitoring our expenses and monitoring what the respective income will be; we certainly made that clear. We will be monitoring vis-à-vis each department in terms of their expenses related to cannabis. We—the education component is there. We will be continuing with an education component across government. We realize there will be health implications to it; we realize there will be justice implications; so we've tried to make sure that each department will monitor those extra costs related to cannabis consumption here in Manitoba.

Mr. Lindsey: It appears that when the government abandoned their fuel tax that was disguised as a carbon tax, that all of a sudden they came up with a tax shortage. So what is the minister doing to ensure that this tax or-fee that we're calling it today—is not just going into general revenue to allow this Premier (Mr. Pallister) to reduce the sales tax like he promised?

Mr. Cullen: Two points to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Clearly, the legislation now outlines a 6 per cent fee. If the member does read the legislation, he knows there's an ability to adjust that percentage in the legislation—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —by regulation. So that's why we are monitoring the extra costs of recreational cannabis use in Manitoba. So we will monitor what the extra costs the government are in the future. Then we can make necessary changes to that 6 per cent social responsibility fee.

Mr. Lindsey: I almost feel bad for the minister that they put him in such a awkward spot that he almost called his own tax a tax.

So the government couldn't figure out how much revenue was going to be generated from the sale of cannabis. Have they figured out how much revenue is going to be generated from their tax fee that they're putting on the sale of cannabis?

Mr. Cullen: Certainly, our social responsibility fee will be 6 per cent based on gross sales at the retail level and this will be only on cannabis sales; it would not be on sale of other merchandise. So it's specifically to the sale of cannabis itself. Obviously, the fee—the revenue generated from that will be dependent on sales as we move forward. I think it's important to note that this fee will not be implemented until January 1st of 2019 and that retailers do not have to submit that fee until June of 2020.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): So the minister has admitted that his departments—that he—his expectation is that the departments in government will be monitoring their costs related to the implementation of legalization of cannabis; however, he hasn't talked about reporting that to the public. So I just wanted to know the transparency that this government is putting in place with this legislation and how that will be reported back to the public.

Mr. Cullen: Certainly, this government is open and transparent, and we look forward to learning the information as we go forward. This will be, obviously, very interesting as we move forward in terms of gathering that information with respect to the various departments and, certainly, trying to make sure that we know exactly what the money is associated with that recreational cannabis and those additional costs. So we certainly will be monitoring that on a department basis and assume, you know, the opposition will have ample opportunity to query the government in terms of what those actual numbers are.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, if only we had all the time in the world, we could certainly ask those questions. Absolutely, it would be great to have leave, because there are certainly no shortage of questions and no shortage of trying to unpack where exactly this government is putting on a tax or not a tax or maybe it's a tax, but it's not really a tax on Manitobans. The point is that Manitobans are paying more, and they're getting less. It's money that's going into general revenue; the minister's already confirmed that.

So, once again, I want to know what assurances the public has that this money will not go simply into the ether of government and into general revenue but will be spent in ways that will actually address the problems that we have in this province when it comes to drugs and drug abuse.

Mr. Cullen: You know, clearly, that's going to be an issue for us. We don't know, as a government—I don't think there's any government in Canada that can really understand and appreciate what kind of social issues we're going to have with recreational cannabis use. And what we're hearing from other jurisdictions, especially once edible marijuana cannabis is legalized, there's a lot of extra pressure on the system, whether it be in health care or whether it be through addictions or mental health issues—there will be increase in those costs.

And that's something that we're—all governments are wrestling with, and we're not sure what those costs will be. It's going to be an evolution as we move forward. But, certainly, we, as a government, are responsible and we will be monitoring those extra costs.

Mr. Lindsey: So Liquor & Lotteries, gaming and cannabis—whatever it's official name is now—already has a fund for social responsibility costs that they—supposed to set aside X number of per cent, whatever the formula is, which they consistently don't spend on social responsibility issues. Now this government has come up with a new tax fee that will go into general revenue.

So the question remains, if you didn't spend this fund over here from Liquor & Lotteries on social responsibilities—or underspent every year—how does the public know that this tax fee that you're going to collect now on cannabis will actually get spent on what it's supposed to get spent on?

Mr. Cullen: I want to clarify for the member opposite that there is a legislative framework around the 2 per cent of revenue generated by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries that is reinvested back into social responsibility programs. The legislation does allow that particular fund, from year to year, to be carried over. But that particular 2 per cent of revenue is set aside specifically for responsibility use, and it can't be used for anything else.

So the member will know that that money that's been allocated to that fund—any monies that accumulate in that fund will be used for social responsibility. And that's exactly the intent—

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

Mr. Lindsey: I'm well aware that the fund is there and how it gets funded, but, as the minister is also well aware, it gets underspent—particularly, the last couple of years, it's been underspent dramatically. So it hasn't actually been spent on trying to address any social responsibility issues. Now the minister introduces a tax fee on the sale of cannabis that—there's nothing anywhere that says, other than some vague thing, that it's actually going to get spent on social responsibility issues.

So what guarantee does the public have, does this Chamber have, that that's actually where this new tax fee is going to be spent?

Mr. Cullen: I am sure the opposition members will be watching very closely in terms of where this money goes, what our extra expenses are relative to recreational cannabis.

I will note for the members opposite, as well, we have a desire to keep the retail level cost of cannabis low, because we are still competing with the illicit black market. So we can't overprice cannabis at the retail market. We still are competing with the black market. That's why we've set the volume at 6 per cent with no provincial sales tax on that as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

The debate is open for any speakers. *[interjection]* Oh, the honourable Government House Leader.

* (11:40)

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Tuesday, December 4th, 2018, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018, (volumes 1, 2 and 3); the Auditor General's Report, Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements Audit, dated August 2018; the Auditor General's Report, Understanding our Audit Opinion on Manitoba's March 31st, 2018 Summary Financial Statements, dated September 2018; the Auditor General's Report, Annual Report to the Legislature, dated March 2014, chapter 6, Managing the Province's Adult Offenders; Auditor General's

Report, follow-up of the recommendations, dated May 2016, Managing the Province's Adult Offenders; and the Auditor General's report, Follow-up of Recommendations, dated March 2017, Managing the Province's Adult Offenders.

And the witnesses to be called are the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was—I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will be—meet in—on Tuesday, December 4th, 2018, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense? Okay. No, I have to read this.

The Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018, volumes 1, 2 and 3; Auditor General report, Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements Audit, dated August 2018; Auditor General's Report, Understanding our Audit Opinion on Manitoba's March 31st, 2018 Summary Financial Statements, dated September 2018; Auditor General's Report, annual report to the legislative, dated March 2014, chapter 6, Managing the Province's Adult Offenders; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Recommendations, dated May 2016, managing the provincial adult offenders; and Auditor General's Report, follow-up recommendations, dated March 2017, Managing the Province's Adult Offenders.

Witnesses to be called: Minister of Finance and Deputy Minister of Finance.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is open for—any speakers?

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's certainly my honour to rise today to speak to this legislation, but before I address the legislation, I just want to call, I guess, a little bit into question why the government is bringing this particular legislation forward right now.

And in fact, we, of course, are on this side of the House eager to talk about our very thoughtful and reasoned amendment that's been brought forward by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) on this government's Throne Speech.

And this is usually the time in the legislative calendar that we set aside to debate that

Throne Speech. And I can tell you that every single member on this side of the House has at least half an hour of quality comments and suggestions about this government's Throne Speech that they are dying to get on the record.

And yet this government has said, no, wait, stop the presses, let's stop the forward motion of this House to come back to this particular legislation, which was introduced just yesterday, so—or maybe the day before. I'm getting my days mixed up, as the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has pointed out in the past.

It's all blurring together, but what the point is here, Mr. Speaker, is that this government came out with a Throne Speech that said a whole lot of nothing. What—didn't address some of the biggest issues that Manitobans are talking to us about on the doorstep, and it appears that the government is so out of steam that they don't even want to debate their own Throne Speech. They don't even want to put words on the record with regard to their own Throne Speech.

They are clearly out of steam, Mr. Speaker. They are clearly a government that doesn't know where to go next, can only focus on cuts, and is clearly out of things to say—positive things to say about this province.

So what are we debating here today? Well, it's—I thought, maybe, by listening to the minister's opening comments, by hearing some very, very good questions posed by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), some very thoughtful and important questions that were put on the record by the member for Flin Flon, I thought we might get some of this sorted out.

But, in fact, what we got was more of the same from this minister that we have seen now from every minister in government, but, in particular, the Minister for Finance, when it comes to liquor, lotteries, gaming and cannabis control and when it comes to the revenues expected or the costs related to the implementation of legalization of cannabis.

Now, I put this on the record because, as the critic for Finance, when I had the opportunity during our BITSA debate—and I know the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) took a crack at it; I think other members on this side of the House took a crack at it. We were trying to unpack and decipher exactly what this minister was planning when it

comes to the revenues and the expenditures relating to cannabis legalization.

And so we asked hours upon hours of questions, and I went back and I went through Hansard with a fine tooth comb, Mr. Speaker, and tried to decipher exactly what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) was talking about when he was talking about their taxes that they were going to implement on cannabis sales in this province.

Now, I'm not afraid to use that word. I know the minister tried very hard to dance and sidestep and move every direction—skate, I think, as the member for Fort Garry—or Fort Rouge talked earlier around that word.

But I think the member for Flin Flon has got it right. You can call it a tax; you can call it a fee; you can call it, as the member for Flin Flon says, a tax—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe:—fee. I think, maybe, a fee tax. You know, I prefer—

An Honourable Member: We can debate that.

Mr. Wiebe: We can debate that. That can be the source of the debate and the subject of the debate here this morning. I am perfectly fine with that.

But what I do know, Mr. Speaker, is that if it walks like a duck, if it quacks like a duck, it's a duck and this is a tax on Manitobans.

So we want to know if, you know, this government wants to bring a referendum on every new tax in Manitoba. Well, I don't think they're eager to do that with regards to this particular tax that they're bringing in, but if they are going to bring in a new tax, what Manitobans want to know is where is the money going? Where is that money going to be spent?

And, again, this is where the member for Flin Flon did a fantastic job of bringing the debate here today and focusing on the real issue, and that is: Is this social responsibility fee that's going to be brought forward going to be applied to the real issues that we have in this province around addictions, around drug abuse? Is that where this money is going to go to? Is that where this minister's going to direct these funds?

Well, you know, the minister, once again, stood up and he said well, I have no idea what this money—how much money there could be. It could be any

amount of money that departments will need. There's no way of knowing what that will be. Of course, we'll ask them at some point; but no tracking, no accountability, no ability to actually show that that money is being spent. And why that's important, Mr. Speaker, is because, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) said, the 2 per cent that's already being collected through Liquor & Lotteries and gaming and cannabis authority is not being spent fully and not being applied in the ways that Manitobans are asking us.

And there's no shortage of ideas of how to spend that money in a way that addresses the real problems of addictions in this province and, quite frankly, it was, you know, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) who has been the No. 1 proponent of talking about this issue in a way that's not political; it's not one party's ideas or left-right ideas about addictions, but what works. What are the experts saying? What are the people on the front lines who are doing this work saying will make an—or have an impact on addictions in this province?

And so one of the ideas that's been brought forward over and over and over again by the member for Fort Rouge, by the leader of the opposition, has been a safe injection site, a safe consumption site for Winnipeg, and—but that's just one of the ideas. Of course, we're talking about treatment beds; we're talking about a multitude of ways that we can actually invest our money in this province in a socially responsible way.

And, you know, when we talk about cannabis—and, again, you know, it seems like I'm cribbing all of my notes here from the member for Flin Flon, but he just said it so well. You know, the sky didn't fall the day that cannabis was legalized in this province despite what, I'm sure, some members opposite were sure was going to happen.

* (11:50)

You know, there are certainly ways that we can make sure that Manitobans are consuming cannabis in safe and responsible ways. But the reality is that for most Manitobans the sun rose the next day, you know, the—as the member for—as a member in the House said, it was a little hazier, maybe, that day. But it certainly—the sky didn't fall and what did happen was Manitobans were able to access, in a legal way, a substance that, in most cases, they were already consuming through gray or black markets.

So, if we can understand that they've taken a drug that probably consumed a lot of law enforcement's time; certainly, consumed a lot of court time; certainly, was not a productive use of our time when it comes to social responsibility around drug use—that has been taken out of the picture. So now we have an opportunity to take those funds and use them in a way that is most beneficial for Manitobans.

And what Manitobans are telling us, over and over and over again, is that a safe consumption site in this province, that new treatment beds in this province and in this city and in Brandon and in other places in Manitoba will have an impact, will save lives. So, if we can take this revenue, we can put it towards those kind of things. That is what is the absolute definition of a win-win.

And this minister has said, well, I—you know, I have no idea what those funds could be. There's no way of knowing what the revenues are. But, of course, we know that the minister has gotten an estimate, has an idea of what those revenues were going to be and can give the House some indication of what they're expecting to bring in, as part of this 6 per cent tax that they're collecting from Manitobans.

And, if he's curious—maybe he didn't get the briefing, I could understand that. Maybe the minister came in—he's a new minister, he missed the briefing, maybe. He could just look over and talk to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding). He could say, I know you don't want to tell the opposition, but at least tell us. I know you don't—I know you're trying to hide it from Manitobans, but at least tell us what are the actual figures that we're looking at for this revenue.

And, if he's curious and he's wondering, maybe the Minister of Finance doesn't have that—those numbers. We know he does, because we have a FIPPA showing that information, of course, was collected by his government. But, more importantly, last year, in Estimates when we had the previous minister for Finance under the hot lights, we asked him—I pressed him, repeatedly, to come out and just admit that this government is writing in \$100 million in costs. That's what the Minister for Finance tried to tell Manitobans it will cost to implement legalized cannabis.

Well, I'm looking for evidence of that daily. We certainly are going to be pressing this minister and the minister for Finance to show where that

\$100 million has been spent. I have a hunch that it might not quite be \$100 million that's spent on the legalization of cannabis.

But what they can certainly admit, at the very least, that there is a need to treat addictions in this province and that this money could be used in a worthwhile way, in a way that Manitobans could understand, to actually address a real issue when it comes to addictions and drug use in our province.

So I'm just asking for the minister to come clean. I'm just asking for him to be honest with Manitobans and to be accountable for that money. It's not a big ask. It's not something that is—would be out of the norm. But, with this government, it seems like at every turn they're just trying to play with the numbers, they're trying to cook the books, they're trying to play games with Finance in this province in a way that has not been seen—well, for at least 20 years I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's—should be concerning to Manitobans.

Whether it's the Auditor General coming out with a qualified opinion of the books here in this province, saying for the first time that, wait a minute, something isn't right here. Why do we have three, maybe four sets of books that we're now trying to track? That should be a concern for Manitobans, and it certainly is. That's certainly what we're hearing on the doorstep.

So we—you know, we are trying to unpack this. We're trying to get some answers. It's been absolutely impossible. And, you know, I thought maybe we were going to be debating—I found out, I think, this morning we're going to debating this bill. You know, I turned to my colleague from Flin Flon, I said, did you get the bill briefing. He said no. I said to the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), did you get the bill briefing. She said, no, I haven't heard anything. We haven't even gotten the information on this particular bill. We don't have the information in front of us.

And maybe at that time we could say, you know, I understand, you know, that you're sitting here—the officials from the department—you're sitting there with your minister. I can get that. But maybe you can just give us the straight dope. Tell us what the numbers are. Tell us what it's going to bring in revenue. Because the officials know it—the officials know the numbers, but they've been told by their political masters, hang on, we're trying to make sure that Manitobans don't understand the real picture here. We're trying to make sure that we're—we play as

many games as we can with the books, hide the numbers and make sure that it looks as good as we can coming out on the other side.

But, you know, we look forward. We've got, I think, probably—I'm going to do my calendar math here—10 months to debate this bill, if we want.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

An Honourable Member: Almost 11.

Mr. Wiebe: Almost 11 months that we can bring this back, and I'm sure the minister, after this particular speech in particular, maybe the questions earlier will go back to his officials. We'll get those numbers. He'll come back into the House. We'll give—I promise we'll give him leave to stand up in the House to answer another set of questions, if he'd like, and actually put those numbers on the record because that's what Manitobans are really asking for.

So Manitobans are saying, look, the proceeds from legalized cannabis need to go to fighting addictions in this province. We know that's the real issue, that's been the concern, and that's been the concern from, you know, not just the experts, and we're certainly listening as a caucus and the leader, of course, of the opposition, listening to those experts about what their experience has been in fighting the scourge of meth use and opioid use in our communities; we've been listening to them. But it's not just them that we've been hearing from. I think every member on this side of the House and I would venture to guess, members on that side of the House as well, have heard directly from their constituents. And this is really, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, where it cuts right to the heart of this issue. This is an issue that affects people that has a real impact in communities. And I know members on this side of the House that have gone out, that have collected needles as part of community cleanups, that have talked to those groups and those community members who are giving their time to do that, who all have experiences with the influx of crime and the impact that crime is having in their communities because of the addictions issues that are out there.

So these are real issues. That's the real issues when it comes to drug use that Manitobans want to see addressed, and yet, as I said, I mean, this government had an opportunity in the Throne Speech. This is your opportunity to talk about the issues of the day in a forward looking way. You know, this government knows they would have our

support when it comes to building new treatment beds, when it comes to a safe injection site or a safe consumption site in this province. They know that the experts in this province are saying it. They know that their own VIRGO report had that as part of the secret draft that was given to the minister but not distributed, then, to the public. This is not, you know, out-there, left-field stuff. Mr. Speaker, this is good practice, good policy that is being implemented in many places in this country and throughout the world where we are seeing these—the impacts all over.

And, you know, this government wants to talk about, well, you know, why wasn't this done before or why wasn't this done, you know, 17 years ago? It was this member—it was this member—from Steinbach, who went out to his community and said, I see meth on the rise; I see meth becoming more—having more of an impact in my community, as it is in other places. And he was on the forefront at that time, saying we need to do something about that. When that issue became a crisis in 2016, when that became a crisis in 2017 and when it's now a crisis in 2018, this minister says, well, there's nothing we can do; there's no way that we can possibly address this issue.

Well, the minister has the tool here in a social responsibility tax. He has good ideas coming from the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew). He has good ideas coming from experts on the ground, from his own report that he asked to be doctored and to have that paragraph removed. He could take those ideas. He would have the support of these members on the—on this side of the House. But more importantly, he'd have the support of every Manitoban in this province who understands that this is now a crisis; this has now reached a level that it needs real action. He has the tools. He has the evidence, and yet he refuses to act. That is shameful, Mr. Speaker, and I wish that he would stand up and join with us in that.

Well, you know, and the minister is—has seen the evidence. I know that he's talked to his counterparts throughout the country. He knows that this is a crisis in Manitoba, and yet he refuses to acknowledge it as such, or, at the very least, to encourage his fellow ministers to act and his Premier (Mr. Pallister) to get with the times and get working on this issue.

* (12:00)

So this is the opportunity that we have here. We have a legalization process that—you know, again—

you know, there's probably members on the opposite side of the House that say, whoa, this was the end of the world, whether it was or not. They'll say, you know, my own personal beliefs, this is a terrible thing to have happened in this country. You know, they like to blame Justin Trudeau, and they blame him for everything. I don't think there's any shortage—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Wiebe: There you go. They are happy to applaud that, and there's no shortage of blame to go around. And he can certainly—the members opposite can certainly blame Justin Trudeau all they want.

The point is that this Prime Minister made a commitment during an election, and it was up to this government to take that and to actually implement it in a way that benefits Manitobans the best that it possibly can, that fits the Manitoba environment best that it can. *[interjection]*

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Okay. Well—and I'm just getting started, Mr. Speaker, so I am glad that I do have a little bit more time here, because I do want to make sure that I cover all of the issues that I wanted to bring up.

So, again, you know, the minister and the members opposite can go on and on. They can blame whoever they want, but the responsibility that they have—and this goes across, you know, the issues that we've seen here in this province. Started with going to war with the federal government over health and over the health-care transfers, implemented, of course—the policy that was developed by their friend, Stephen Harper, carried out by Justin Trudeau.

And now this minister says, well, now we're going to go—we're going to pick a fight. The Premier says we're going to pick a fight with the federal government. And they get the short end of the stick when it comes to resources from the federal government.

They did the same with the carbon tax. You have other provinces who have made—you know, made deals, and then we can certainly criticize those deals. There's lots to be said. We did, and we're happy to do that.

But then, all off a sudden, this Premier says, well, no, no, hang on, you know, all these investments, all these NDP investments in Manitoba Hydro have been good investments in clear—clean energy. You know, we wanted some credit for that,

and the Prime Minister—you know, I guess he said a comment that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) didn't like; he made a joke that he didn't like, and there we go, another battle.

So here we are with an opportunity, when it comes to cannabis, to take a policy developed at the federal level, but to take it and use it for the Manitoba situation. And here we are with a crisis that's been acknowledged by absolutely everybody in addictions.

You know, this government went out in the last election and said, we—you know, we don't have many things to say, but we are going to develop a mental health and addictions strategy, I think, in their first 100 days. The first 100 days—this was a first-hundred-days commitment.

And 100 days came and went. I stood up in the House; I said, where's the report? Another hundred days went by; I said, where's the report? A year went by; where's the report? A year and a half later, the government says, well, we have a report. Here it is. Oh, wait a minute, give me that copy back, scribble, scribble, scribble, here's the actual copy.

But there are good ideas in the VIRGO report—again, ideas that could be supported by all members of the House, but this government continues to drag its feet. And, when given tools like we're seeing here, with the cannabis revenue, which—you know, the government knows what the cannabis revenue is going to be. So start taking that information, start putting it into—start addressing these issues and dealing with them in a real way. That's what Manitobans have been asking for, and that's what Manitobans will continue to ask for.

And yet here we are debating a bill, you know, only half an hour each to debate this bill. Thirty minutes, I think, isn't nearly enough to talk about this issue for each member, but we certainly will use that time to just try to get the minister—he could go back right now. He could go to his officials right now and go talk to them. He can have a little meeting and come back into the House, and we'd be happy to give him a little bit of time to put on the record some of the facts, but he refuses to do that.

Again, I know that that's being—that's direction that's being given from the top. That's direction that's being given from the Finance Minister, most likely from the Premier himself, who's saying, look, we can't let Manitobans know what the real books are saying.

And that's where we're running into this problem, and we cannot address, we cannot properly debate an issue when we don't have the facts in front of us. And that is really what we are talking about here today.

So this government has continuously bungled this file along with so many others. Again, if we had all the time in the world here, I would, certainly, spend that time talking about all of those issues. But this is, certainly—

An Honourable Member: It feels like it's been all the time in the world.

Mr. Wiebe: While the minister, you know, is right, in the—sometimes in that as well.

But, what I will say is, is that this is an issue that I think every Manitoban wants to be clear about. They want to know that if this government is going to bring forward a new tax without a referendum, without any kind of consultation, but a tax that can be used in a positive way. They want to know that it is being used in that way, that it's being utilized in a way that actually addresses the core issues that we are all facing in our communities.

So, you know, I will—I continue to listen to my constituents. I continue to listen to their perspective on this, but, equally, I also listen to all members of the House who are bringing those experiences from their constituents with addictions and drug abuse and the spinoffs and the issues that arise from that forward in the House. And I hope that—I mean, we—we'll do our best, Mr. Speaker. We continue to raise this issue as an opposition. I think we are on the side of the angels, as they say, with regards to this issue. We're, certainly, on the side of the experts. We're, certainly, on the side of those who are working on addictions and drug abuse issues on the front lines, but we will continue to listen to those folks who are giving their best advice and the best path forward for us.

I hope that members opposite—it might be behind closed doors, but I hope that they are sending that message, loud and clear, bringing their constituents' concerns directly to their Premier and saying: You know, look, we need to address this issue right away. And, if this is a tool, if this is the opportunity here with increased revenues, don't put it into the general revenue; don't just use it to reduce the deficit, to work towards, you know, at some point, reducing the PST—but, if you're going to use this money in a truly socially responsible way, not to just backstop the

failed gas tax that this government tried to bring forward, where they would have taken the—you know, instead of a price on pollution, just would have had a straight carbon tax on gas that would have gone straight to general revenues and would have seen—never been seen by anybody except for the Finance Minister in trying to balance his own books.

Now they're trying to use this revenue in the same way and that is the real shame, Mr. Speaker, because every one of us has a responsibility to our constituents, to those members of the front lines, to those members who are going out and dealing with this crisis in a real genuine way, to use absolutely every tool of government to address those issues. And that's the real shame that we're faced with here today: that this is a government who plays—pays a lot of lip service to the issue but has really not actually addressed it.

As the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) pointed out in his comments, I think immediately following the Throne Speech, but, certainly, in this House in his comments and in our resolution which was brought forward, I do believe it was amendment (a)—letter (a), so the first one, was with regards to the meth crisis and the lack of any kind of real plan, the omission in the Throne Speech of any mention, in a real way, of the meth crisis, and more—most importantly, no commitment to resources—additional resources to fight that scourge in our province.

This is the opportunity here. This is the opportunity that those responsible Manitobans who are going out consuming cannabis in a way that is responsible, that is legal, you know, they are the ones who are, I think, happy to pay a tax, a fee tax, whatever the government wants to call it, but they are willing to pay that if they know that that money is going towards the real issues when it comes to drug abuse out there.

So I—you know, Mr. Speaker, you know, it is absolutely incumbent on this government to stand up, and I do hope—I'm looking across the way here to see who is up next, because I'm sure they're eager to stand up and they're just—they're hopping out of their seats, almost, to get up to say: I've asked my minister; I know that there's real revenues coming into this province. I know; I've heard from my constituents that there's a real issue when it comes to drug abuse in our province.

* (12:10)

We need to make a difference. We need to be accountable for this money. We need to make sure that Manitobans know where it's going. It cannot just go out into the ether of government. It cannot just be another backstop for this government's austerity agenda. It needs to go to real investments—real investments in battling our addictions and social issues that arise in our province.

So, you know, with that, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record. Again, I know that many members opposite will be eager to rise in their place, put some words on the record. And if they're not, I certainly know that members on this side want to debate this. They want to put words on the record. They want to make sure that they hold this government to account, and that's absolutely the job that we're going to be doing, whether it's on this bill, whether it's on this government's failed Throne Speech. We will stand every day with Manitobans to hold this government to account.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): The previous speaker did get one thing right—is that this government will go to war with anybody on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me acknowledge the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) and the former minister of Justice, who has taken this issue of the legalization of cannabis so seriously and so responsibility—so responsible.

This government has been going on a step-by-step basis to ensure that the implementation and the execution of cannabis in this market has been done as safely as possible and as responsibly as possible. This government initiated bill 25, which was the first bill to ensure that Manitobans are going to be exposed to cannabis as safely as possible. Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government implemented bill 11, which also, too, was a continuation to ensure that Manitobans will be safe in the implementation of cannabis. And now we implement Bill 3 to ensure that the revenues of cannabis will be utilized for the betterment of all Manitobans. So my compliments to the ministers of Justice, both previous and current.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this whole initiative created significant challenges not only to our provincial government, but to all provincial governments across Canada. The Government of Canada just would not listen to provincial

governments and advisory groups indicating that they were rushing this initiative and it needed more time. And this government had done its due diligence in trying to convince the federal government—and our Premier (Mr. Pallister) in particular—that more time was needed. However, when the federal government did not listen, this government did its due diligence to ensure that it did—it will be implementing cannabis in a responsible way.

We have listened to our police chiefs. We have listened to the RCMP. We have listened to social advocate groups. We have done our due diligence in trying to ensure that we create a mechanism that cannabis is done as safely as possible. We've created the LLC, the liquor, lotteries and cannabis corporation. We chose to maintain a government retail—a government retail that has been—that is responsible for ensuring that the regulations and the laws that are set down by the government in regards to cannabis will be followed up.

So that organization is consistent with previous governments too in their dependence and their confidence in an organization to ensure safety. So we've even gone a step further. We've continued the initiative that the previous government did in ensuring that there's an entity that regulates products such as alcohol and now cannabis.

Madam Speaker—or Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government rolled up their sleeves when this initial—when this initiative initially took for—with place. We initiated a—right off the bat, our Premier initiated a cannabis—a caucus cannabis committee. Members, made up of myself, the member from Seine River, the member from Radisson, the member from Brandon West, the member from Kildonan, the member from Transcona and the member from Emerson, all studied this question over a number of months, everything from production to the cost and the competitiveness of the black market, which is quite significant and does play into how we present our pricing models, which Bill 3 addresses. Our focus has always been on the safety of Manitobans to utilize recreational cannabis and, most importantly, not to see the product exploited by any means.

Our committee studied from seed to sale. Our initial study—again, this all relates to, ultimately, how we came up with pricing model and fees that will be implemented under Bill 3.

So first we looked at the production sources, which was extremely challenging, because we didn't know exactly how we were going to accommodate

the demands, as a—from a government perspective, to be able to tackle the black market. That was extremely challenging and—coming up with suppliers who, at the same time, not only could offer us quality product but also, too, could offer it at a price where we could, ultimately, implement the product or have the product implemented at reasonable pricing to ensure that the black market is not going to be able to continue to expand. So we did that, and we did that very, very effectively. Our challenge continues to adopt or find producers who can satisfy the market, but that's not an issue that's unique to Manitoba; that's a issue that's unique to all of Canada.

The wholesale component that our committee studied was to go to, as I'd indicated earlier, to maintain the government wholesale. Our government has a great deal of confidence in the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, who had been wholesaling alcohol beverages and, upon our study and our review, determined that that was the best entity to be able to accommodate and implement cannabis into the marketplace. The pricing model, quite frankly, worked. And the responsibility of distribution was also something that we were quite confident in. And also, too, as a—at a wholesale level, has the ability to be able to collect the—and charge the proper fees on this product will—and which will, ultimately, wind up in the coffers of Manitoba to benefit all Manitobans.

The retail model that we presented was a private model, because all of the recommendations that we had, through government or through different analysis, was that they—it wasn't feasible to be able to put cannabis with alcohol; therefore, it was in the best interests of the implementation of the retail market as being a private entity. So we, basically, determined that we were going to do it with the people who could do it best, which was the private retailers.

Madam Speaker, what Bill 3 does, from a pricing perspective, a competitive pricing perspective, is it sets the tone to the retailers of how much money that they're going to be able to charge in the marketplace. And that money that they're going to be able to charge in the marketplace has to be competitive with the black market, because, ultimately, that's the goal—is to eliminate the black market and sell cannabis in a safe manner.

* (12:20)

So that 6 per cent that we are talking about is not an unreasonable amount and will create revenue to the Province to be able to fulfill the social needs of

the Province and the safety needs of the Province. And, in doing so, the retailers know exactly what models that they're looking at, and they can determine what the market will pay.

There may be cannabis retail stores that are going to be charging premium product—premium prices based on the market demand that they may have, very similar to what the private wine stores do here in Manitoba right now. Private wine stores offer a—an offering to people who may want to look for a different selection, and they're—they buy up, if you will, to premium product. And that's what you just may see happening in some of the retail offering that we have through this private sector. So that 6 per cent may not necessarily be a problem for some retailers, because they'll be charging higher to begin with.

Now, other retailers, in order to compete with the black market, may have a clientele that pricing becomes very much of a factor. So that 6 per cent that's put on gives the retailer an opportunity, a reasonable government fee, to ensure that they're able to put their pricing models together and go forward to create a stability of pricing to this market.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my comments are in regards to Bill 3 basically being a bill that does offer stability to the market in a safe way, but it also, too, offers a stability to pricing long term. And I think that, as we continue to go through this process, as we—as this whole initiative continues to evolve, it's a moving target.

We're going to have to adjust based on what the activity is out there, but our government has been doing the responsible thing, and this Bill 3 is just another example of how we're doing our due diligence on this particular issue.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, I'm pleased to get up to speak to Bill 2—

An Honourable Member: Three.

Ms. Fontaine: Three? Two or three? Three, Deputy Speaker. Three. Let's talk about three instead.

So I do want to point out, Deputy Speaker, that certainly Manitobans expect, now that cannabis is legalized, that Manitobans have the right to expect that the rules around cannabis will be fair and, certainly, prices will be competitive.

And I think that when we look at what the government started to do in their narrative when they talked about legalization of cannabis, they did talk about fair prices, and that prices would be competitive. So I think it's important to kind of go back to that place there.

However, now we see, with Bill 3, that the Pallister government has added on, or taxed on, a social responsibility fee. And, certainly, I would suggest to you, Deputy Speaker, that this is just another example of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) heavy-handed approach to legalization of cannabis.

As you know, Deputy Speaker, the Premier has already imposed harsh fines, which are literally up to thousands of dollars for an activity that is considered legal in Canada and in Manitoba. And, I think, it's important to put on the record what some of these fines are. And, again, with the implicit understanding that cannabis use and cannabis consumption here in the province is legal.

We're talking about fines for an—a legal activity. So here's some of the violations, Deputy Speaker: driving carrying cannabis in or on a vehicle—again, for a legal activity here in Canada—the fine is \$237. The—for driving—for a driver carrying cannabis in an off—in and on off-road vehicle, the fine is \$237. The violation for consuming cannabis in or on vehicle on a highway, the fine is \$672. Consuming cannabis in or on off-road vehicle, the fine is \$672.

Again, I just want to keep reminding everybody that we're talking about a legal activity here in Manitoba and across the country.

So the violation for smoking and vaping cannabis in provincial parks is \$672. The violation of growing non-medical cannabis in a residence, in Manitoba, is \$2,542. Supplying cannabis to a young person under the age of 19 is \$2,542. And, finally, Deputy Speaker, as you know, selling cannabis without a licence is also a fine of \$2,542.

So it seems that the government is attempting to make a lot—a lot—of money off of the legalization of cannabis here in Manitoba. And this is, certainly, more money and taxes that the Premier thinks is a good idea for Manitobans.

I would suggest to you, Deputy Speaker, that we do not believe the government should be adding more fees to cannabis when Manitobans don't know how they intend to spend the money from the initial revenues from cannabis. We don't know what this Pallister government is going to be doing with those

revenues. And I know that the—it's called a cannabis social responsibility fee, but what guarantees do we have that those additional government revenues are actually going to go into programs and services that benefit Manitobans that are struggling with addictions or—well, in particular, addictions?

And why is that a concern, Deputy Speaker? I think it's a concern, because what we've seen thus far from the government in respect of the meth crisis is not enough. I would suggest to you that it doesn't even begin to seriously look at or address the issue of the meth crisis that we are undertaken.

And, you know, here's the piece about meth, is that the present crisis that we're facing here in Manitoba doesn't just affect one constituency or one area of Manitoba. It is literally affecting every single place in Manitoba. And so the fact that the government has done very little except, you know, open a couple of clinics for a couple of hours a week that connects folks with some supposed resources, but I don't understand where the resources are. It's not enough.

And we've been rising in this House for many, many months—for many, many months—our concerns about the lack of attention or concern from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his ministers and the backbenchers in respect of the meth crisis that we're

seeing here in Manitoba. And so, when we see that there's a cannabis social responsibility fee but there's been nothing done, you—I don't think that we can be blamed for being a little suspicious that this—dollars will be used for something that has nothing to do with addictions or making more beds or more spaces for dealing with the meth addiction.

So I do want to—I have a lot of time that I'd like to spend on this issue in respect of meth, but I would like to talk about Manitoba families that are presently facing the meth crisis. And it can be, you know, parents, children, sons or daughters. It can be partners. It can be husbands or wives. We've actually seen, in some cases, that it's families' loved ones in respect of grandpas and grandmas. And so I'd like to spend a little bit of time talking about Manitoba families that are in the midst right now of this meth crisis and what that does for families with little resources, that they're able to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) will have 23 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 23, 2018

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