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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
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NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
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SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
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STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
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TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I wish to table the Annual Report for 2015-2016 for the Manitoba Student Aid.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education. The required 90-minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

100th Anniversary of Vimy Ridge

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): On April 9th Canadians marked the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. On that day, 100 years ago, over 100,000 men from four Canadian divisions climbed out of the trenches, dugouts and tunnels through the snow and the sleet and over broken ground and barbed wire to attack fortified German positions. Among those in battle were soldiers from Manitoba's Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada and The Royal Winnipeg Rifles. By next day, all four divisions had reached their objectives.

In advancing the 4,500 yards to secure the ridge, 10,602 casualties were suffered and 3,598 men were

killed. It was an enormous price to pay to gain the high ground needed to further push back the enemy.

Madam Speaker, the 100th anniversary of this significant battle, both in terms of war effort but also in terms of important milestones in our development as a nation, have been widely recognized. The efforts and activities commemorating April 9th are the ones that we can all, as Canadians, applaud and celebrate.

It is important to note that our young people have also taken part in this celebration of remembrance through events conducted not only in their schools and in their communities, but also abroad. Almost 350 students from 12 high schools in seven school divisions, as well as Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School, along with three dozen supervising teachers, flew to France to witness first-hand the centennial event and to see that—the sacred Vimy monument and the surrounding land where so much death and carnage have occurred.

It is sobering to think, Madam Speaker, that many of those killed or wounded on that day 100 years ago would not have been much older than the students at Vimy paying thanks to their—for their sacrifice.

Madam Speaker, I know everyone in this House would join me in recognizing the value of our students making the journey to France to be part of this important event. To remember is to honour, and through their journey overseas and participation in the Vimy commemoration, these students honoured those young Canadians who sacrificed their own futures so that successive generations could enjoy theirs.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and in recognition.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement.

Last week, Canadians honoured the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Thousands of Canadians attended the many commemorative ceremonies that took place to honour and remember the sacrifices made 100 years ago by Canadian soldiers. Some 12,000 students from across the country, including 350 from Manitoba, were in attendance.

We can all be proud to see so many youth engaging in these events. It reminds us of the important role that our young people have in understanding and promoting Canada's history.

The 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge was a meaningful opportunity to spread awareness to young people across the Canada—across the country and to help them better understand not only this defining moment in Canada's history, but also the horrors and costs of war.

These students learned in the very grounds that this battle occurred about the incredible bravery and sacrifices of our soldiers and about the impact that this war had on our country. Many soldiers who died at Vimy Ridge and other battlefields were little older than the students who attended the commemoration.

Experiences like this help students grasp their historical roots and put the lessons they learn about at school or through family members into perspective.

My own daughter, like other students at her former high school, studied the life of a student from that very high school who was killed in battle in the First World War. She learned about where he lived, where he worked and even about his grades in high school. She had the chance to visit the Vimy memorial in France last summer and was greatly moved by the monument's tribute to all those who served and gave her lives, like other young people who were able to get there.

Madam Speaker, the Battle of Vimy Ridge can teach students much about Canadian history. In learning the important lessons that came from it, we hope they will use this knowledge to work towards a better and a more peaceful future for Canada and our world.

Thank you.

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

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

Ms. Klassen: I rise today to speak about some of our youth.

Students from Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School travelled to France to take part in the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Those youth were very touched and impacted for the better.

Seventeen students received the experience of a lifetime, travelling to Europe for two weeks. They even stopped in at Anne Frank's house.

Most students from our First Nation communities may never get the chance to leave the community, never mind the province, let alone travel to France and the Netherlands. I am so very excited that these young people have been given this experience, this amazing adventure, that will carry them for the rest of their lives. This investment in those youth, we will see great things from those families for generations to come.

It's projects like that one that can open the eyes of our very young people and show them the incredible world that is out there for them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Headingley's 25th Anniversary Events

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, today I rise in the Assembly to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the RM of Headingley.

The municipality has been busy organizing several events in honour of reaching this milestone, which will see guests from the area and neighbouring communities gathering to celebrate the occasion.

* (13:40)

The Headingley Regional Chamber of Commerce is hosting a gala dinner at The Gates on Roblin Thursday the 27th, and is sure to be a special evening of recognition.

The chamber was assembled just after Headingley left the City of Winnipeg in July of 1993. A small group of business owners, headed up by Jarl Johner and Wilf Taillieu, decided a new municipality also needed a strong business voice, and, as such, the chamber was incorporated.

The Headingley Regional Chamber of Commerce has an active membership: over 80 registered businesses, the large majority which are small and mid-sized business owners. The current president is a young businesswoman by the name of Jade Wood, and a special tribute is planned to Wilf Taillieu, the former mayor of Headingley. Wilf will be honoured for his vision and dedication

to the municipality and its citizens in providing decades of leadership and public service.

A number of other 25th anniversary events are also planned, Madam Speaker, including a chamber-sponsored golf tournament at Breezy Bend on May 25th, a Euro Car Show and Shine on May 28th and the Grand Trunk Trail Ride and Bridge Opening on June 3rd. A special July 1st event, Canada Day, at the Headingley Community Centre will be the grand finale, where a variety of family activities are planned in conjunction with the splash pad grand opening and fireworks.

I invite all members to join me in recognizing Headingley's 25th anniversary. And to the RM of Headingley, I extend my congratulations on reaching this milestone and extend my congratulations and best wishes to the organizing committee, volunteers and municipal leaders for their vision and dedication to their community.

Thank you.

Cranberry Portage Heritage Museum

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, Manitoba's North is a flourishing arts and cultural hub. As the country celebrates its 150th anniversary, local museums, like the Cranberry Portage Heritage Museum, are a beacon of northern Manitoba's rich history and diversity.

The establishment of this museum was truly a community effort nearly a decade in the making. In 2001, the Cranberry Portage Heritage Museum was established, and in 2012 they received a land title to the old CNR railway station, gifted by the Hudson Bay Railway Company. The old station needed an enormous amount of restoration work, from the inside out. Through community fundraising efforts, donations and a generous benefactor and countless hours spent applying for grants, the old station was restored to its former glory. Today, the museum welcomes visitors from across the country, showcasing everything northern Manitoba has to offer.

Madam Speaker, cuts to the arts and culture funding hits small communities especially hard. We need to remember that for the people of Cranberry Portage, a community of 771 residents, their museum is so much more than a place that holds artifacts. It's a place that holds the collective memories of families who have lived in the community for generations. It's a place that preserves the history of Manitoba's North. Finally, it is a place that teaches young people

about their heritage and culture. Investing in culture means investing in the people of Manitoba, and this is true for all the small communities throughout the North.

Although the community of Cranberry Portage has weathered many changes throughout the decades, the immeasurable contributions of the museum staff and volunteers have helped preserve the community's rich history. Thanks to all of their efforts, Cranberry Portage's cultural heritage will continue to thrive for decades to come.

Brandon Area Flood Protection

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to thank everyone who helped in the high-water event—or flood, to most people—in the Brandon area. The City of Brandon is to be commended for their foresight and planning to keep people and businesses safe with very little disruption. Grand Valley Road has been closed for just over a week, and the flood waters were below the roadway yesterday, but the plug in the dike is still there as a precaution. There was a very small amount of sandbagging by volunteers around one residence outside the dike, but it was all done in a short period.

Thank you to Mayor Rick Chrest and City Council. Thank you to Brian Kayes, Brandon's director of emergency management, and his team. Their patience and composure in answering questions from residents and media representatives went a long way to keeping everyone calm and well informed.

There are countless staff from engineering and operations who helped build and maintain the dikes, seal off the manhole covers and check to see that there were no trouble spots. Private contractors provided equipment and operators at the direction of the City and the Province.

The minister and staff of Manitoba Infrastructure dealt with changing flood forecasts and kept the lines of communication open with all municipalities and continue to keep those lines open as the flood moves and develops in other parts of the province. Madam Speaker, 1st Street was kept open by Manitoba Infrastructure crews with water-filled dams to hold the water back and divert it under the bridge.

Madam Speaker, we know that there has been much damage in many areas of Manitoba this spring and some evacuations. Thank you to all Manitobans for their resilience and their patience as the waters move through. I think it is safe to say that we learn

something every year that will make the next event more manageable.

Turban-Tying Competition

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Our diversity is one of the reasons why Manitoba is such a great place to live.

This past weekend I attended a unique event where I was able to witness a turban-tying competition.

Madam Speaker, Sikhism is a faith that has believers all around the world and the turban is a very important part of it.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to wear a few turbans, even though I myself am not able to tie it—it's not an easy task—it was nice to watch the children and youth demonstrate their turban-tying skills.

The youth that participated in the competition also had to answer questions about Sikhism. You see, Madam Speaker, this event was emphasizing the importance that this new generation of children are aware and understanding of the history behind Sikhism. An example of one of the questions was: which guru made covering the hair by a turban official? The answer is Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Madam Speaker, it is important to gain awareness of the turban within Sikhism. Did the members of the House know that there are several types of turbans and that they can be up to six metres long?

Watching the participants at this event all master the art of tying on the turban and then answering questions about Sikhism was something really special.

I would like to thank all of those who contributed for their efforts in making the competition possible and congratulate the first- and second-place recipients that received solid gold and solid silver medals.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Northern Manitoba Blizzard

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): It is my pleasure to recognize the extra effort and dedication shown by northerners in Thompson, Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids during the three-day snow storm March 6th to 8th, 2017.

The storm brought snowfall in quantities not seen there for over 50 years and stranded motorists traveling between Thompson and Leaf Rapids for three nights before they could be rescued.

Southwest of Leaf Rapids, an SUV became stuck on the side of the highway near another vehicle and all six motorists huddled together for warmth as their vehicles ran out of gas. Once the storm subsided they could see a distant telecom tower, and two of the passengers trudged through waist-deep snow for hours, broke into the building and managed to get out a call for help.

Leaf Rapids RCMP tried by snow machine to bring supplies to the stranded vehicles, but had to turn back.

With co-ordination from Manitoba Infrastructure employees Barry Rempel, Darcy Delyea, Calvin Abele in Thompson, and Jason Cockerill and Ron MacDonald from Lynn Lake were able to push the road open from Lynn Lake to Leaf Rapids and decided to continue on and try to reach the stranded motorists.

After trying with limited success with their plow, the Town of Leaf Rapids volunteered their grader and blower to help, but after a while they also had to turn back.

At Manitoba Infrastructure's request, Timber Wolf Trucking in Lynn Lake supplied their 966 loader with operator Brandon Dulewich to help. The snow could not stop the 966 and the Lynn Lake crew, and after clearing a path to the stranded vehicles, RCMP managed to escort the motorists back to Leaf Rapids.

Continuing to clear towards Thompson, the crew came across another stranded vehicle with two passengers and a dog team, and managed to rescue them too.

At the end of the shift, Manitoba Infrastructure employees Jason Cockerill and Ron MacDonald had worked approximately 36 hours straight clearing snow, answering the call for help, not giving up and doing all they could to rescue stranded motorists.

This is an example of northerners coming together to help those in need and these are Manitobans we can all be proud of.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery from the Laureate Academy 18 grade 6 and 9 students under the direction of Stino Siragusa, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes).

On behalf of all of us here, we welcome you to our Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Reason for ER Closure WRHA Budget Cuts

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Winnipeggers are still reeling from the government's misguided shutting of three emergency rooms in Winnipeg and an urgent-care centre. These closures will have a detrimental impact on patient care and will leave much of Winnipeg without quick access to emergency rooms.

This government has tried to portray its decision in all sorts of ways, but we have now learned that it is closing these ERs as a way of making cuts for the WRHA.

Will the Premier admit to Manitobans that he is shutting ERs in a misguided bid to cut costs?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member—I appreciate the question from the member.

The member refers to misguided, Madam Speaker. Misguided would be descriptive of behaviour that didn't follow expert advice or recommendations. That is exactly what the previous government didn't have the courage to do. They sought analysis and some research and science. It told them that changes were necessary, and they didn't have the courage to follow up and take action.

Courage is not the absence of fear, Madam Speaker; it's the willingness to seek progress in the face of fear. Everyone is afraid of change to some degree, but the greatest thing here—or the greatest obstacle to better health care, would be to keep our system last in the country, to keep our waiting lists the longest in the country and to keep our seniors and others, vulnerable and needing health care, waiting for hours upon end. So, we'll seek improvements.

I thank the member for raising the question today.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier and his minister gave marching orders to the WRHA months ago to cut tens of millions from the budget. Suddenly at the end of March, the WRHA determined it could save tens of millions by shutting ERs and an urgent-care centre in Winnipeg.

The Premier knew all this but he refused to tell Manitobans and refused to come clean about what he knew regarding the WRHA budget. The Premier pretends that his actions haven't caused any ER closures, and he pretends he's not motivated by cost cutting.

Why will the Premier not take responsibility for his actions for shutting ERs across Winnipeg? And why will he not be open with Manitobans for the reasons he did it?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I don't appreciate the personal attack of the member, but I do appreciate her right to raise her question, as poorly worded as it was.

I would say that the Canadian institute of health information would be a body that we should respect. The previous administration refused to respect that body when they said that Manitoban hospitals had the longest wait times in Canada.

There were reports also, Madam Speaker, well-known to the members opposite, who refused to act on them, that they should pursue certain courses of action to reduce the wait time. You know, just last year, Manitobans were forced to wait in pain and in fear at—for over 600,000 hours of wait times.

The member speaks about cost. It's too bad, Madam Speaker, that the members opposite, when they were in government, didn't consider the human cost to Manitobans of having to sit for hours on end, the longest of any Canadian citizens, not knowing if you were even going to get health care when it was your most vulnerable time or when a loved one in your family needed health care.

Madam Speaker, they didn't have the courage to act on science and research, but we do and we will.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier had the opportunity to come clean with Manitobans. When asked how much

shutting ERs cost, he pretended that he did not have the answer. We now have learned, in fact he did have the answer. And the answer was exactly the one he ordered the WRHA to produce months earlier.

We know that the Premier has already made deep cuts to our health-care system, but—cuts to personal-care homes and clinics, but why does the Premier not come clean with Manitobans and admit shutting ERs is his misguided way of cutting costs and not about patient care?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, what would be misguided—and, in fact, deeply misguided—would be to follow the previous administration's practice of throwing money at the problem and making it worse in so doing. That would be misguided.

What would be well-guided would be to follow the advice of experts, national and provincial experts, who have looked at the situation, have said that we can reduce our wait times, improve our quality of care, improve our services, improve our wait times and make the opportunities for people to be diagnosed, to have treatment, to get emergency care happen faster.

Better care sooner, Madam Speaker, is what we're after. After a decade of decay, we're about repairing the services for Manitobans.

Reason for ER Closure WRHA Budget Cuts

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, months ago this government ordered the RHAs to find over \$100 million worth of cuts this year. They demanded the WRHA alone come up with \$80 million worth of cuts no matter the impact on patient care or on community health.

We now clearly see the results of this cost-cutting exercise: a loss of essential front-line services with three ERs and an urgent-care centre closed in Winnipeg.

Will the minister simply admit today that the WRHA shut ERs in Winnipeg solely to meet the impossible budget demands that he imposed on them?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I can see why the member opposite is confused. He believes that patient care and saving money can't be together. That is why the previous government poured hundreds of millions of dollars into ERs and

things never got any better. If money was the solution, the problem would have long gone away.

Actually, when you improve patient care, when you make the flow go better, when you ensure that there is efficiency within the system, that naturally does save money. I don't know why the member would be opposed to that.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, on April 10th the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Health Minister claimed that they had no idea how much money it would cost or how much it would save to close ERs and urgent-care centres across the city. But we now know that they, in fact, did know the answer to that question.

Media reports last week revealed that the government received information from the WRHA at the end of March, nearly two weeks prior, and that they would—and that they could cut \$50 million from their health—the health-care system if they shut down the emergency rooms.

Why did the Premier and the Health Minister not just be up front with Manitobans that their cuts were, in fact, motivated by cuts, pure and simple?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I don't mind that the member stands up every day for weeks on end and defends a system that left people languishing in ERs for two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight hours at a time. I know that that's the sort of system that he defended when he was in government under the Selinger government.

Madam Speaker, I wouldn't defend that system. When we came into government we knew that this had to change, there had to be changes. The NDP had commissioned a report by Dr. Peachey. We looked at it, thought it would be good advice.

He can continue to defend the undefensible, Madam Speaker. That's fine in the House. But I don't think Manitobans understand that.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I think this minister needs to focus on the question and come clean with Manitobans here for the House today.

The facts are, in fact, very clear. The end of March, the WRHA told the government it could meet its targets only if it shut down emergency

rooms in Winnipeg. And then, what did the minister and the Premier do, just two weeks later? He shut them down. But he refused to come clean with Manitobans. The Premier knew the entire time the impact that his cuts would have on the front-line services that Manitobans count on.

Why did the Premier and the Health Minister not just come clean with Manitobans about the real reason that they closed ERs in Winnipeg?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I can tell the member is struggling with this line of questioning. I'm not surprised that he's struggling.

*(14:00)

The report, the Peachey report, was commissioned by the Selinger government. It was endorsed by the member himself. He went out into the hallway and he told the media that, yes, the Peachey report, for instance, talks about changes and efficiencies that can be found in health care. That was commissioned by the former government. Those are the words for the member. He went out and told the media there can be efficiencies that are found.

I'm not sure why he's surprised that where there are efficiencies there are also savings. That's what's confusing him. He doesn't think you can have both. And, actually, I think those two go together, Madam Speaker.

Repeal of Affordability Act MPI and Hydro Rates

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): The Health Minister's not fooling anybody in the House today. He's cutting the service so that he can cut the waiting time. It's that simple. There's no other explanation for it.

But I have a simple question for the Minister of Finance today—and I'm sure that will get the Premier up off his chair.

But does the minister agree that his government has a responsibility to keep hydro rates and MPI rates low for Manitobans?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for a question about affordability for Manitobans.

This government cares greatly about affordability for Manitobans. That party over there, when they were in government, threatened that by bringing around the largest tax hikes in a generation to this province when they, in 2012, widened the

RST and cost every Manitoban \$180 million more. But then they raised the PST the next year.

I would caution that member that he's not on solid ground when he talks about his own commitment to affordability.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, the minister says that he cares about affordability, but buried deep in appendix C on page C9—for the Health Minister's reference, because I know he's a page number kind of guy—was, under the heading, other tax measures, the government has, without telling anyone, repealed the affordability act, which kept hydro rates, utility rates, car insurance rates, home heating rates, the lowest in the country.

Why is he frittering away Manitoba's affordability advantage?

Mr. Friesen: It is not lost on any Manitoban, but I think it bears reminding the members in this House, that the commitment that the member speaks about, when his government brought it, was concurrent with some of the largest tax hikes in a generation. At the same time as on one side of the mouth they said, we really care about affordability, on the other side, they were doing everything to gouge Manitobans: higher hydro rates, higher gasoline, higher retail sales tax, raising the retail sales tax to 8 per cent.

So let that member tread cautiously when he proposes to like the idea of affordability.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, we don't just like affordability on this side of the House, we love it. That's why we passed legislation; that's why it's the law, or was the law, to keep hydro rates, home heating rates and MPI rates the lowest in the country.

And this minister, buried deep, deep in the budget—he wasn't bragging about that on budget day—repealed that act.

So, I want to ask him now: Why won't he be accountable to the people of Manitoba, or what has he got to hide?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, it's a simple question, Madam Speaker, so let me answer it simply: smokescreen; that's what the government did before us. They came in with a smokescreen. They came in with a smokescreen bill that said that they promised Manitobans, in this little piece of their pie

chart of their budget of their annual expenditures in their household, they'd keep those items low.

But then all the rest of it, Madam Speaker, they raised. So the car tax, they jacked up; if you had a cottage, that went up—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —as the former premier knows; benefits, taxes on that; beer and wine; haircuts; home insurance.

And what did they do with the money, Madam Speaker? They brought in a vote tax subsidy for themselves.

Now, Madam Speaker, that's a smokescreen. Manitobans know—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —Manitobans know that making a promise like that, from that previous government, out of the one side of their mouth, while out of the other side of their mouth they jacked up taxes on just about everything they had to pay on, isn't sincere, Madam Speaker.

So the member asked what we're hiding; we're hiding nothing. We have an open agenda to leave more money in the hands of Manitobans. They had a very clear agenda to leave Manitobans with less money.

Affordability for Manitoba Women Minimum Wage and Child Care

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): We don't have to look very far outside this Chamber to see women who are struggling every single day just to get by. These are women who need that we exercise thoughtful, tangible equality, ensuring that all women have the best chance to accomplish their dreams.

So it begs the question: What has this government done towards moving towards this equity? Well, it's frozen minimum wage. It hasn't built any child-care spaces or affordable housing. It's left non-profit agencies servicing women in limbo.

So, Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) explain why his government is intent on making it harder for Manitoba women?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I appreciate the members

opposite raising the issue of affordability and how it affects and impacts women's lives.

On this side of the House our government cares very deeply about enhancing affordability for all women. That includes enhancing child-care spaces in the province. That includes raising the basic personal exemption. Our government took over 3,000 people off the tax rolls in our first budget, and we're just getting started, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Fontaine: This government has been in office for a year, and it's made life harder for so many women.

Statistics show that women earn considerably less than men on average. Women also tend to be in health and social-service industries jobs that offer lower pay. These are important jobs, yet this government has frozen minimum wage for a second year in a row. That affects anyone who is making close to minimum wage.

Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Families please explain how low-income women can expect to make ends meet year after year with frozen incomes?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, our government is really committed to getting more women working in higher paying jobs. That is why we're investing in Training for Tomorrow initiatives that will help women improve their chances of building careers that can support their families.

We've also done more than the previous administration in enhancing affordable housing initiatives, more on child-care initiatives. And we also know that a strong priority of women in the province of Manitoba is the Children's Advocate act and in enhancing protections for vulnerable children, which is what our government is committed to doing to improve the lives of women and girls in this province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Many women want to work after they have a child, but there's not enough child care to meet the need. That means that they stay at home when they could be earning an income that would help families.

In the past year we've seen the waiting lists for child care grow and grow. This government has made empty promises about all sorts of new child-care spaces, yet there is no action.

Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Families please explain to women in this province when they can expect to see new child-care spaces being built?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): We are encouraged in terms of providing a plan that will produce a lot more child-care spaces in Manitoba. This budget is committed to over \$6.2 million to create over 500 spaces, 50 home-based child-care spaces. We're going to work with the federal government that would—contributing close to \$15 million a year towards creating child-care spaces.

And one thing we'll do, Madam Speaker, is we're going to detangle all the red tape that was left by the previous administration in terms of trying to start child-care centres. That's exactly what this government will do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Preliminary Inquiries Reform Concerns

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Is this Minister of Justice familiar with the 2007 Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Aspects of the Trial and Conviction of James Driskell?

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

* (14:10)

Certainly, it would be inappropriate to discuss specifics of any individual case in Manitoba. But we do know that under the previous NDP government we saw that we were the violent crime capital of Canada—that was under this previous NDP government and under this minister—and we are committed to improving the lives of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Swan: This was a public inquiry report, and starting at page 115 of that report, Mr. Justice LeSage wrote as follows: "The preliminary inquiry has a long history in Canadian criminal law. It can be and often is of immeasurable assistance to the Crown and more often to the accused. Overriding the right to a preliminary inquiry when that right is available in the Criminal Code is an extraordinary step only to

be used in the rarest of cases. I believe that had a preliminary inquiry been conducted in this case, the likelihood of this miscarriage of justice having occurred would have been diminished."

Why is this Minister of Justice willing to risk more wrongful convictions in the province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, in fact, we're not, Madam Speaker, and as the member opposite knows, that we had the two chief justices, the chief judge and myself who wrote a letter to the federal Minister of Justice asking for preliminary inquiry reform. It's something that has been asked for across the country as a result of the Jordan case, which the member opposite is familiar with, I'm sure.

There needs to be changes with respect to preliminary inquiries. So we are committed to doing that. We're committed to working with our counterparts across the country to ensure that our criminal justice system is reviewed. This is very important. All of my counterparts across the country see this. We hope members opposite will get on board and see how important this reform is, not only just for Manitoba, but for Canada.

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

Mr. Swan: It's abundantly clear this minister did not consult with defence lawyers before she did sign the letter asking to abolish preliminary inquiries in Manitoba. If she had done that, they would have told her that they only occur in less than 3 per cent of criminal cases. They would have told her they allow both Crown attorneys and defence lawyers to test the strength of evidence for trial, they lead to more resolution short of a trial and shortened trials and they are an important tool to avoid wrongful convictions.

The Driskell case alone cost an inquiry and \$4 million in compensation.

Why is this minister penny-wise and pound foolish when it comes to our justice system?

Mrs. Stefanson: Members opposite are consistent in one thing: they're consistent in representing the status quo.

The status quo with respect to criminal justice system reform is not an option. We see that all across the country. It's why that—the chief justices, chief judge and myself have written a letter asking for them to consider some changes to the Criminal Code

that will allow for us to replace the preliminary inquiries with an out-of-court discovery process.

Now, members opposite will understand, and certainly this member would understand, that that allows defence attorneys to call on witnesses, as well.

So it's not eliminating preliminary inquiries, it's replacing them with an out-of-court discovery process, which is in the best interest of not only Manitobans, but of Canadas—Canadians.

First Nations Communities Support for Flood Evacuees

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): First Nation communities in Manitoba are currently facing a dire flooding situation. The Red Cross has said that it is providing support to more than 432 flood evacuees from six First Nations. I notice that, despite that fact, that more than 430–432 Manitobans have been evacuated from their homes.

This minister did not provide a flood update for today.

I ask the minister: What is the government doing to support these evacuees so that they can return to their homes?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): It is certainly hoped that the flood water—as the flood waters continue to recede, these residents can, no matter where they are in Manitoba, can get back in their homes.

The Red Cross in—works with the INAC, the Indian Affairs Department out of the federal government, and it's under the jurisdiction of INAC and Red Cross that does the evacuations and looks after these people. And as soon as they are safe to return to their homes, they will be returning.

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

Need for Flood Protection

Ms. Klassen: It's apparent that First Nation communities are the most affected by flooding because they do not have enough nor the infrastructure to prevent it. Despite this clear need, the government has chosen to do nothing.

How many more years of spring flooding do these communities need to endure before this government will step in and fight for the flood protection in those communities?

Mr. Pedersen: I thank the member for that question. She really needs to talk to her federal 'counterpods'—parts to make sure that they are part of the solution in providing that flood preparation, flood diking and whatnot, that will help prevent this—evacuations from happening in the future. And it is up to the federal government; it's their jurisdiction to make sure that this floodproofing takes place, and as a province, we're certainly willing to be there to help in any way, shape or form we can.

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

Ms. Klassen: I have consulted with the federal government. I have submitted a letter to the federal Minister of Public Safety, and I have asked for these supports because this government is not willing to stand up for our First Nation flood evacuees.

For the flood of 2011, Manitoba's top court opened the floodgate to First Nations action lawsuit. Is that always the route we have to take to get equitable treatment? Will this government sue our First Nations as well?

I ask this minister again: When is the government going to start standing up for all Manitobans and include First Nations in their list of priorities?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, we've taken upon ourselves, a new government, to reach out to every First Nations community in the province and have done so. We've been working hard to build and rebuild relationships with trust and goodwill, to work co-operatively with others.

We made more progress on the Freedom Road than the previous administration did in a decade. We've got agreement from the federal government to work on floodproofing in the north end of Lake Manitoba that'll positively affect First Nations communities around that area and elsewhere. We're working hard with our Look North program to develop economic strategies that will include people in the North and from all communities.

We are working diligently to make sure that all Manitobans have the opportunities to a quality education, better health care, better social services, whether indigenous or not, Madam Speaker. This is progress long overdue, and we're excited to be on the road to recovery.

Infrastructure Improvement Projects Water and Wastewater Treatment

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to see the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations announce the funding of several water and wastewater infrastructure projects this morning, particularly phase 2 of the Rural Waterline Expansion project and the wastewater treatment lagoon and collection system improvements in my riding. I know that the rural municipalities of Dauphin and Gilbert Plains respectively have been keen to see these projects funded.

Can the minister tell us about the projects funded and what it will mean to the communities getting the funding?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I want to thank the member from Dauphin for that great question.

Municipalities are actually really excited about our 2017 budget—and they've expressed this to us—which puts us firmly on track to fix Manitoba's finances while keeping our commitment to invest \$1 billion in strategic infrastructure every year and help grow our economy. In fact, overall investment in infrastructure will reach as high as \$1.7 billion this year, one of the highest totals in infrastructure expenditures in Manitoba history.

Just this morning I was pleased to announce provincial contributions to 24 water and wastewater infrastructure projects to support economic growth and healthy, sustainable communities all across Manitoba. This government is going to take Manitoba to economic growth in the future, and municipalities are proud to be a part of it.

Madam Speaker: I believe the agreement is the honourable member for The Maples is in turn for a question.

Power Engineer Position Hiring Practice Concerns

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I received a letter from a lady who worked in the Accommodation Services branch and different powerhouses as a casual assistant engineer for three years. She was recently interviewed for a permanent position in the Central Power House, but was not given the job. She feels she was bypassed, being a woman.

* (14:20)

Will the minister look into this situation?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Well, I thank the member opposite for the question, and our government is more than happy to look into this particular situation. It hasn't been brought to me, yet, about this particular incident that he's referring to. But we certainly do take matters like that very seriously, and we do have, you know, equitable employment agreements in place and really do support women working in the provincial government.

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

Mr. Saran: Yes, Madam Speaker, this issue comes under the Finance Minister's office, and I forwarded it to—that letter to—recently—to the Finance Minister. The lady has a third-class power engineer licence and is now going for a second-class licence. Already has passed one paper. When I was a chief engineer I had a hard time to find second-class engineers. I had to encourage third-class engineers to go for second class. This lady's already going for it.

Why the chief engineer did not give the job to this lady while she is going for her licence and was going to work in the same position for three years?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, our government is really proud to partner with many organizations in the province of Manitoba getting women to work in—we know that women, for example, make up a large portion of the entrepreneurs.

Recently, I met with the Women's Enterprise Centre and I was surprised to learn that they had never been afforded a meeting with the previous administration in talking about how to build up women entrepreneurs in the province of Manitoba.

Our government is ready to work with women and partner with women getting them to work, whether it's starting their own business or coming to work with for the provincial government or getting them to work in the private sector.

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

Mr. Saran: Yes, Madam Speaker, she has been let go as a casual employee after the interview, and after the interview when she started asking the question to the HR and the chief engineer. According to her, the explanation by the chief engineer is that the minister has asked her to let go the casual employees.

Did the minister order this action? Will the minister meet with the lady to find the truth about this situation?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, our government does have in place various mechanisms if there is an employee who feels that there have been, you know, unfair treatment on—in the workforce, that there are certain mechanisms that they can appeal to, and I encourage that employee to go forward and seek out those opportunities.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding with oral questions, I would just like to draw your attention to the loge to my right where we have a former MLA, Gerry McAlpine, from Sturgeon Creek here visiting us today.

Welcome to the Legislature.

Education System Bus Program Cuts

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Jessica Dubuc, a single parent with two children in Fort Rouge, was at a school division meeting yesterday. Media reports Jessica relies on getting her children bused to school and daycare by the school division while she's studying to be a diesel mechanic at Red River College.

Now, this government's underfunding of education has led to her busing program being cut. She says these cuts will have serious implications for her and her children, saying, quote: I went to school for a reason and I would like to actually get a job I can hang onto, and right now it's kind of going downhill. End quote.

Will the minister commit to making new resources available to help parents like Jessica keep their kids in good schools and in good child-care centres?

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

As he knows, or should know, school divisions are responsible for busing policy within their own divisions and, certainly, we're prepared to sit down with the school division in question to see if there's anything that can be done to assist them. But they make the decisions as to what busing policy's put in place and we respect their right to do that. He should too.

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

Mr. Kinew: Two dozen parents packed the Winnipeg School Division boardroom yesterday to share their concerns about how these government cuts are going to affect their children. Because of this government's underfunding, Winnipeg School Division has had to cut the policy that allowed parents to bus their kids to school for a fee. These are parents that live near a school but work early and need help getting their kids to daycare before and after school. These are parents that are now faced with tough decisions, like Shauna Labman, who may have to change her daughter's plans for school next September.

Will the minister commit new money to help transport these kids to daycare before and after school?

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

And he seems to think that throwing money at every particular incident will solve the problem that is the education system in Manitoba.

We look back 17 years and see nothing but 17 years of declining results in the education system in Manitoba. Manitoba taxpayers and Manitoba ratepayers, both of whom pay for the cost of education in Manitoba, have told us that they need to get good value for their dollars, and we are certainly trying to do that and we encourage the school divisions to manage their money carefully for the same reason.

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

Mr. Kinew: Investing in good-quality child-care options for parents has a powerful multiplier effect on our economy by allowing more parents to go to work. Instead of looking at things system-wide and recognizing that decisions made in education should also help parents with child care, this government's cuts are making things worse.

It seems like they have a siloed approach where the Minister of Education is not speaking to the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding). Why else would he be making good-quality child care more difficult for parents after school?

So will the minister back away from these cuts and invest in our education system and also improve child care here in Manitoba?

Mr. Wishart: Despite what the member is trying to imply, we are working very closely with the Department of Families to co-ordinate child care both in schools or adjacent to schools and out in the community. We're very pleased to have a very strong initiative to encourage child care in this province.

We know that we have a long way to go. We inherited a waiting list in excess of 12,000. The member should know that; he was part of that.

Family Violence Prevention Funding Initiatives

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, on budget day I was pleased to take part in a shoebox project with many of my colleagues. This great project provides support to women in crisis.

Budget 2017 makes significant investments to combat family violence and violence against women so that those at risk can get the help they need.

Can the Minister of Families please inform the House today how these vital funds will help Manitobans at risk?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): This government very much supports opportunities, initiatives that's going to enhance or reduce family violence in this province. Our provincial government is investing close to \$13 million; included in this budget more money for places like Nova House, in Selkirk, that will be established over the next number of months.

We're also partnering with the federal government on the social—the SIF funding that will invest over \$4.3 million in victims of violence.

This government takes its projects seriously, takes these initiatives seriously and are committing money to the most vulnerable citizens in our society.

Highway and Road Maintenance Alternative Repair Methods

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Every year winter and spring weather conditions wreak havoc on Manitoba roads and highways. It is this repetitive freezing and thawing, amongst other factors, that take a real toll on our roads. No road is immune from potholes, frost boils and erosion. The wear and tear on roads isn't just a Winnipeg problem, in fact, two provincial highways made the list of Manitoba's 10 worst roads.

We spend hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars to fix roads in our province.

Can the minister tell the House to what extent is this government looking at new, innovative ways to repair our roads?

Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, let me—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order please.

* (14:30)

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): We are pleased with what we see. Certainly, we are staying even. We are not going backwards, which is positive. We've talked to the government for years, saying our members want to see no increase in taxes. They want to see more efficiency out of the monies government has, and they are doing that. So we are pleased to see it and, more importantly, they are being fiscally responsible so we don't drive the debt up and become unable to sustain the investment we need in the roads going forward.

Who said this? Mike Mager, President, CAA Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition was 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.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer

jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihoods of hundreds of Manitobans, many

of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize how important it is to provide young people with quality learning spaces to succeed in school.

(2) Sport, recreation and the spaces to engage in them are critical to the health and welfare of all students.

(3) All forms of educational infrastructure, including gymnasiums and recreation centres in general, represent an incredible value-for-money investment, whereby the return is improved physical and psychological health and wellness.

(4) Kelvin High School is one of the largest high schools in the province, with over 1,200 students.

(5) Kelvin High School spent several years raising almost \$1.2 million towards the construction of a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

(6) Some Kelvin students currently have to pay to use outside facilities to obtain their mandatory physical education credit.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for the Kelvin gym and wellness centre for political reasons, despite the extensive community support, fund-raising and engagement.

(8) It is wasteful and disrespectful to the dedicated efforts of students, staff and the community in general to simply lay their goals aside without consultation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the need for excellent recreation facilities in all Manitoba schools, to reverse this regressive cut and to provide Kelvin High School with the funding necessary to complete a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

Signed by Camilla Kacsmar, Alaia Minish, Alex Stanton and many other fine Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding with petitions, I would just like to caution members again that when reading out names that no qualifiers, no adjectives are to be added to the—when the member is saying Manitobans. Members are allowed to say many Manitobans, but no other context around that. And I would ask for the co-operation of all members.

Dakota Collegiate Sports Complex

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize how important it is to provide young people with quality learning spaces to succeed in school.

(2) Sport recreation and the spaces to engage in them are critical to the physical, mental and social welfare of students.

(3) All forms of educational infrastructure, including gymnasiums and recreation centres in general, represent an incredible value-for-money investment, whereby the return is the improved physical and psychological health and well-being of students.

(4) Dakota Collegiate spent several years raising money toward the construction of the Louis Riel School Division sports complex to replace the poor condition of its playing field.

(5) Dakota's varsity teams have been forced to play elsewhere because of the poor conditions of its playing field.

(6) Dakota Collegiate must put the project out to tender and break ground in a matter of months for

the field to be completed in time for this coming school year.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for this project for political reasons despite the extensive community support, fundraising and engagement.

* (14:40)

(8) It is short-sighted—it is a short-sighted move on the part of the provincial government to undercut the dedicated efforts of students, staff and the community in general.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the tireless efforts of Dakota Collegiate, its students, parents, staff and the surrounding community; to recognize the need for excellent recreation facilities in all Manitoba schools; to reverse this regressive cut; and to provide the funding necessary to complete the Louis Riel School Division sports complex.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: If not, orders of the day, government business.

Resuming debate on the budget motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Ms. Squire), who has 10 minutes remaining.

Prior to proceeding, I see that the honourable Government House Leader is standing.

House Business

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 33(7), I'm announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski). Title of the resolution is Asserting Copyright for Victims of Child Abuse.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that, pursuant to rule 33(7), he announced that the private members' resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Transcona. The title of the resolution is Asserting Copyright for Victims of Child Abuse.

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Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): It's always an honour to rise and put comments on the record, and, on Thursday, I had concluded all of my remarks.

So thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the budget debate.

I first want to thank all those in River Heights who supported me and talk about, for a moment, what a wonderful place River Heights is. I am sad, however, that the government has singled out Kelvin High School and its gym for cuts, and, hopefully, that can be reversed in future budgets, and, certainly, that's what I will be working for for my community, among other items.

I want to talk about the vision, or lack of vision, in this current budget. The government has talked a lot about making cutbacks, trying to balance the budget. But, of course, even with the cutbacks, even with this vision, we are given a budget which is expected to have a rather large deficit of close to \$800 million this coming year.

Many items in the budget, interestingly, are rather modest modifications of previous NDP plans—interesting, but there it is.

Also interesting, the biggest change that's being proposed in health care was the result of the Peachey report, a report commissioned by the NDP. So, more evidence that the Conservatives are, in a lot of respects, following the lead of the NDP, and that was not to be expected, but that, in fact, is what's happening.

* (14:50)

Let us look at the vision, however, from the actions that the government is taking. First of all, there is a rather striking vision in this budget to target students and recent post-secondary education graduates. The post-cancelling and eliminating the post-secondary education tuition rebate is a tax increase. It will increase the income taxes of students and recent graduates by \$46.5 million this year.

Who would have ever thought that we would have a Conservative government who would single out students and recent graduates in this way, the young people in our province, the future of our province, to be targeted by this big tax increase?

In doing this, the government is sadly breaking its promise of not increasing taxes, and, interestingly enough, if you compare who is paying more in this budget—the students and recent graduates—and who is paying less as a result of the indexation of the tax brackets and the increase in the personal exemption, the interesting fact is that the people who actually come out best are those who are the most wealthiest. And they're also helped by the increasing tax credit on political donations.

And the government, it should be noted, has put and will put post-secondary education students at a further disadvantage by removing the cap on tuition or essentially what they're doing is increasing the cap to a very high level so it's close to—similar to being removing the cap entirely.

It's sad that students are being—and recent graduates are being targeted in this way, but that was one of the central messages and central visions of this budget.

I must say it was sad that the government did not address the most vulnerable in our society by increasing the basic support under employment income assistance amounts to 75 per cent of the Market Basket Measure. This is an action that was called for by Make Poverty History in more than 100 organizations, and it is widely supported. It's very clear that people who are on social assistance, particularly those who are single adults, in fact, are having a lot of struggles. And they are having a lot of struggles because the amount that they get in social assistance is really marginal.

And I am dealing almost every day with people who come to me and say, how on earth can I get by with this situation? And I have to acknowledge that it is extremely difficult for them.

Quite a number of these are, interestingly enough, children who have aged out of child and family services system and are now on their own, trying to make their way, and they're having a really tough time because of the type of support that is being provided. Some are mothers whose children have been taken away, sadly, by Child and Family Services, and they are often having a double loss because they lose the income that they would have got through social assistance for their children and some of the income that supports housing as well as basic income. And they're put in very, very difficult and hard situations.

Another group of adults who are being singled out are adults between the ages of 50 and 65, who have for one reason or another lost their job, the workplace has changed, they have been laid off, and, sadly, they're really struggling because they're in the situation where the social assistance is not really enough to cover their basic expenses.

So it's too bad. And this vision, from this respect, is a vision to not support the most vulnerable in our society. And that's a sad vision to have.

The next part that I would observe in this budget is that there is a failure to pay attention to the need to optimize health and prevent sickness. We have produced, for example, an extensive report on diabetes and many things that can be done to prevent diabetes.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Type 2 diabetes is a preventable disease, and yet we now have considerably more than 100,000 Manitobans with diabetes. And this is very difficult for individuals. It is difficult for our health-care system because it adds a tremendous cost burden and it's difficult, in fact, for our economy because many of the people who are now getting type 2 diabetes are in their working ages, and so we're losing economic activity.

Interestingly, the Peachey report said that 8 per cent of new spending should be on sickness prevention, but sadly we don't see this in the budget and we don't see any real plan in this area. Liberals have also put forward some significant suggestions in terms of prevention of brain and mental health, preventing depression, anxiety, suicide, addictions, preventing multiple sclerosis. These are all diseases where we now have a significant amount of information, and it suggests—that information suggests that we should be doing a lot better in preventing these conditions and in looking at what is happening in other countries where the rates of depression, for example, are much lower.

And yet we see not only are these investments not present in this budget, but we see that the government is cutting certain critical health investments in prevention. For example, the investments in Metis people and the health funding for the Metis has been cut. The funding for the Islamic Social Services Association has been cut. And that again is largely an effort at helping families and preventing problems and trying to support families. So it is sad that the one area which really should have been there, front and centre, was missing.

As to the health plans the government has unveiled, a—major changes within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the closure of the emergency rooms at Victoria hospital, Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks and the closure of the Misericordia Health Centre. And, although the Peachey report is long and although there is comparison to other centres, there really isn't an adequate base of evidence to document that this is really going to work.

We have already suggested, from a Liberal perspective, that it is essential that the government use tests of temporary closures of these facilities to see what will happen, where people will go. If, in fact, the result is that you're going to end up with clogged emergency rooms in emergency rooms which are remaining, at St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre and Grace, then it's not going to be a solution at all.

I had somebody comment over the weekend that they'd seen ambulances already lined up outside the St. Boniface emergency room at times. If you close these other emergency rooms which make up almost half of the adult and general emergency room traffic in the province, we could be in for major, major problems and major and increasing delays.

It will also, interestingly enough, affect people in rural areas. People from Morris in the south, people from the Interlake in the north or eastern Manitoba, who might come to Victoria or Seven Oaks or Concordia, will now have to come an extra 15, 20 minutes or whatever to the Health Sciences Centre or St. Boniface. And that 15 or 20 minutes may be a rather critical 20 minutes in somebody who's very sick. So we are concerned about these plans. I have talked about these concerns and will continue to do so.

There could have been much more to address and treat brain and mental health conditions. Peer support workers, residential treatment of those with mental and brain issues and suicidal ideation certainly should have been on the table.

* (15:00)

There's a striking failure to support science and innovation, decreasing the funding to Research Manitoba—no effective plan for other critical areas of research, including community-based research to help us move forward with preventive measures.

On environmental issues, the government has failed to protect the environment. It's cut funding to the Clean Environment Commission, to water science and watershed management. Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Manitoba are all having their own issues. There are concerns—*[interjection]*—long-run concerns on Lake Winnipegosis about the decrease in the pickerel fishery. There are concerns on Lake Manitoba of what may be happening at the moment in that respect. They are not mentioned and climate change is not mentioned.

There is not adequate attention to indigenous people in our province. There's no mention of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. There is a failure, so far, to develop an adequate duty-to-consult framework for indigenous communities. There is a failure to provide flood prevention for First Nations communities so that now we have more than 400 people who have had to be evacuated from First Nations communities this year.

And the government says it's all a federal responsibility, but, you know, the government gets equalization transfers of \$1.8 million a year that's based on population—substantial dollars which should be going to the indigenous communities, which are not. A failing to provide an economic plan for First Nations communities, failing to uphold the Jordan's Principle resolution as unanimously voted by the House; cutting funding in certain areas to indigenous health; failing to support children in care by continuing to claw back the children's special allowances while cutting funding to Child and Family Service organizations who've been demonstrating positive results.

We expected more; we hope that there is better to come, but we're still waiting.

There's a failure to support justice diversion programs like drug courts, mental health courts and youth justice committees, and services for victims have been cut. Crime prevention needs more than we're seeing in this budget.

There's a failure to commit funding for the Kelvin High School gym and the Dakota Alumni Field, health improvement, sickness prevention activities and there are cuts to the Grace Lake airport. Indeed, let me spend a moment or two on the Grace Lake airport, because it needs to be talked about. What appears to be, on the surface, a rather severe and serious example of discrimination, I refer to the government's decision to fail to support the Grace Lake airport in The Pas. This is an airport which is the home airport of a First Nation's owned and operated airline, Missinippi air, an airline which has been professionally and well-run for 28 years. The airport is much closer for residents of The Pas to use than the alternative Clearwater Bay airport.

A good friend of mine, Dr. Sandy Banks, said the following about Missinippi air: he said, and I quote: I feel so honoured and privileged to have been involved from day one of the project and been able to watch as this dream team came to fruition, watch as this embryo developed into the most sophisticated,

significant private air ambulance team in Manitoba, and certainly ranking with leaders in mid and western Canada. This service which dedicates itself to its patients and their care is made possible only with the amazing work of a team—dedicated, hard-working personnel in the fields of nursing, managerial and aeronautical professionals. I have and will continue to keep in close relations with this wonderful enterprise.

And those are words from Alexander—or Sandy Banks, as he's known, a founder and first medical director of Missinippi air care.

Missinippi air aspires to be the leaders in providing uncompromised safety, exceptional quality and unparalleled customer service in both aeromedical service and air transport, and to be the leading quality provider of aeromedical services and air transport in Manitoba, and to expand the services beyond the borders of Manitoba while maintaining the values of the owners, Mathias Colomb Cree Nation.

There are many questions which need to be asked: Were people properly consulted? Was there actually a full review done of options for The Pas and its airport? Has the government of Manitoba given the strong support for Grace Lake Airport as an airline hub, which it should have been giving?

In the days ahead, the government will have a chance to answer for its decision, a decision which at the moment seems fully contrary to any just and fair treatment of Missinippi air.

There is much more that I could talk about in this budget. There is much more that should've been done in this budget, and clearly for a province as important and significant and with as much potential as Manitoba, we would've hoped for more. We will wait and see what happens, but looking at the budget as it's been prevented—presented and talked about, I and my Liberal colleagues will be voting against this budget, because we don't believe it's up to the standard of what we should've seen. We don't believe it's as good as what could have been done, and as good as what Manitobans deserve to have.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are you—no, are you—sorry—are you up for for speaking?

Mr. Maloway: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. It was actually PC. Sorry about that.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I want to rise in the House today. First of all, I want to, you know, wish everybody a very happy Easter. We just came off the Easter weekend and, you know, it's quite the honour to live in a country like Canada where over the Easter weekend not only was there a celebration of Easter, we also had the celebration of Vaisakhi, and for those of us who may not be as familiar, Vaisakhi is a Sikh celebration. Part of it is, you know, bringing in the new year, the Sikh New Year. But it's also a celebration of the harvest, the spring harvest.

So it's—and also on Saturday, I had the unique opportunity to attend a Nepali New Year celebration. It's apparently year 2074 on the Nepalian calendar. And, you know, if you look around the world and other countries don't always get the opportunity to share and coexist in a respectful manner like we do see in Manitoba and across this country.

So I do want to wish everybody a happy Easter, happy Vaisakhi and a happy 2074, according to the Nepalian New Year.

I know the member from Burrows mentioned earlier about the turban-tying contest, and I got to—a chance to attend—that's called a *dastar* competition—on Saturday. And, of course, unfortunately, I had a chance to speak at it, but I wasn't able to actually have a turban tied on my head. I didn't have time for that, unfortunately, but next time I hope to get more involved in the festivities and have a—more time with the Sikh community over the Easter weekend. It's not always easy.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the wonderful people of Southdale for entrusting me to represent them here in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and, of course, everybody who worked on my campaign and helped me—helped not only me but the entire Progressive Conservative team to build a better Manitoba.

We know that it was—tomorrow is our one-year anniversary as a government and I think everybody in the province was very happy to see a change and it's always good to keep new governments in check. But, of course, it is also important to see our new government have a very bold and aggressive agenda to make sure our province is much stronger for the next generation and certainly our young people that are coming up behind us need to know that we're

investing and we're looking out for their best interests.

You know, the community of Southdale, of course, is a very dynamic and growing community with a lot of young families, and I really want to make sure that, you know, parents in that community are always very interested and very concerned about the future of their children. Of course, it's a—home to many newcomers as well who now call Winnipeg home and, of course, who have settled in the Southdale community and expect that governments spend the money wisely, not only their money, but the money that will be their children's and grandchildren's money.

And I think that Budget 2017 does just that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a path to prosperity; it's a path to balance; and it's a way that our government can reinvest in the province of Manitoba, while making sure that it's spent efficiently and, of course, the money goes to urgent and important things like health care and education.

*(15:10)

I know we talked about the Peachey report earlier in the Chamber today and, you know, the Peachey report was sanctioned by members opposite during their time in government. And, you know, it's interesting that places like Vancouver has four emergency rooms—departments and Winnipeg has six, yet has a longer wait time. So things like that are very important to reconsider, certainly, these—because of the length of the wait time that Manitobans were experiencing was the longest in Canada. We spent the most per capita and got the longest wait time, paying more and getting less. And that certainly didn't serve Manitobans and taxpayers any better than other places in Manitoba—in other places in Canada like Vancouver or Calgary who have less emergency rooms and shorter wait times.

So I am excited to see a new initiative coming through this government, and under the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Pallister), I know that this is—and have great confidence that this will certainly be a positive thing going forward for Manitobans and certainly a positive step for many of our seniors and those who will be seniors in the next decade or so, as they tend to rely on the health-care system more than others.

With our education system, with the focus on early childhood literacy, I think that's a very important thing. We ranked dead last in many

metrics across the board in terms of our education system. And with the new initiatives here, not only in early childhood literacy but at the post-secondary level where we're putting more money into things like bursaries and scholarships and front-loading the assistance to students, I think that's a very positive effect and a very positive move for the next generation. We know that many of us will look to future generations for leadership at some point, and we want to make sure that they have the best education and the best system that can afford them the opportunities to do just that.

You know, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of us in this Chamber have inherited a province that has afforded us many opportunities, some of which include sitting here as a elected member of the Legislative Assembly. But we want to make sure that our children and grandchildren inherit that same and not—if not better opportunities that we had the opportunity to inherit ourselves.

So I think that Budget 2017 is a delicate balance between finding the efficiencies and finding better ways of doing things, while delivering on the front lines and delivering the services that Manitobans come to rely on, on a daily basis.

We—it's certainly no—not unknown to many members in this Assembly that, if left unchecked, the provincial deficit by 2019 would reach \$1.7 billion, so that's a staggering \$1.7 billion that would not have been—that would've been passed down to our next generation. That's money that could be used to invest in education an early—

An Honourable Member: Give it some time and you'll reach it.

Mr. Smith: Well, you know, I know I hear the members from opposite, and I couldn't quite understand what they said, but I'm assume they're agreeing with me on the fact that a \$1.7-billion deficit is a staggering amount. And it's unfortunate that members opposite did not address that fiscal issue. That was a serious issue, and, unfortunately, for every dollar we pay in repaying our debt and paying down the deficit, that's money that cannot go to other important services, not only for ourselves but for the next generation.

So the members opposite in the previous government under the Selinger government unfortunately did not recognize the inherent threat of out-of-control spending, and that's why Budget 2017 takes the necessary steps to bring that back in control

and bring things back to balance in this province. I mean, Manitoba's always known as a province that's—appreciates balance, and we think that this budget hits that—hits the right note in that sense.

Through this budget, we are seeing significant strategic infrastructure investments based on value for money, better and more streamlined systems, and increased flexibility and choice for our municipal partners. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to see strategic infrastructure funding that's steady throughout the years, not raid, raid, parade, as our Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen) has said in the past.

Unfortunately, under the previous government, it was quite obvious that Infrastructure was the only department that was underspending throughout their term until election time. Every other department was overspent except Infrastructure, and that, unfortunately, does no—that's not good for the infrastructure of our province. It's not good for the companies and contractors that rely on it. It's certainly not good for Manitobans who have to use infrastructure like highways and roads that pretty much everybody in this Chamber and all our constituents have to rely on.

So, unfortunately, that's—that was a practice, but, you know, I'm glad to see that our new government has decided to go away from that model and spend more efficiently and spend money on targeted and strategic infrastructure to make sure that we have the best outcome, economically and socially, in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

No, it's, you know, just a—being out in the community and talking to my constituents, it's always great to do—be able to do that, and I do a lot of that and, quite frankly, I hear a lot of good feedback. And people are excited about the new approach that our government's taking, that, you know, this change is a long time coming. And it's good to see the support from Manitobans on that particular issue with—whether it's on infrastructure spending and holding the line on taxes; that's very important. And, you know, I do hope that members opposite—you know, I know there's—sometimes there's heckling here in the Chamber, but at the end of the day—that they will support us in this important initiative in making sure that we get Manitoba back on track to balance, and that's something that I think every single person in this Chamber and every constituent across this province would really appreciate that.

So, again, I do urge all members of the House here to support this budget and certainly look forward to continued debate on the subject. Thank you.

Mr. Maloway: I'm very pleased to speak today on the amendment to the budget before us today and, at the outset, make some comments about issues that are rising out of the budget that produced very serious effects, or will produce very serious effects here to the people of the province, and notably the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), just two speeches before, pointed out the effect it's going to have on students. And that was fairly obvious, that this government certainly chose them, chose the students, as a—one of their easy targets, which may, in fact, come back to haunt them.

But they decided to eliminate the tuition freeze that the former government had in place for a number of years—and certainly was popular out there with the student community. And by eliminating the freeze now, they—we're going to see the tuition fees in Manitoba skyrocket over the next few years. And I believe I've read that we're looking at tuition fees now of probably 7 per cent and on top of that some extra course fees and other extra type of fees that are going to be charged by the universities.

And so I see the—part of the government's strategy here, on a macro sort of sense, seems to be to let others exercise the cuts they have—in the whole area of education by essentially cutting back on education expenditures at—bringing it in at, I think, 1 per cent, or certainly below the rate of inflation. They've necessitated the school boards to take responsibility for the shortfalls that they're going to have and do either one of two things: either raise taxes or cut. And the cuts will include things like cuts to teachers and cuts to the school system.

And I guess they hope that by off-loading the responsibility to the school boards in this case, that somehow they're going to not be affected as much by taking that approach. And, certainly, that approach has been tried in the past by other governments with, you know, a certain amount of success, but sometimes lack of success. But, anyway, that's an option that they're taking.

The other area they're looking at is downloading responsibility to the municipalities, which is another, basically, off-loading of responsibilities here.

And I guess the biggest chance they have taken here is cutting the three ERs in the city. And I heard

the previous speaker talk about, well, you know, there's bigger cities have fewer ERs. And it seems to me the more I listen to the comments being made on this whole exercise of theirs in reducing the number of ERs in Winnipeg from six to three, it seems to me that this plan was drawn up by bureaucrats. I mean based on the Peachey's report, but by people who, essentially, you know, don't really know—are not on the ground to be able to evaluate the effect of doing this.

* (15:20)

I—my guess is that this was done by bureaucrats looking at statistics, maybe even outside of Manitoba, and saying, well, if we can take a population, say, of Vancouver and Calgary, and we find that those are bigger cities and they have two ERs, then perhaps the same should apply to Winnipeg. But the fact of the matter is I doubt whether they've actually sized these facilities to see how big they really are. I don't think that the Health Sciences Centre and the St. Boniface hospital and the current Grace Hospital are going to actually have the physical space any time soon to handle what is going to be 100,000 extra visits coming to these hospitals.

And the—even though the Seven Oaks hospital has a better layout, evidently, and more facilities there right now, this government has somehow picked Grace that has the least space available. But they say, well, you know, it has more fields around it, so we can start building, you know, we can build—start building out. Well, anybody that knows anything about planning and constructing knows that this isn't happening any time soon. By the time they do the planning to expand Grace and then actually give out the construction contracts and do all of this work and actually get these facilities in place, this government's going to be long gone. It's not going to be the government anymore. That's going to take a number of years.

And, in the meantime, they're saying that, oh, well, we can just shut down Concordia in six months. Well, you can't do that. They've said, well, we are going to—just to show you how unrealistic they are—we're going to shut down Concordia because we're going to expand the Grace. Well, hello, they can shut down Concordia in a year, but they can't expand Grace in a year. That's just not going to happen.

So the question is: Where are all these people going to go? And we know that from Concordia there are approximately 30,000 visitors a year; from Seven Oaks there are approximately 40,000 visitors a

year; and from Victoria there's another 30. So that adds up to about 100,000 visits. And these people now are going to be fighting traffic, fighting with one another, to get to Health Sciences Centre, for example.

So I had a occasion where a couple days ago a person who goes to the Health Sciences Centre from St. Norbert told me, well, you know, this might not be bad, because I wouldn't go to Victoria anyway. I would normally go to the Health Sciences Centre where—because they've got better equipment there. And this is true.

But I had to point out to her that, what is going to happen at the Health Sciences Centre, when you take all those 30,000 from Victoria, the people are going there, and now her wait, when she goes to the Health Sciences Centre, are maybe two hours or four hours. Well, you add another 30,000 from Victoria; those visitors going there, that's going to increase your wait-list. You take your 30,000 from Concordia and put them into the mix, and then you take another 40,000 from Seven Oaks and throw them in the mix—like, you are going to have chaos.

That's all you can say about this, because you cannot possibly expand Health Sciences, really, you know, any more than it is right now. The thing is already a pretty big facility, but I don't think it's anywhere near as big as what you actually need to handle the problem. So where are they going to build? Are they going to build further up? Are they going to build across some more streets? I mean, this is all going to take time. So this government is really deluding itself if it thinks it can simply read over the Peachey report and say, oh, well, this is so simple. We just going to shut down these three facilities and the other two are going to handle the problem.

And the—you know, another issue in all of this, of course, is if you could do these things—anybody in business will know this—that you have to have a buy-in by your employees, right. If the employees don't believe your plan and can't follow your plan, your plan's going to be unsuccessful. So I think that these are, you know, these financial geniuses over there who got elected a year ago tomorrow, you know, think that the—as my friend the former member from Selkirk used to call them, the—what did he call them?—the captains of industry and—what's his other line?—the captains of industry over there. I mean, they think that somehow they could just follow this Peachey report and it's all going to work out. Well, I got news for you; it's not going to work out to their

satisfaction, and it's not going to work out that way any time soon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I certainly look forward to dealing with this issue over the coming months because I have to say that I think they have really taken a—just a—too big of a bite out of the apple at this point to ensure any sort of amount of success. And this issue is not going to go away. I've been involved in several issues over the past few years, and this one here, it certainly is, in my opinion, as strong an issue as any that I've seen. And people do not like what this government is doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to also make some comments on some issues that have been happening, certainly, down in Quebec regarding Bombardier. This is a company that members will know, not unlike a lot of other companies in this country who, you know, put the hit on the local governments when it comes—when things are not going well for them financially. So, just to paint the picture a little bit here, what happens is a company like Bombardier, you know, maybe takes on more business than it can handle. Maybe its—it doesn't plan its production that well, and so it gets behind in its deliveries, for example, to Toronto transit authority, for one.

But what it does is, unlike business—what businesses are supposed to do, which is simply go to the bank to get more money, what this corporate welfare bum does is it has a track record, a very successful track record, I might say, in putting its hand out and getting money from the Quebec government, I believe even from the Ontario government at a time or two and certainly from the federal government. And what it's doing right now is right up there, following their usual course. And to the Quebec citizens' credit, there's been a lot of blowback on this. What has happened is not only have they had their handouts from the government, but what they did was they gave their executives a huge increase in pay.

And, you know, I think people, even shareholders, don't mind having executives get an increase in pay if the company is actually performing. So, for example, I'll give you some examples here. In 2000—or, sorry, 1995, the Royal Bank CEO was paid \$2.2 million, but in 2007—so, in 2007, the CEO pay was \$44 million. So it went from \$2.2 million to \$44 million from 1995 to 2007. The Petro-Canada president was paid—went from \$1.3 million to \$17 million in 2007. Bank of Nova Scotia

president was 1.9 to 16 million, and the Air Canada president, which was \$1.9 million, went to \$42 million.

So, needless to say, you know, unlike Europe where corporate executives evidently earn, you know, more reasonable salaries, this seems to be more of a North American phenomenon where these corporate executives get these huge, huge payouts. And they say, well, this is because of competition in the market. There's so few of these great CEOs around, and they also sometimes make the argument that, in fact, they've actually increased the value of the—to the shareholders. And, you know, I think there's some argument to be made that perhaps a salary increase, provided it's reasonable, could be acceptable to the shareholders if in fact the company's doing what it said it was going to do, that they're actually making the company better and improving its bottom line.

*(15:30)

But what's happened with Bombardier is these people are not doing that. The corporate executives are—the bottom line: the layoffs are huge. They're laying off huge amounts of people, and they're basically incompetent at running their company. They're losing huge amounts of money. They're having the taxpayers bail them out, and, on top of that, they take an increase in their corporate salaries, and this should really not be something that we support.

Now, I notice the Conservatives federally, while they, too, were involved in bailing out Bombardier in the past, now they're against corporate welfare. Their current leadership contestants, Bernier being one, have said, well, oh, no more corporate welfare, and that's what they're saying, you know, in opposition, but when they get in power, it's a different story.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have seen in Canada over the last number of years, is a drive for more shareholders' rights, where groups of shareholders have got together to demand a say—it's called a say-on-pay movement—and I did have some involvement in that in the past and actually introduced a bill into the federal House of Commons to deal with that issue to give the shareholders the right to approve salaries, stock options and other compensation for top executives and corporate officers.

And, in fact, at the time that this bill was introduced, we did have, right here in Manitoba—

actually it was an article in the paper of—I don't have the date here, but it looks like April 1st, 2011—and guess what? It was Winnipeg Free Press, and it was the MTS—you know, our old MTS board, to give shareholders a say on executive pay: The board and directors of Manitoba telephone system has decided to give shareholders a say on pay at next year's annual meeting. The policy, which will be developed more fully this year, will allow shareholders to participate in an advisory vote during Manitoba Tel's general meeting in 2012.

So, you see, this actually is a very popular idea and supported by people from all of the parties. You know, it's not an NDP thing; it's like, you know, probably even as many Conservatives would support say-on-pay resolutions and—because, you know, you've all got your own shares one way or another. If you don't own them outright, you have them as part of your retirement funds, and why should you be interested in having corporate CEOs making, you know, like Robert Milton, \$42 million, and here you are struggling with your Air Canada shares which, at the time, were like a buck or two bucks a share, and you've got this guy walking away with \$42 million.

So there is a very good reason why the average citizen should want to be involved and take a position and put some restrictions on these CEOs and, as I explained before, this is not a big problem in Europe. So what does Europe do that we're not doing here in Manitoba, in Canada, and why is it, then, that we don't have all the CEOs from Europe over here?

Because, I mean, it's just obscene. If you were looking for an occupation as a young person entering university right now, I mean, I would think, looking at the CEO pay packages, you'd have to say that's got to be the place to be looking right now.

So I would think that we should be paying a little more effort into this particular issue to make certain that we change the culture in these corporations so that this is not a—United States is a really good example. I mean, we have seen Wall Street, and now we have a president in the United States that's actually taking us back to pre-2008. But what you had there was, I mean, CEOs in companies that basically earned millions and millions of dollars and, as a matter of fact, stole—many of them stole millions and millions of dollars. Some of them—actually, in the United States, some of them actually did jail time. There are more corporate executives—

not enough, I'll tell you—but more corporate executives in the jail—actually went to jail.

But let's look at Canada. If you look at Canada, the picture is totally different. If you look at all the frauds and scams involved with corporate CEOs in Canada, you will find that almost nobody actually ever goes to jail in this country. I—we looked at this back in 2011, and, in the cases that we could find, we were talking about, you know, maybe one or two actually went to jail, whereas, the United States, the numbers were much, much higher. And you know what is even worse is that you could find out more about a Canadian company by checking with the American securities exchange than you can in Canada. And isn't that sad that if a Canadian shareholder wants to find out what's happening with their company, they don't—can't get the information in Canada, they go to the securities exchange in the United States to get the information? And that's the— one of the drawbacks of the system we have here in this country.

Now, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was so eager to make this speech that I even got up one rotation earlier, and now I find, once again, that I've run out of time—

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

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): It's a pleasure to rise to put a few words on the record, not in favour of the Leader of the Opposition's amendment, but in favour of our budget. I think it's a very fair and well-thought-out and well-balanced budget. We certainly are modest in terms of changes and movement, but we—you can certainly see the direction that our government is prepared to go.

And we made the extraordinary effort to turn the canoe, as our leader likes to use as an example, when it comes to finances, because finances in this province have, for some time, been headed out of control. We've seen repeated deficits, and they're continuing to grow in size. And we know, not only for ourselves, as Manitobans of the current generation, but that for the future, we simply must deal with the deficits that are in place. We cannot keep offloading our mismanagement and our inability to deal with issues on the next generation, because the next generation—we can't start life further behind than we did. We need to leave things, as is often said, leave things better than you found them. And I think that will be something that Manitobans

remember the previous government did not do, that they did not leave things better than they found them. They left them in a great deal of crisis.

And we talk about specifics—talk about some specific things, and in terms of the deficit, and I couldn't help but chuckle to myself when the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) was talking about Bombardier and how their government would never make the mistake of putting extra dollars into a private company like that, because you wouldn't get a good return on that. They would simply take the money and run with it, and the benefit would not be there. And then couldn't help but think of OmniTRAX and all of the money that their government put into OmniTRAX over the years. And what did we get in return for that? And we still have issue with OmniTRAX. We do not have a functioning railway up there. And what was the benefit to Manitobans? And I think that if the member stops and thinks about it a little bit, he'll see the parallels there, too, and perhaps be a little bit ashamed of picking one example over the other, because they themselves did that.

And Tolko was no different. And our government had—was fortunate enough to have a time and an approach that actually led with—to some better options there. And we would hope that—I wish every success to 'kolko' now and into the future, because I think it's very important, not only for Manitoba, but for the community itself up there, in a situation like that. Where it's very much a one-industry town, we certainly want that industry to succeed.

Now, I would like to talk a little bit about a few things related to education. But I did want to mention, because it had come up earlier today, the amount of work that our Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) has put into trying to get things organized and to try and deal with child-care issues. We came into a situation where there really wasn't a plan; even though they talked a lot during the election campaign about the wonderful things they were going to do in improving child care in Manitoba, there really was no plan. It was just a report with no plan forward; it really outlined some of the problems that were there.

* (15:40)

Our government has put together a plan moving forward. And a good portion of that is actually the departments of Education and Families working very closely together as we move forward with school

redevelopment in this province, and, as much as possible, where we're going to put childcares in conjunction with the schools. That is a very, very good program. There's great opportunities to do that.

As I like to say when I'm talking to people in the community, we simply must do something like that because we're out of church basements and community halls to use for child-care centres. We have to look at what other infrastructure is in the community, and the obvious choice is to work with schools. And, frankly, it works very much—very well with families to have the kids go preschool and also to school. And we need to get better results in terms of having kids well prepared to come into the education system. So we certainly benefit in multiple ways for having strong child care and in conjunction with schools one opportunity.

The other area that we're looking at is, of course, licensed in home, and that was the other message we got very, very clearly from people during the election campaign. If it can't be at the school, it needs to be down the street. And so we need to encourage more licensed-in-home childcares, and, of course, the red-tape problem in Manitoba actually was a real significant barrier to that.

I know that I did a fair bit of research on that and compared our red tape with a number of other provinces, and we were multiples of—in terms of red tape from what other provinces. And the province to look at actually is—that has the greatest success in licensed-in-home childcares, everybody knows, is Quebec. And that we're 40–41 per cent or greater of the capacity for their child care is licensed in home, and, yes, it's been that way for some time. It's a multi-generational thing and you actually do find families that run—family-run businesses there that've been in place for years and years.

And, even though we've not had that kind of history here in Manitoba, the potential is there to do that. And, in fact, there was a study come out the other day that's suggesting that children that have gone through licensed in home have experienced much more a better structure, much greater stimulation than not-for-profit child-care facilities. I'm not sure that that's a absolute determinant because certainly I believe that it—very much a function of the amount of education the ECEs or early childhood educators have, and I believe our standard here in Manitoba is amongst the highest in the land. But I'm looking forward to seeing that—the report in greater detail and working with them.

Now, the education system here in Manitoba. And I guess before I get into that, because we'll—I'll forget about it otherwise, I did want to mention that what we've done with the Provincial Nominee Program here in Manitoba and the immigration program here in Manitoba, we have made significant changes to clean up the mess that we inherited. We had waiting lists pushing 5,000 people. That is extremely disrespectful for those individuals. We're asking them to put their lives on hold for nearly—for up—for 40 months or nearly that long on the average, and we can't expect people that want to come to Manitoba to wait that long in limbo without any answers.

So we've put a lot of emphasis into cleaning up that waiting list. Everyone is either dealt with now or in process. There's still always a period of time when you go back to people and if you need additional information or another document, it takes a while to get some of these, because some of them come from parts of the world where getting access to individual documents can take a little while, and, of course, they have to be verified and all of that. So there's still a small number of people in process.

But we're now down to a point where we're doing a turn-around time of six months, which I think is very, very respectful of people's time, and we're working much more closely with industry, private business, to make sure that we can fill the needs of private business, because I would remind them—everyone in the House that the Provincial Nominee Program is an economic immigration program, and it needs to be working well and working in close conjunction with private industry to make sure that Manitoba as a province benefits from that as well as the individuals in that, and that's why it's in place.

We're very pleased, and we expect it to continue performing well in the future. We're making some other changes in terms of different methods of entries that will work specifically for students that come here, foreign students that come here to get their education in Manitoba, which we expect will attract additional students to come here in Manitoba and make our post-secondaries even more competitive now and into the future.

So we're very pleased to have taken that program and revamped it, and I suspect that we're going to find other provinces following the lead that we have shown on that and, in particular, our ability to work

with the labour market information much more closely.

Labour market information is something that we are planning on using, actually, in the post-secondary system, a lot more than has been the case in the past. In fact, the previous government didn't use it much at all. They used it a little bit in the trades and training side of things, and we will certainly continue to do that work more closely, in fact, with that sector. But the colleges used it a little bit. We'll be working much more closely with the colleges to make sure that the new trades that they're putting together, the new training programs they're putting together are designed to work within the labour market needs so that we can actually have more people come here that can go 'girectly' into a good job. Whether they're trained here in Manitoba to that good job or whether they come from another country, they'll get into that good job faster, be much more successful here in Manitoba, and, of course, the province benefits from that as well.

But we do have some outstanding issues to deal with in terms of the K-to-12 system. The K-to-12 system in Manitoba is—under the previous government, had 17 years where we went from fifth in Canada to either dead last or nearly dead last in almost every category, and we're certainly looking forward, and in fact, have initiated a number of ways already to try and improve the quality of our K-to-12 education here in Manitoba. It's not that we don't spend dollars on it, because, in fact, if you look at the dollars per student, we are the second highest in the country in terms of the amount that we spend on—per student across Canada, and we know that we have some of the best educated teachers of any province in Canada. So one would wonder why we can't get better results.

And so we're certainly working very closely with our educators in the province of Manitoba, the teachers themselves, and trying to improve the quality of the education. And our focus initially will be on early years numeracy and literacy, and we believe that that is important, because there's certainly data to support that we don't lose the kids in high school; we lose them before high school. They hang on, but they're not doing well in the education system, and, of course, that shows in the performance that—the poor performance in the education system. We need to focus on getting them started right on literacy and numeracy and get them better results.

The other thing that we're doing, of course, is bringing much more vocational information into the school system. Not everyone is going to go to a university or even to a college. We need, now and into the future—we know that by 2022, we need to replace 170,000 people that are working in Manitoba that are going to retire because the baby boom, in particular, becomes an issue, and we're very pleased to work very closely on that.

And we're also working with the post-secondary system, and a lot of people have made reference, of course, to the support for students, especially going into post-secondaries in Manitoba. And we are very pleased to have increased the support for students in a major way. The previous government had a program, Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative—in fact, goes back to the '90s; was actually Gary Filmon's government that put in place that program initially. And they had not funded it in any significant way to increase it. They were—a total of about \$4 million a year was available to students as scholarships or bursaries. Now that we have changed the structure of that program and put additional dollars into it, we have taken that \$4 million and turned it into \$20 million, which, I think, is a significant amount of support for students. I know that the opposition doesn't like to hear that, because they always said that we needed to support access to universities. And now that we've done it, they're complaining about it. And I find that a little disconcerting that they don't like it when we do what we said we would do during the election campaign and we—and what Manitoba students told us they wanted it. So we are very pleased to do that, and, in addition to that, we have a special bursary program that we announced the other day, at 10 and a half million dollars that is targeted to low income students so that anyone should have access to university. We do not want tuition costs to be a barrier to anyone who wants to attend university.

* (15:50)

So, when you combine the two programs and a few other existing programs that are special-purpose programs, some of which are Aboriginal or some are specific to a particular training program, the total of scholarships and bursaries available to Manitoba students now will be 35 and a half million dollars. And I know that that's going to provide a level of access that this province has not seen before, and we look forward to the opportunity to work with Manitoba students and Manitoba post-secondary institutions on that.

And while we're talking about universities in particular—and I mentioned earlier, labour market information and—it is very important that people are being trained to an end, whether done through university, whether done through college, whether done through trades or training, and so we're certainly working—planning on doing more work with universities as well to make sure that labour market information becomes available to them so that they know what it is they should be training people to.

I heard a report on the weekend that kind of was a little disconcerting because now we seem to have a surplus of Ph.D.s in Canada. I wonder what that will have—impact that will have in terms of competition at institutions—as post-secondary institutions—and whether or not we can have greater success in getting some of these Ph.D.s into private industry where they can actually use their skills and put them to work to even greater benefit. So we look forward to those opportunities.

I know there are many other things I could say, but I know that time is tight. We're very pleased to have had the opportunity to make some changes already to—in particular to the Provincial Nominee Program which we believe will work very much better. We've made some changes already to the post-secondary institutions. There are certainly more to come. And we're also initiating a consultation process on the K-to-12 system. I know Manitobans want to express their opinions. I look forward to hearing from Manitobans on that. Certainly, I've heard a lot already. It's probably the most common comment out there: Why don't we make some changes? What should those changes be? And we'll certainly be asking that question.

We're doing what the previous government could never in their 17 years get around to doing. We're taking action, and I think Manitobans appreciate that. Manitobans expect their new government to get better results for their taxpayer dollars, and we will guarantee that we will do that.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's certainly my pleasure and honour to rise today to put a few words on the record in favour of the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and against this government's misguided and detached-from-reality, I might say, budget that has been put forward on the floor.

But before I do get into my comments, Mr. Speaker, I thought I'd just take a quick moment, as is sometimes the custom in this place, to thank my constituents, of course, of Concordia, who have sent me here, have given me the opportunity to represent them. And I certainly have engaged with them in the last number of weeks more so than ever before because of the cuts and the realities that they're facing, based on this government's decisions.

And I always, when I do get an opportunity like this, like to take this chance to say to my constituents that I appreciate their viewpoints. I appreciate all of their comments. I certainly am guided by their input, and some of the best ideas that I've gotten and come forward with in this place have been, you know, have had their genesis, you might say, with my constituents and their concerns and their great ideas. So I always like to take the opportunity to say that and to put that on the record here today.

You know, this is—this budget has left me, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, just—almost without words in a lot of ways. And the reason is because the cuts that we've seen come forward from this government were more than I could have imagined, more than I could have anticipated. You know, a lot of the things that we see now, coming to fruition, certainly in the health-care system, but with regards to education, with regards to housing, with regards to justice, with regards to a whole number of issues, you know, is much worse than we anticipated. And I would say that we spent a lot of time in this House, as members will recall, in the first year of the mandate of this government sort of just, you know, sort of saying, okay, what have they done in the past? They haven't said much now, but what have they done in the past? What have they mused about in opposition? What have their counterparts elsewhere in the country done? And where might they go now? What options are on the table?

And so, you know, bits and pieces of information would come out. We'd present them. We'd ask questions about them, and we heard from the government: No, no, no. You know, it's not going to be that bad. It's not that bad. We are certainly not going to cut those services that you care about.

And the reason that they had to say that was because during the campaign, as I said, a number of times they, you know, they tried to get through that campaign without tripping over their shoelaces and they certainly didn't want to say a whole lot. Certainly, the members, the individual members of

the government caucus, who are now the members of the government caucus, did not want to say a whole lot on the doorstep. They wanted to blame every problem on the former government and they still do.

But, in terms of their ideas, they would—they were very mum on that, and, of course, in the first budget that they brought they—well, it was great. It was full of talking points; it was great for that reason. It was short on any kind of initiative, but it was great for their first year to have something to work with in terms of their talking points and their messaging.

But that's about all we got out of the first budget. We saw some cuts; we saw some rollbacks; we saw the average Manitoban feeling the pinch, but, in comparison, or in looking back, in retrospect, compared to what we've seen in this budget, that doesn't seem quite as bad anymore, and we see that that budget was holding back—was holding back on this government's true agenda.

So, when it came to this budget, we thought here we go. This is going to be, you know, the full picture is going to be painted for Manitobans. But I have to say, again, they—very clever in how they presented this, some very good political maneuvering. You know, they had the script all written before the budget was presented, and what they decided to do was to decouple or detach parts of the budget from budget day.

And so what we saw leading up to the budget was kind of a betrayal of where the budget was going and what would be contained in it, but it was kind of a rollout of all the bad news all in one shot before budget day.

So, you know, first this started with, of course, cuts in capital spending in health care and, you know, this hit the health-care system hard; this hit a lot of our stakeholders hard. People were, I think, not expecting—maybe they were expecting that some projects would be timed out a little bit differently or would be, maybe, even pushed back. They could expect that this government would push them back, freeze them. These are all buzz words that were used in the first year.

But, no, they didn't do that. In fact, what this government did was cancel major health-care projects, projects that, in some cases, were quite far along in their development and had a significant amount of community support, had community dollars put into it, in many cases had government dollars invested in these projects and were, for all

intentions and purposes, shovel ready. And that actually took, I think, a lot of communities by surprise.

So that was the first thing that they rolled out. And then they said, well, actually, in education we're cancelling the class sizes—small class size initiative. They said that specific projects at—capital spending of specific projects at different high schools would be cancelled, and this was all being kind of rolled out in a kind of a campaign of cuts that were happening before the budget, and what that allowed this government to do, then, was, again, to decouple the messaging from budget day. So, when the budget rolled around, you know, they didn't have to walk out in the rotunda and say, oh, by the way, we're cancelling the increase to the minimum wage. No; they had already done that. They didn't have to walk out there and say we're cancelling projects in health prevention; they had already done that. They didn't have to go out there and say personal-care-home projects are gone.

* (16:00)

What they could do is they could go out and say, well, it's, you know, it's kind of a reasonable budget and there's nothing really too exciting in it, and anyway, let's keep moving on.

Well, we're not going to keep moving on, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, because we know that this budget has introduced a number of cuts that cut right to the core of what this—what Manitobans expect from their government. And it's not just us that's saying this. The government, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself, who was then running in the election, was very clear, and he said himself: I will not cut your front-line services; don't worry; don't worry; I'm not going to cut them. I'm not going to cut your front-line workers. Look, I'm just like those guys; I'm going to just do it a little bit more efficiently but, otherwise, I am going to protect those things that you actually care about.

And, again, I mean, this was all part of the strategy of not saying too much, you know, just saying enough to kind of convince people that, hey, we're okay, we're nice guys, and we're not going to be like the last time that we were in government. I'm not going to do the same things I did when I was around the Cabinet table the last time; I'm a totally different guy.

Well, of course, we know that that was not the case. That's not how it played out. And we're seeing that in this budget. And we're not only seeing it in

the prebudget, as I said, in all of these cuts that were announced beforehand, trying to decouple them, trying to change the channel, so to speak, in the messaging. They didn't do that. They—not only did they do those cuts there, but they also cut within the budget. And they, actually, even despite all of this shrewd political messaging, they still managed to have a budget that was a disaster for average, hard-working Manitobans like the ones in my constituency that I represent.

So things like cutting millions of dollars for Manitoba's housing budget, failing to match the federal government's housing commitment; the things like failing to make communities and families and seniors safer in their communities; any—no new commitments, Mr. Speaker, with regards to preventing crime, cutting programs that actually help deal with the root causes of crime; things like refusing to reverse the changes the minister was just talking about to the Provincial Nominee Program; the additional fee that was introduced and removing any incentives for newcomers to settle down in Manitoba. They failed to provide any investment in promoting gender equality, closing the pay gap for women in the workplace, an issue that certainly for young people is top of mind and something they want to see the government do something about. Very little investment into the child-care system, with no plan on dealing with the wait times and the backlog with regards to spaces. And they failed young people, quite frankly, by failing to present a clear, a strategic and inclusive vision for the future of Manitoba.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

They went ahead; they raised the tuition fees. They allowed the cap to be removed so tuition fees can go up by, you know, roughly 7 per cent or more. They deregulated the course fees which we know have gone up exponentially in the past. So they're balancing the budget essentially, Mr. Speaker, on the back of students. They removed the post-secondary education tax credit. You know, this is a huge, important tax credit for those students who decide to stay in Manitoba, to invest in our communities, to live their lives here and to build their families and their futures here, and that's been removed—and failing to present, really, any kind of long-term strategy with regards to training and long-term job creation in Manitoba.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on, but what I really want to focus on is the

fundamental deception that was presented, you know, prebudget or, you know, and even in the election campaign, that members opposite—and I have all of the sympathy in the world for those members who are, you know, sitting on the backbenches right now, who read the budget probably at the exact same time that the media did, you know. They were blindsided just like the rest of Manitobans, you know.

But we know that, you know, when presented with those stark realities, they had nothing to say. They didn't go out in the hallway; they didn't speak up. They didn't go out and protest or—you know, even privately within their own caucus to say this is not happening. They didn't stand up to this government and to this Cabinet who made these decisions. They didn't stand up to the Premier (Mr. Pallister). And, for that, I feel like they are accountable, and certainly the voters of their constituencies will hold them accountable, because, you know, when we can have a change as fundamentally devastating to our community health care as the closure of Concordia Hospital is to the entire quadrant of northeast Winnipeg and to have member after member after member stand up and not talk about it, not mention it, not stand up for it, not defend it in their budget speech, is disappointing, to say the least. And I think members in their communities would be surprised that their member didn't stand up and say something, didn't stand up and take absolutely every opportunity to stand up against that.

When I heard the member for River East (Mrs. Cox), the Minister for Sustainable Development, stand in her place just weeks before talking about BethaniaHaus, the personal-care home space that's connected by a tunnel that was built as a charity to connect those seniors so that they could get to the emergency room at Concordia Hospital—to hear her talk about that in a member's statement two weeks ago and then stand up and not say one word about Concordia Hospital in her budget speech was shocking.

To hear the member for—you know, maybe I haven't heard—no, I did hear the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) stand up—and not stand up and defend the closure of Concordia Hospital and not stand up against that decision, but not even to mention the health and fitness centre, a project that is in his constituency, that has support of broad range of people, of community leaders—not even stand up and defend that project and the lack of any

information in this budget about the future of that project.

To hear the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski) to stand up and not say anything about the personal-care-home spaces in his own constituency that have been on the books, that have been worked on by the community for seven years. Seven years, they've been working and raising money and developing that project, and now it's cancelled. People are losing their jobs. The future of the entire personal-care home is at stake, and I hear nothing.

And to hear the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) stand up when Uber is discussed and not have anything to say, not defend those people who've come, brought their money, brought their investment to this province, put their—put the safety of passengers and the delivery of service first, and for him not to say anything about that is shocking.

For the member for—I've been listening. I've been listening to the members opposite. And I've been listening for them to talk—to stand up—the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) to stand up for his own personal-care-home bed spaces. Where is he? Why is he not standing up for his community? Why is he not doing that?

The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes)—now, I have to admit I haven't heard him. Maybe he hasn't spoken yet. I want him to stand up for the personal-care-home spaces in Bridgwater. These are important community projects, and absolutely every single one of those members on the other side knows this.

And I want—I would question every single one of them that if they went during the campaign and they knocked on the doors and the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer) said, you know, Dakota, we're going to cut that project. I want to know if that's something that she said to her constituents.

I want to know if the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) knocked on the doors and said, Victoria, closing.

I want to know if the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) was walking around saying, you know your seniors' tax rebate? We're going to cut that. We're not going to give that to you.

I want to know where these members were. Where was the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton) when they're cutting water testing in—for across Manitoba, calling it red tape to test the water when

he has constituents in so many small communities that care so deeply about water in our communities?

Where was the member for Southdale (Mr. Smith)—Southdale—when class sizes initiative was cut? Where was he? Where are these members?

* (16:10)

And, you know what, I hear a lot of chatter from across the way, and you know what, I appreciate it. I appreciate them talking to me, but it's not me that you have to talk to. It's not me that you have to answer to. It's actually not me that matters in this equation. The people that matter are your constituents, and what I ask—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Excuse me. It's getting a little loud in here for our staff to pick everything up. So I would ask both sides of the House to just tone it down a little bit because it's getting fairly loud in here.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. But I did ask for them to be loud, so maybe I—maybe it's partly my fault. But thank you for calling us all to order and asking us to be respectful.

What I ask of every member is that when they go to the doorstep, when they talk to their constituents, that they look them straight in the eye and they say, yes, I stood by while that emergency room was closed in your community. I stood by when your tuition went through the roof. I stood by. I stood with this Premier (Mr. Pallister) when class size initiative was cut, when those capital projects were cut, when CancerCare was cut, when personal-care-home projects were cut, I stood side by side, shoulder to shoulder, with this Cabinet and this Premier to make that decision. And I want to see what their constituents have to say to them. That is for them to answer and for them to stand accountable, and I'm sure that they will.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that is about just one kind of Manitoban. It's about the haves and not the have-nots. It's about a Premier who is out of touch with the realities of the average Manitoban, who voted himself a 20 per cent raise and all of his Cabinet a 20 per cent raise before they would invest in front-line services like they promised to.

And, again, I—it's not me and it's not the opposition. I stand here to be the loyal opposition in this House, to raise these issues but ultimately it will be them who will have to walk door to door, knock

on those doors and explain to their constituents why they brought forward a budget like this.

And, well, it's going to be a rude awakening I think for some. Others may see the writing on the wall. But this is going to be the kind of budget that will define these MLAs and this government going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I'm pleased to see everybody back after a relaxing weekend, Easter weekend, and by the excitement about our budget across the floor, I think even the Easter Bunny's optimistic about the future of this province, all right?

Okay, I'm pleased to stand to be able to put a few facts on the record for Budget 2017.

Manitoba continues to face a large and looming fiscal challenge after the decade of debt, decay and decline by the previous government. Okay, the previous government doubled the provincial debt, implemented significant tax hikes, they increased and broadened provincial sales tax, allowed spending to exceed revenues and they ran up a deficit year after year. Our province was on the pace to \$1.7-billion deficit by 2019 if the previous government's spending habit had been left unaddressed.

Budget 2017 puts Manitoba's economy on the road to recovery and provides a solid plan for making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada. Budget 2017 sets out a strong plan for our province as we work to correct our course and steadily pursue improvements year over year.

Our government believes in listening to the people. They help guide us on the road to recovery. An unprecedented 18,000 interactions with Manitoba's families, front-line workers, small businesses and employees—or employers, each of whom provided their input on the future direction of our province. His budget provides record-high levels of investment to Manitoba health, seniors, active living, including the \$107.5 million in new spending, with targeted investments in primary health services, cancer, triage, expanded dialysis treatment, mental health services and reduced ambulance fees.

Budget 2017 makes significant investments in Manitoba and—or families in the—or increasing its budget by more than \$105 million. These mean our government will be moving quickly to improve the supply and quality of affordable housing, address wait-lists for child-care spaces, provide appropriate

support for our employment income and rental assistance programming clients and protect the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit.

Economic growth is central to our ongoing prosperity. Manitobas told us they want us to focus our efforts on building opportunities and creating a more efficient and effective economy. As well, strategic infrastructure investments are forecast to reach over \$1.7 billion in 2017-18, one of the highest total infrastructure expenditures in Manitoba's history. This includes \$744 million for roads, highways, bridges and flood protection; \$641 million for health, education, housing infrastructure; and 370 for municipal, local and other provincial infrastructure.

Budget 2017 includes provisions for enhancing tourism, marketing by reinvesting revenue generated by the tourism sector—and we know that Manitoba is rich in tourism, and we just have to tap into it. We're removing regulatory burdens for business, non-profits, local governments and residents by reducing red tape. And we've seen our members opposite didn't want to see this happen. In fact, the red tape reduction was one of the bills that they removed to defer to the fall. We've seen that previous government has no interest in this, as they pulled this bill and they're delaying our government's ability to make it easier for business and non-profits to operate in this province.

We've seen the same thing happen with our fishers. That bill also got pulled to give fishers freedom of marketing. They would rather see dollars come out of the people of Manitoba's pocket rather than have them be able to earn what they deserve.

An Honourable Member: Shame.

Mr. Wowchuk: And shame on you.

Budget 2017 focuses on true community partnerships that will enable us to market northern Manitoba as a place to visit, to invest in and to live. Our member from Flin Flon will agree, and I see he's quite excited and nodding, yes, about the northern strategy. Okay. It'll engage indigenous communities in creating sustainable economic development.

Budget 2017 has no tax increases and no new tax, while enhancing investment in services Manitobans depend on, with a 2.1 per cent increase core government spending for the 2017-18 year. It includes provisions to maintaining the child's—Children's Arts and Culture Activity Tax Credit, the—or the fitness tax credit, the adoption tax credit, the

fertility treatment tax credit and the Seniors' School Tax Rebate, the Education Property Tax Credit, the Farmland School Tax Rebate and Manitoba tuition free and education amounts.

The agriculture budget is now \$191 million—up 1.7 per cent from the Budget 2016. Our government recognizes this value of this sector: not only employs thousands of Manitobas—or Manitobans but feeds both our province and the entire world.

Investing in education and skills training continues to be a priority for our government. Manitoba education training will see significant funding boosts for the 2017-18 year, with an overall increase of \$36 million. We're providing record funding to Manitoba post-secondary institutions, with grants totalling nearly \$700 million annually.

* (16:20)

The confederation of students agrees, stating: We believe in front-end measures, such as full conversion of loans to grants would be better use of funds, since grants would greatly reduce student debt levels and encourage more people to pursue a post-secondary education and eventually employment in our beautiful province. This was by Michael Barkman, the Manitoba chairman.

Manitoba government's developing a made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan founded on the principles of sustainable development. It'll offer approaches to water and land use; sustainable agriculture; protecting wetlands, forests and natural areas; as well, investments to green infrastructure promoting clean tech and innovation and numerous other initiatives. These are the facts, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So Budget 2017 charts a moderate and responsible course for our province. It's based on solutions that control government spending and invest appropriately in front-line services to ensure the right help is available for Manitobans at any time.

While our inherited challenges required us to make difficult decisions, something the previous government had difficulty with, Budget 2017 avoids drastic measures, choosing instead to responsibly move Manitoba along the road to recovery. Our government will make these difficult decisions while maintaining our commitment to making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada.

Manitoba deserves a better plan, and the path to our future is clear. Budget 2017 is open; it's transparent and accountable to all Manitobans. It addresses our inherited challenges, improves front-line services and rebuilds our economy. Making these necessary adjustments now will allow us to ensure that Manitoba is today, and continues to be tomorrow, a wonderful place to live.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I would like to put a few words on this budget, which is not—there is not any excitement in this budget. So ordinary people won't benefit from that. Only 1 per cent rich will benefit from that. And my caucus—100 per cent against it.

And so—but I can put some suggestions because, the other day, I asked if the third language, compulsory third language, can be brought in the school system. And that will be really helpful for people like me, because then I will be express myself fully, and I think you can have ideas in any language, not only in English or French. And I hope Education Minister listening it and for sure he will do something about it.

And so I think it's very important we take care of the other cultures, their languages, because if language dies, then culture also dies to the development of one culture. And it makes us more rich, not reduce us, and we should not think too much about money in those terms; we think about how we can conduct business in other languages in other countries, and in that way, I think we can create more business and we can bring more money in and we can balance the budget easily in that way.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So I hope—the other idea I gave, I think I wrote a letter to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), how we can make money out of the taxi industry, because I think also there's a misconception. Like every other city have, oh, a taxi industry, and those major cities have jurisdictions on the taxi industry but in—it's only Manitoba that jurisdiction with the Province.

But think about that. Other cities have very low percentage of the total population, but Winnipeg had more than 50 per cent of the total population. Why, then, this taxi industry, we cannot keep it, and we can make money out of that. How—I think that's where we can bring some money in the budget. That's what we're told. Let us say we need another hundred taxis. Yes, we need another hundred taxis

on going price of say, around about \$350,000. Either people can buy their taxi from the market or they can get that from the Taxi Board.

So, if we are able to sell that many permits, we can get about \$30 million, and that \$30 million will go a long way to help the seniors. I think that seniors got hit hard because the previous government was planning to give a credit—a tax credit, a school tax rebate up to \$2,300, and the PC also made that commitment they will keep the same thing whatever the previous government promising.

But then they backed off, not only backed off, they only had \$470 if your income is \$40,000. If more—family income is \$40,000. If it's more than that, then up to \$60,500 in family income, it will be only—it will be zero. If lower than that, they will consider other tax credits and that will be again less than \$470.

And also it took away seniors' excitement. Before that seniors, after June, whenever they paid city property tax, at that time they were able to apply for it. That cheque used to come directly to the seniors and seniors were very happy. Now even they may not notice it.

So I think it's not only money side, but it's also excitement side of the seniors. So I don't see anything in this budget where seniors will get compensated, whatever, taken away from them.

So I think we should—when I said we should have—this government should think about that. If seniors being taken care of, those people who are not seniors now, they will be staying here in Manitoba because they think when they will be seniors they will be taken care of.

But, on the other hand, if they think they are—they don't matter to these governments, they will move wherever it matters. And similarly—so we may lose our—more population in that way.

Also, I think we should think about—let me talk a little bit—talk about Provincial Nominee Program. Like when I got elected in 2007, I look at the Provincial Nominee Program. There was so many barriers to apply—for people to apply. Nurses have to have a job letter, teachers have to have assessment of their credentials, and people who work in the beauty parlour, they have to also have those assessments.

And because of all those barriers, people were not able to apply and people—and it was really a

problem because sitting somebody in other countries and with hospital will give them a job letter.

Somebody sitting in other country with a trucking company will give them a job letter. So exploitation was going on. Under the table \$20,000, \$30,000 was being paid to get job letters, and I hope—I have not seen the new regulations on new policy—I hope PC government may not go back to the same order.

* (16:30)

When I sat down with the deputy minister and the premier at that time, I suggested remove these barriers. Let people come in and they will make their way. Everybody who comes, they cannot get, immediately, a job in the same trade because they have to know the culture. But, to make them know the culture, we can set up a system. What a system can be, if person comes—say, the person is, say, a mechanic, when he comes in after a couple weeks, sends them to some garage. Let him work over there, but the government pay two, three months for the minimum wages, whatever. They will know the culture; then they will advance and they will upgrade their skill.

But this—I think if we can go through that route, but thinking in other terms—thinking other terms, persons first have to be qualified; then they have to come over here. So that won't help because there will—always will be some differences and some cultural differences in a different trade. You have to pick up those.

So I think those people who got successful, they never got their job first day on the—in the same trade or same profession. Sure, they have to work through it, know the system, bring the qualifications equivalent. And, because in some of the countries, don't forget, there is a system—there's bribery, and people can even buy certificates. And even they can fulfill their requirement, so don't forget about that. If once a person is in the—his trade, people will know whether he knows his stuff or not, and he will know whether he knows his stuff or not. After that, they can create a kind of understanding and they can succeed.

But don't forget there are also other industries which we need people. We don't need people only in these trades; we also need people for the service industry and other industries like, say, gas stations. Sometimes they cannot find people. So we have to be very flexible in those terms.

And so I think the Provincial Nominee Program is a very good tool to increase the economy, but also at the same time we should not send people away. There is, I think—I've seen there used to be 200 points to take away EOI, expression of interest. If you take 200 points, I—because if you have relatives, your brother is living in Ontario or living in Alberta, and that was discouraging the people to take advantage of Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

Now I think that is being eliminated, and what will happen? People will ask somebody over here, pay some amount of money under the table. Somebody will sponsor over here, and the next day, once they got immigration, they will go to Alberta, they will go to Ontario. I don't agree with that system. The previous system was a good system the way it was working.

So, hopefully, I think if—so, that makes a difference, how much money out of budget we will be spending on the nominee program, and how many people will be leaving Manitoba and taking advantage of our system and we are left with nothing, we were not left with the skill and we needed it, because we let it happen that way.

So I think we must have to be more innovative and instead have to be more vigilant because there will be exploitation of the foreign workers. Similarly, students, they think, well, we are encouraging students. Sure, if a student comes, we—our institution gets three times more fees, and if one student comes there, other students support and create that. That's what somebody told me in Red River College.

But how we are discouraging? Because our English requirement is higher than the other provinces. In other provinces, you can get in with an English test, which is called I-E-L-T-S, IELTS, and with that test, you can get admission in those colleges. And so money's coming in and those provinces are benefiting.

We have a minimum requirement of 6.5, so people and students coming to Manitoba, they go to the other provinces, then when they have to have part of their requirement practicum, and what they will do, they come to Manitoba, get the immigration, then they go back to Ontario or whatever province they are.

So we should encourage those students to come in this place so that we can have—our economy can grow with that. We are—we're getting money, we are getting skilled workers, we are getting really

educated immigrants. So I hope, under the Provincial Nominee Program, we can be more innovative. And I know the minister said, well, like in the past we were not that good, but we are now good, I think we are going backwards. We were not good when we start with, but then I emphasized some changes, those changes were brought in, and that system became good, but there were some other changes which were not listened. I tried to talk to the department. Sometimes, unfortunately, we depend so much on the—on those people in the departments, and they run the department and the minister does not have a say into it. That's where we are lacking. The minister should have to say into it, nothing wrong to talk to the other MLAs, does not matter which party he is, or he or she is, because everybody have some kind of good ideas. Out of those good ideas, minister's knowledge that can make those changes.

So I—so the Provincial Nominee Program, I think, is an important driver for our economy and to balance our budget, and so I think—the other thing I would say, we can also have some developmental programs for the people who are on social assistance. Those people, there should be some amount in the budget, those people should be encouraged to take some courses. Say somebody wanted to become a mechanic, give him training about 40 hours and then send it to the some garage, let that person like it. If he like it, then pay again, pay for three, four months their wages. If that guy likes it, he might start doing work. And then we don't have to pay Rent Assist. We don't have to pay other benefits which we otherwise have to pay. So I think—I wouldn't mind even if the people who are able-bodied, if they're encouraged to go to, with incentive, go to their community centres, they can help to cut grasses, they can help to shovel snow and they can feel good about themselves. So I think those kind of incentives should be there and which we are not thinking about. And I wouldn't say this government is not thinking about it, but we say the government does, so I was critical within the caucus, and I wouldn't mind to be critical, and maybe that's why they couldn't afford me.

And so I think the PCs can also—I'm now independent—and as independent, I can help a lot—I think the PCs can have an independent minister. I'm just kidding. I'm not changing parties. I'm going to have my own party. And—but I think that because as an MLA, my caucus can help them as an independent minister. Yes, I can help as an independent minister. Tell your Premier and I think I

will have—I think the government can save money because I won't charge anything, whatever I'm charging them now my salary will be the same and I'm getting as MLA. This is a good offer, maybe, and I think the government will think about that. But don't think that I'm going to change parties. I'm not going to change parties. No, being independent, I think you are more innovative, more innovative. You can help to balance the budget because you can think from both sides.

* (16:40)

So, hopefully, I think I can be contributing. I am really thankful of my constituents. They trusted me the first three times, and they—again, when I was going through this testing period, they also stood with me. They said, be strong. And we are with you. Don't worry about anything. I am really thankful for my constituents, and I did whatever right in my whole life. I will do whatever right on, you know—I will walk, my head high, it doesn't matter what anybody says because my community is with me.

So I think that's why I can suggest many good ideas or bring good ideas to this budget if the Finance Minister's ready to sit with me, and therefore we can improve this budget. By improving this budget, we can improve Manitoba's economy and everybody will win.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley—[*interjection*]

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Let's just agree not to go there. It is worth the trip, but—I rise today to share the enormous concerns that my constituents have and, really, their sense of betrayal with this government and with the budget that they have put before us here in the Chamber.

I think the reason why Manitobans, not just in Wolseley, but across the whole province, feel betrayed by this budget is it is completely different from what was promised by the Premier (Mr. Pallister). This is a gentleman who would tell anyone who is listening—and talked to lots of people who didn't really want to hear it anymore because they didn't believe it, and rightfully so—that there would be, you know, no layoffs, there would be protection of front-line services, that there would be no radical alterations to how things were going in Manitoba.

And I think history—an honest assessment of this budget would have to conclude this is one of the

larger examples of a bait and switch in our province's recent history. You can look at a myriad of policy areas which are getting absolutely hammered by this Finance Minister's document, and there are real lives and real people and real families who are being negatively affected already by what this government has done, and it is one hundred per cent contrary to the promises that they made to the people of Manitoba. And they should just prepare themselves to be held accountable for that.

In many respects, this is Harper 2.0. They have taken a number of pages out of the Harper playbook, from voter suppression, to outright attacks on democracy with omnibus bills, to outright assaults on environmental protections. All of that rings true with the agenda that we now see being implemented both by this government's budget and by the legislation they brought forward.

In no particular order, there's a number of topic areas that I think demonstrate the truth of what I am describing. The Premier has made it very clear that he is governing first and foremost in favour of the 1 per cent in this province. And this goes right to his own Cabinet. He and every single other Cabinet minister took a massive pay raise and then enshrined it so that it would be in place for the entire term that they will be in office, for all four years.

And, in this budget, they went a step further, and they are now proposing to make it legal for people to donate even more money to political parties. And wouldn't you know it, that's actually going to cost the government more money because they will have to provide larger tax credits to people who were, you know, just so severely—you know, it's funny to listen to the members opposite chirp. How many people have we seen parading through the streets say, I'm a multi-millionaire and I feel oppressed, because I'm not allowed to donate, you know, \$5,000 to my chosen political party? I—you know, my fundamental human rights are being violated. And so this government decides that that's a priority and they're going to provide a much larger tax credit to those tiny individuals—a number of people in our province who have been suffering so mightily, in their view, that, you know, the wealthy, again, deserve to have even more control over our political system than they do already. And, at the same time, this government's legislative agenda is bringing in outright voter suppression measures, which will make it more difficult for anyone who does not already have voter identification in the form of a photo ID to be able to even cast a ballot.

Never mind tearing a page out of Stephen Harper; this is a page right out of the Republican and Tea Party playbook south of the border.

It has absolutely no place in Manitoba politics, if the government was acting with a proper moral compass and a sense of democratic integrity for all Manitobans to be able to participate.

You can look at the other end of the income spectrum, and the enormous amount of neglect that this government is shouldering upon the most vulnerable members of our society. People who work minimum wage had been making enormous gains under our government—well above the rate of inflation with annual, predictable increases to the minimum wage. This is now the second year in a row where the minimum wage is going to stay frozen. That means low income people are losing ground in the battle to support themselves and their families.

The child-care commitments of this government would be laughable if they weren't so tragic and painful, not just for the families, not just for the kids, not just for the workers in those centres, not just for all the volunteers who put in their time on the boards for all the child-care centres around the province but for all of them.

A 3 per cent dent in the waiting list, 500 spaces, is not even going to keep up with the increase in demand that will happen over the coming year. It is an absolutely pathetic response to a beautiful opportunity. There are so many examples of how a publicly run, community-based, non-profit, highly skilled daycare program, which should more properly be called early childhood education, can provide enormous benefits to everyone—governments and businesses and communities and families—and this government is just shrugging its shoulders and saying: it's not a priority; we don't care. We're not going to make much of a dent in that.

And, of course, as my hard-working colleague earlier today pointed out during question period—my colleague from Riverview-Fort Garry, one of the legislative protections we put in place was the utility bundle law, where we made it the law that when you added up the cost for natural gas, the cost for electricity and the cost for public auto insurance, when you add those three together, as a bundle, Manitoba would have, by law, the lowest cost of any province in the country. And, at the bottom of one page buried in the back of the Budget, it says very quietly this government's intention to repeal that law outright.

Who is that going to have a negative impact on? Well, it's going to impact pretty much everybody, but low income and vulnerable people are going to be disproportionately hurt by this government's actions.

If we were to shift gears and look at programs that all Manitobans are impacted by, education and health care, for instance. Let's look at what's happening, just locally in my own constituency; when it comes to education, this government, if it had the integrity to do so, should've been at the meeting last night in the Winnipeg School Division where you have hundreds and hundreds of parents coming forward talking about the enormous disruption to their family's lives, enormous disruption to their children's education due to the cancellation of a busing program.

And it is directly traceable to this government's decision to provide such a paltry amount of funding for the K-to-12 education system this year. It is left to the school trustees to try and make the best that they can with a really awful decision made here in this building by this government. And this mirrors what the Filmon Conservatives did, of course, throughout the 1990s.

*(16:50)

It was left to the school divisions to try and deal with zero per cent increases, which, of course, were actually a loss of revenue because they weren't keeping up with inflation. And, on average, if I'm not mistaken, the property tax bill for all Manitobans went up by 60 per cent in a decade, and we're seeing a repeat of that. And, again, this is completely contrary to what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his party and every single Conservative MLA in this Chamber right now promised to the people of Manitoba.

They said this wouldn't happen and it is happening. And it's not—that's just one example with the school busing. Another example would be all the amazing students and families at Kelvin High School and many students from Wolseley. Those that are pursuing French immersion or the International Baccalaureate program live in Wolseley and they attend Kelvin. They are horrendously disappointed and deservedly so with this government's just cruel decision, nonsensical decision, to refuse to fund the new gym and wellness centre. Like, who does that?

Look at the contrast between what happened when Gordon Bell High School students mobilized and launched that incredible campaign of spirit and

collaboration and we're not going to take no for an answer, but they were always respectful, came down to the Legislature many times. I was proud to meet with them and help them every way that I could, meeting with various ministers in our government to build support for it, and we found a way to make it happen. It involved collaboration with the federal government and Canada Post and the school division and us and the students and the teachers and alumni, and it was a beautiful, beautiful end result.

There is a way to make these things happen, and this government just slammed the door on Kelvin and said, no, you're not getting a facility. And you've raised a million dollars already for it—we don't care. We're not there to support you anymore. That is a horrible, horrible message to send to young people and their families and their community. That's just no way to run a province.

The cancellation of the smaller class size cap, where our government found, through research, the Healthy Child's Committee of Cabinet among them, that when you are able to cap the number of students, particularly at the early grade years to 20, that that is good, sound policy, that you end up with multiple long-term benefits for those students because the teachers are able to give the individual attention that all of them need. It also means you end up hiring more teachers in Manitoba, growing the economy that way, supporting more people with that honourable profession. This government's just wiped it out. They said, no, you're going to have class sizes go up to 30—what, 35? Who knows what teachers are going to have to be juggling? And the quality of education for our children at their most important early years is going to suffer.

Now, those three examples of school busing, Kelvin High School, and the smaller class size cap, they only demonstrate negative impacts this government has brought in from the K-to-12 education system. What about post-secondary education? Oh, my goodness. What a horrible bit of bad luck to be someone of any age who wants to try and go to university or college in Manitoba now with this government in place. The tuition cap, which our government had put in place very reasonably, was slated at the rate of inflation. A university could not increase tuition by more than the rate of inflation every year as part of protecting students from a dramatic increase in cost for their education.

Well, the tuition cap's just been completely wiped out by this government, and, yes, no kidding,

that's one of the five pieces of legislation we, as the official opposition, have deliberately held back. That's bad policy and it's unfair and that now means that a university student could very easily be facing \$2,500 in extra costs over the course of their studies. The inflation rate cap is gone. It can now raise it up to 5 per cent. Then you have any additional fees, and, on top of all of that, I'm getting so many phone calls and emails from students who are in their program right now, or who are just about to graduate wondering how on earth does the government think it's fair to suddenly yank away the graduation tax rebate program.

This was a fantastic program we had in place so that a student who graduated and stayed in Manitoba could get 10 per cent of their tuition back off their taxes every single year if they chose to reside in Manitoba. It didn't just reward students for staying here. It didn't just help encourage people to go back to school, knowing that they could use that tax credit to help pay off any student loans they might have or to help them start their new professional life once they had their education degrees in hand. It also even helped recruit students from other provinces, other countries even. It didn't matter, under our policy, where you got your degree from; if you wanted to come and live in Manitoba, we made it possible for you to do that, and this government is just slammed—slammed—post-secondary education up one side and down the other and, again, totally in contravention of what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and all of his MLAs promised Manitobans. This is, indeed, a bait-and-switch budget, if ever there was one.

And health care, of course, is near and dear to all New Democrats' heart and to all Canadians' hearts, and a lot of Manitobans are probably scratching their heads at what this government could possibly be thinking when it comes to their mismanagement and cruelty around our health-care system. For the government to somehow believe that shutting down emergency rooms without addressing the demand for emergency room treatment is going to reduce wait times, is just quite simply mind-boggling; it's nonsensical. And to go from six ERs down to three is bad enough. In my own local constituency, they've taken the additional step of telling us that we're now going to lose our urgent-care centre. And, Madam Speaker, we have to remember that the Misericordia used to be a hospital. It used to be a full-fledged hospital facility, and the Filmon government took that away from them. We lost that in our community, and it was turned into an urgent-care centre, and that

urgent-care centre has provided not the same types of service as it used to, but very valuable services. It helps keep people out of the emergency rooms. And now the inner city, in Wolseley, is losing its urgent-care centre at the same time that this government is shutting down emergency rooms in the suburbs and turning them into urgent-care centres. Where on earth is the fairness? Where is the logic in this? I'll tell you. There is none.

It's not going to work. People who would've perhaps been able to make use of the QuickCare clinic on St. Mary's Road there, just across the river from The Forks, that's been shut down by this government already. Their excuse was that they couldn't find enough nurse practitioners to staff it. Then, just a few weeks later on, we find out, lo and behold, four nurse practitioners have decided to set up a private fee-for-service company, and the Health Minister's, ah, I don't see any problem with that. And we lose the public facility that's available to everyone, and instead it gets replaced by a service which is only available if you can pay for it. How on earth is that consistent with the principle, spirit and law of medicare? I don't know. But that's what this government has done.

So we've lost the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic, which was not super close to Wolseley, my constituents, but it was closer than not having it. Misericordia's now going to be gone. So where do you think people are going to end up? They're going

to go down Sherbrook Street and sit in the emergency room of the Health Sciences Centre, and you can hardly blame them for doing that.

And so many public articles have been written indicating that providing more personal-care homes and more personal-care beds is a key aspect of reducing the wait times in emergency rooms and in improving the flow of patients and the flow of service. So what did this government do? They cancelled all the planned personal-care homes that were on the books ready to go. They've introduced no plan whatsoever to replace them. What I am very fearful of is—and it's probably related to their move to also cancel our government's accountability legislation when it comes to public-private partnerships. It would not surprise me one bit to see this government walk away from any commitment to provide personal-care homes and turn it over to public-private partnerships when there's no law in place to evaluate them anymore and say, there you go; that's how we're going to build personal-care-home beds, and if you can't afford it—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have two minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

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