

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 222—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act

(Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs)

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I move, seconded by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that Bill 222, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants from Rising Utility Costs), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Altemeyer: I'm very honoured today, on behalf of our caucus, to introduce Bill 222, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. This is just the first step in several legislative proposals I'll be bringing forward on this particular piece of legislation. The bill requires a landlord to make reasonable efficiency improvements to reduce utility costs for heating, electricity and water before a rent increase above the maximum amount 'permitted' by regulations can be obtained. I look forward to the debate that will ensue, and I'm pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report for the—Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, for the fiscal year 2018-19.

Madam Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I am pleased today to table Manitoba Municipal Relations Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 2018-2019, Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I am also pleased to table the Indigenous and Northern Relations Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, for the 2018-19 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Thompson Citizenship Council

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Madam Speaker, Thompson Citizenship Council, also known as the Thompson Multicultural Centre, was first established in 1975.

Since inception, the organization has provided much-needed support and language training to many newcomers and has helped them adjust to life in the North with résumé writing, job searches, finding housing and navigating government agencies.

The council organizes and participates in events that promote multiculturalism and celebrate ethnicity, including public gatherings to showcase traditional food, music, dance and cultural observances.

Volunteers from the Citizenship Council also work in collaboration with other charitable organizations in Thompson, helping to host events such as Winterfest, Nickel Days, Santa Claus parade, Feast of Nations and Operation Red Nose, to name a few. They also provide a welcoming centre for seniors and other visitors and promote healthy living through their gardening project.

The Thompson Citizenship Council consists of caring volunteers, many of whom, after having received help, give back by volunteering and fundraising, themselves, for the organization.

One such volunteer is Esther Latchman, who first came to Canada in 1981 from Guyana, South

America, and has resided in Thompson ever since. After receiving help from the council when she first came to Canada, Esther remained a volunteer and now serves as its president. She serves on a volunteer executive along with vice-president, Don Fulford; treasurer, Inderjeet Singh; secretary, Mervat Yehia; and board members Kevin Carolino, Deepu Thomas, Angel Marcelino, Gladys Bignell, Rie Ueda, Fritz Villanueva. The president, Esther Latchman, is also recognized as being the organization's longest serving volunteer.

Please join me in welcoming Esther Latchman to the Chamber today and in recognizing the life-changing contributions Thompson Citizenship Council has made supporting newcomers to our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Tec Voc Students Skills Competition

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, learning a skill or trade takes time, effort, dedication and focus. Last week, students from across Manitoba showcased their talents in the 21st Annual Skills Manitoba Competition. Once again, students from Tec Voc High School in the West End made us proud.

Forty-eight Tec Voc students competed in Skills Manitoba this year. Tec Voc has an exceptional history of preparing students well, and many students were able to achieve success and reach the podium. Last week, Tec Voc won 20 medals at Skills Manitoba: five gold, eight silver and seven bronze.

The students who received gold included: Jasmine Perez, taught by teacher Gordon MacRae, in architectural technology and design; Ivanna Sanderson, taught by Ryan Desjarlais, who won gold in job search; Eh Htee Soe, taught by teacher Vance Halldorson, who won gold in precision machining; and Theona David and Jack Nai, both taught by Trish Goldrup, who won gold medals in graphics.

Students from Tec Voc's graphic arts department have now won the gold at Skills Manitoba three years in a row, and they will be representing Manitoba in the Skills Canada National Competition.

The past two years, Tec Voc graphic arts students medalled in the national competition, which features more than 500 of Canada's best and brightest young people. This year, Tec Voc's team is setting their sights on gold this June in Edmonton.

Like athletes, these students have invested many hours of practice and hard work as they pushed themselves to reach excellence in preparation for this competition, on top of their regular course load for the year.

I want to commend the students for their hard work and success at the competition. You make us proud, and we look forward to the good you will be able to do with your skills in the future, both in the workplace and in your communities. Please join me in congratulating tomorrow's leaders from Tec Voc High School.

Madam Speaker, I'd ask leave to include the names of all of the medal winners and their teachers in Hansard.

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

21st Annual Skills Manitoba Competition winners: Jasmine Perez, gold, architectural technology and design; Ivanna Sanderson, gold, job search; Eh Htee Soe, gold, precision machining; Theona David, gold, graphic design; Jack (Aye Min) Nai, gold, graphic design; Bernal Delos Santos, silver, graphic design; Elijah Chipalata, silver, graphic design; Faye Dosado and Anjanelle Aco, silver, 3D character computer animation; Rozen Nina Figurasin, silver, architectural technology and design; Andrea Cantor, silver, mechanical CAD; Kiara Espiritu-Magundayao, silver, baking; Hannah Barnbrook, silver, photography; Christian Payumo, silver, web design and development; Audrey Bongar, bronze, graphic design; Rowan Vermette-Furst, bronze, IT office software applications; Cybelle Comia, bronze, architectural technology and design; Drake Kennedy and Brandon Mah, bronze, mobile robotics; Tyson Schenkeveld, bronze, photography; Michael Go, bronze, web design and development

School Bus Driver Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It is with great privilege that I rise in the House today to acknowledge bill 214, The School Bus Driver Day Act, which officially makes the third Wednesday in April of each year School Bus Driver Day in Manitoba. This day is extremely important as it allows us an opportunity every year to publicly honour all the men and women school bus drivers who—in our province for the outstanding job they do to ensure the safe transportation of our children.

* (13:40)

School buses are considered to be the safest vehicles on the road. They are constructed and outfitted with safety equipment in order to provide safety to school bus occupants in the event of an accident. However, it is the school bus driver who often prevents any incidents from happening and ensuring the safe transport of our children to and from school each and every day.

Driving is not the only role of a school bus driver. Prior to every single trip, the school bus driver is responsible for conducting a physical check of their school bus's vehicle systems to make sure that it meets the necessary requirements to safely operate. School bus drivers are responsible for the discipline of children on the bus as well as any medical emergency that may arise while en route. School bus drivers must attend to the unique requirements of students with special needs, which may require additional training. Lastly, since many students see the same school bus driver every day, they become a friend.

In summary, to be a qualified school bus driver you need to be a skilled driver, a mechanic, a disciplinarian, a health provider and a friend. All of these tasks are required on a daily basis, which means that the school bus drivers themselves must also be in sound physical and mental health.

Madam Speaker, school bus drivers aren't always recognized for the important role they play in our education system. That is why School Bus Driver Day is a day for Manitobans to take notice, celebrate and honour those individuals whose daily job is the safety of our children.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize all past and present school bus drivers in Manitoba, some of which are here with us today in the gallery.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to enter the bus drivers who have joined us today in the gallery—their names into Hansard.

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

School bus drivers: Lorne Hachkowski, Ron Milbrandt

Catherine Collins

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Today I would like to recognize a very special and dedicated community member as she embarks on her journey to retirement.

Catherine Collins has and continues to be an integral part of our Logan constituency and the Manitoba community at large. For over 35 years she has been playing an active role in museums, galleries and cultural sites around the province.

She has worked as head conservator at the Manitoba Museum and head conservator at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. She also spent some time teaching heart—an art history course at the University of Manitoba.

In addition to all her contributions, Catherine raised \$61 million in grants for the Winnipeg Art Gallery. In her last year of work, she raised funds for a travelling art exhibit to honour Canada's 150th which ended up touring 15 sites across Canada. This project put Winnipeg and our art gallery on the map in places as far away as Inuvik in the Northwest Territories and St. John's in Newfoundland.

Over the years, Catherine has graciously volunteered her time to many boards in the community, including the board of Manitoba Heritage Council, Neighbourhoods Alive!, inner-city residents groups and museum committees, including the Manitoba Museum board of governors. She is an unparalleled advocate for the West Alexander Residents Association and passionately supports the many activities of the association, including advocating for affordable housing, quality education for students, community cleanliness and safety.

I'm so honoured and delighted to have Cathy as a friend and a strong ally in community projects.

Cathy, we wish you a happy retirement, although knowing you, I'm sure you'll be just as busy. I thank you very much for many, many years of dedicated service promoting Manitoba arts and culture and your deep concern for the welfare and upliftment of our communities.

I would like to request my colleagues to welcome Cathy and her friends in the gallery today.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Logan.

Ms. Marcelino: I would like to request that the names of guests be included in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to identify those guests here in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Keith Berens; Benilda Campomanes; Jean Dunmire; Tsehaie Gmariam; Sharon Reilly; Reynaldo Sangalang

PC Manitoba Platform

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Again, I'd like to thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for the opportunity to fully represent the people of Assiniboia on the PC Manitoba platform.

I also would like to suggest axing the carbon tax, have an inquiry into Manitoba Hydro, support the freedom of the press and fundamental principles of conservatism.

MLAs, MLAs, MLAs everywhere / and not a Tory to be seen. / Half a league, half a league, / half a league onward, / all into the valley of debt / rode the 57 MLAs. / Forward, the tax brigade. / Charge for the wallets, he said. / Into the valley of debt / rode the 57. / Forward, the tax brigade. / There was an MLA dismayed? / Not that—though MLA know / someone had blundered. / Theirs is not—make reply, / theirs is not to reason why, / theirs is not to do and die. / There into the valley of debt / rode the 57 MLAs. / Grits to the right of them, / dippers to the left, / common sense in front of them. / All of Manitoba wondered. / The tax charge they make, / the reason is fake and half-baked. / But it is time the noble 57 MLAs / axe the carbon tax.

But, Madam Speaker, where are the Tories? / There ought to be Tories. / Quick, send in the Tories. / What a surprise. / Could—who could foresee? / Isn't that rich, isn't it queer, / losing my timing this late in my career? / And where are the Tories? / Quick, send in the Tories. / Don't bother—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Fletcher: Is there leave to finish?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I'm hearing that leave has been denied.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests with us today that I would like to introduce to you.

Seated in the loge to my right we have Gerry Ducharme, the former MLA for Riel, and we'd like to welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature again.

And seated in the public gallery from Kildonan-East Collegiate we have 33 grade 9 students under the direction of Luke Klassen, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Opioid Epidemic Safe Consumption Site

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So we're hearing from a lot of people who are combatting the addictions epidemic on the front lines, from experts, we heard a short time ago from a lot of people on the steps of the Legislature, that the government needs to act in order to combat the scourge of methamphetamines, opioids, benzos and other addictive drugs.

So, again, we've called on the Premier and the Minister of Health to take action. In particular, yesterday we called on them to approve an application from a local organization, a harm-reduction-based approach that would see a safe consumption site built here in Winnipeg. And yet, we saw the Premier refuse that.

Now, we know that there were at least 24 opioid-related deaths in 2016, likely more last year. This is a crisis. It requires action now.

Will the Premier approve a safe consumption site for here in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member's right to raise the topic, certainly, Madam Speaker, because it is a concern to all of us here. He is wrong to jump to simplistic—relatively simplistic solutions to what is truly a multi-dimensional, complex problem being dealt with by this government ambitiously.

We believe there's value in a continuum of treatment services. We believe there's value in a continuous series of supports. We believe in school-based interventions, Madam Speaker, to get in front of the problem rather than chase it at the tail end, as the member seems to be proposing.

There are all kinds of actions that we can take and are taking, Madam Speaker, and certainly, we'll wait forward—we'll wait, and we look forward to a

full analysis, as we've commissioned, to gather even more ideas on how we can combat the scourge of this problem.

* (13:50)

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, this government's repeated delays of the report on mental health, and presumably addictions also, has taken too long, and Manitobans are paying the price. It's people who are dealing with these addictions and their families who are paying the price, and the actions that this government are taking are going to compound the problem.

The cuts in health care, the cuts to the Rent Assist program, reduction in support in the education system, these are all going to create upstream problems that are going to aggravate the addictions epidemic our communities are facing from now and going forward into the future.

One of the interventions that they could make to start turning the tide would be to add a safe consumption site. Not only do the experts agree on this, but also those who are on the front lines, and not even just those who are doing safety patrols, but parents who don't want to see their kids walking around in neighbourhoods with dirty needles in them.

Will the Premier reverse course and instead support Main Street Project's application to have a safe consumption site here in Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: It's unfortunate the member resorts to misinformation in his preamble so frequently, Madam Speaker, and the myth of cuts is just that, as is well known. We have—this year alone, we'll expend investments that exceed half a billion dollars more than the previous government ever did in terms of health programs of various kinds including residential detoxification programs, a variety of community-based services, opiate replacement therapy and a number of other well-thought-out, well-reasoned approaches to this problem.

The member has his one idea. I would encourage him to develop more. I would encourage him to take a look at the seriousness of this issue in a real way and not look for instantaneous solutions. As much as we would all wish those were there, Madam Speaker, the multi-layered approach we are taking is the most

likely to succeed over the longer term, and that is how we are going to proceed.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) can share with the Premier that I made a number of recommendations on this front in our prebudget conversation. They included adding a safe house in the Swan Valley region; they included adding detox facilities in Brandon; they included adding more treatment facilities right across the province. And yet, which of those measures has this government introduced? Absolutely none.

Now, there is an expert consensus around how a safe consumption site will save lives. Why is this government ignoring that specific advice? Why will he turn his back on that?

I know that the previous prime minister, Stephen Harper, seemed to harbour some sort of ideological grudge against this issue, but that does not stand up in the face of the evidence. The experts are clear: safe consumption sites save lives.

Will the Premier reverse his course and add a safe consumption site to the list of interventions that Manitoba's making to combat addictions?

Mr. Pallister: I do appreciate the member participating, in some form, in the input-generation activities that this government has embarked upon. We have sincerely reached out to Manitobans on many fronts and asked for advice and assistance in terms of the—advice of front-line workers, for example, across government has moved us in the direction of a transformation strategy internally that I believe will make a significant difference in changing the old cultures that prevailed here for too long: cultures of inefficiency, cultures of spin rather than fact.

I would go back to the member's comments earlier, Madam Speaker, where he said that we were not helping the poor in this province. That is not the case. We are fundamentally engaged in making sure that more than 3,300 Manitobans in—are receiving additional support through the Rent Assist program alone; \$2,020 more dollars, tax free, to every Manitoban over the next two years with a raised basic personal exemption.

These are ways to put more money into the households of Manitoba families that are struggling. This is also a fundamental aspect of what we need

to do to address some of the causative realities that families in Manitoba face. We are cognizant of those, and where they broke it, Madam Speaker, we're fixing it.

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

Hip and Knee Replacements Increased Wait Times

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): The government's record on hip and knee replacement surgeries is not good. They delivered an 18-point drop in hip replacements within the target time frame. That was in 2017. In the same year, this government delivered a 28-point drop in the number of knee replacements that were delivered within the target time frame.

Worse yet, these numbers had been moving in a positive direction prior to this government taking office. However, under this Premier's approach to the health-care system, which is characterized by cuts and emergency room closures and cancelling related services like outpatient physiotherapy, they have reversed those trends. Again, the trends are now moving in the wrong direction under this Premier.

What is the Premier going to do to turn course, and will he commit that there will be improvements in the next set of data that CIHI releases on knee and hip replacements?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, again, sadly, Madam Speaker, the member preambles that things were tickety-boo under the NDP government. They weren't tickety-boo under the NDP government; they were dead last and they were getting worse. They were further behind ninth—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —rankings on emergency waits. They were getting further behind ninth rankings in a number of other key measurement categories under the Canadian institute of health information.

So, though the member might like to put a little rainbow around the previous government's accomplishments, quite the opposite, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, was the truth.

Now, they had the information to make the necessary reforms, but they didn't have the courage to proceed. We are proceeding, and we will work diligently to make sure that we achieve better outcomes for Manitoba families.

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

Privatization Inquiry

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, in the Premier's rush to make cuts and to bring in closures across the health-care system, he has forgot that he might actually make things worse, and it looks like that's what is happening when it comes to hip and knee replacement surgeries. The trend was moving in a positive direction. They have not only reversed those gains, but they have also seen that progress backslide further.

We know that they're also receiving recommendations about privatizing surgeries in the report that they commissioned on wait times. Page two-twenty-'thru'—223, rather, the recommendation is that there be an RFP as a means to achieve the greatest value for money and to provide the private sector for—the opportunity to bid on this contract.

Now, we know that privatization is not what Manitobans want. They want public health care. They want investments to reduce the wait times in knee and hip replacements.

Well, will the Premier tell us today: Does he plan to issue an RFP for the private sector to provide hip and knee surgeries?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if it's out of pure fear or out of just excessive partisanship, but the member seems to be cheering for worse results. He said last week that he'd be happy to see hydro rates go up so he could blame this government for it, when we all know what caused those higher hydro rate pressures.

He seems to be cheering now for—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —seems to be cheering now for worse outcomes in health care when they aren't there. And he seems disappointed that our new report shows that our wait times are down 18 per cent year over year, and congratulations to the Health Minister and all our staff for their diligent efforts in that respect.

While the member may be cheering for worse results, Madam Speaker, Manitobans want better outcomes, and that is what we're focused on achieving.

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

Mr. Kinew: Emergency room wait times are getting worse since they started closing emergency rooms and urgent-care centres. That was clear in the report that came out yesterday.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: The month-by-month statistics show that ER wait times are increasing since they closed Misericordia urgent care and since they closed the emergency room at Victoria General Hospital.

But again, the question—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —was about whether or not they plan to privatize surgeries in Manitoba.

We know that the Premier has received advice—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to come across his desk—we know that the Premier has received advice that's come across his desk recommending that they privatize surgeries here in Manitoba. What we want to know is whether the Premier plans to act on it.

Does the Premier plan to privatize hip, knee and cataract surgeries here in our province?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, political staff working with the New Democratic Party are waiting anxiously for the new leader to keep his promise in respect of addressing harassment within the workplace. He has, to date, refused to do so, covers up a report he promoted over two months ago as being the be-all and end-all, and now it's just a revelation to everyone here that the culture of concealment remains alive and well across the way.

As far as the Chicken-Little approach he's taking on health care, Madam Speaker, no, quite frankly, the sky is not falling, despite what the member may wish to have happen. Wait times are down 18 per cent year over year, we're getting better value for money in our system and our service delivery is improving. We are going to continue to focus on that.

* (14:00)

And I would say, Madam Speaker, congratulations to all members on their election two years ago tomorrow. And in particular, I'd like to thank and congratulate my colleagues for their focused teamwork.

Addiction Crisis Community Safety

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): A community rally outside the Legislature only an hour ago, where actually no one from the government even bothered to attend, made it clear hundreds of Manitobans are struggling with addictions.

Community is more than disappointed to hear our Premier (Mr. Pallister) say that until there is as many deaths as there are in BC, in Alberta, here in Manitoba, he will not take action.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Marion Willis only said about an hour, and I quote, this isn't a crisis; it's an apocalypse. End quote.

And what is this government's response? Absolutely nothing. Very shameful.

Why has the Minister of Justice refused to even acknowledge the biggest community safety issue our province is facing to date?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm not even sure where to begin with all the false accusations in the member's preamble of her question.

But what I still—what I will say, Madam Speaker, is that the Minister of Health, the Premier, all members on this side of the House do take this situation very seriously. It's why we're taking a whole-of-government approach, it's why we're taking an intergovernmental approach I—to this issue. I've had a meeting with the mayor, with Minister Carr as well. We've agreed to work collaboratively with this. We work in conjunction with law enforcement to ensure that our communities are safe.

We will continue to work with stakeholders in the community to ensure that we provide safer communities for all Manitobans.

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

Winnipeg Police Service Drug Safety

Ms. Fontaine: In its annual report, the Winnipeg Police Service committed to rolling out a drug strategy in April which would include a new drug enforcement unit. The strategy will apparently partner with the Province. And yet, Madam Speaker,

this year's budget fails to increase funding for the WPS.

Does the minister even realize that it is not solely the responsibility of the WPS? She's actually supposed to be an equal partner in dealing with this crisis.

Why has the Justice Minister refused to fund this initiative?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, we are aware of the fact that the Winnipeg Police Service is in the process of establishing a drug-enforcement unit to deal with these issues. We are very supportive of them in that effort.

We will continue to work with stakeholders, including law enforcement, but this is—this goes way beyond that as well, Madam Speaker. We recognize the seriousness of this issue. We take a whole-of-government approach when it comes to this. That's why we're working collaboratively with the Minister of Health, with other ministries across our government. And we will continue to work with the federal government, as well as municipal government, to ensure that we take a whole—that we all recognize the importance of this issue and we recognize the fact that we need a collaborative approach to this issue.

So that is our approach to this, unlike members opposite.

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

Government Intention

Ms. Fontaine: And yet she couldn't find a couple minutes to go stand with community members that are sharing their stories on the meth crisis and how—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —it's affecting them in their individual lives and in their families and in their communities. I don't know what kind of approach that is, but in my books, that's a nothing approach.

Our members were out there standing with community, and the bottom line is that we need a real—
[interjection]

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —public safety plan with measurable goals and immediate action, like a safe consumption site, alongside funding commitments that focus on harm reduction to support our most vulnerable and an education to keep communities safe.

When will the minister stop ignoring this crisis and actually do her job and do something?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): All heat, no light, Madam Speaker.

The overheated rhetoric and the false accusations of the member opposite are just those, and they have no significant—add nothing significant to the solutions we on this side of the House are working to achieve to assist the very people that she patronizes with her empty comments, Madam Speaker. This is a member opposite who was paid for half a decade to work, and hasn't produced a single shred of evidence that she did, for the previous government.

Now, I've asked her repeatedly to produce one single report that we could use—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —one bit of data, one bit of an analysis of some kind, that we could use to work to achieve outcomes that would be better for the people she purports to represent today, and not a shred—not a shred of evidence has come forward to this government that could help us in any way. So, she was happy to cash the cheques, but she's not happy to produce the evidence she did any of the work.

Now she attacks this government for doing their job, Madam Speaker? I don't think so. I don't think so. These governments are focused on doing their job, and they will continue to be, to achieve real outcomes, not just false rhetoric.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The noise level is starting to rise. I have identified a couple of specific voices here. I want you to know I am listening very, very carefully, and I would urge that when members are standing to ask a question or answer a question that we respect their time on the floor and listen carefully to what they have to say.

Methamphetamine Addiction Prevention Initiatives Needed

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Today and tomorrow—and tonight, rather, all over Winnipeg, volunteers are out conducting a census of those without homes. The 2018 Winnipeg Street Census will contain important information.

The Minister of Health, I know, is aware that those without stable housing are at great risk of becoming addicted to meth. I'm sure he knows that meth suppresses appetite and the need to sleep. Unfortunately, it's cheap and more and more readily available in Winnipeg and across Manitoba.

Why has the Minister of Health not taken any new steps in almost two years to prevent more Manitobans from becoming addicted to this very dangerous drug?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, there are a number of different actions that have been taken by this government that were never taken by the previous government. Some of them are specific to meth; some of them are specific to other drugs. Certainly, when we talk about naloxone and having naloxone more widely distributed across Manitoba, that wasn't done by the previous government. Using Suboxone for treatment of—opiate replacement wasn't done by the previous government even though it is the front line for treatment.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition quoted a report in his advocacy for a supervised injection site. That report also advocates for the decriminalization of all illegal drugs including methamphetamine, decriminalization of heroin, decriminalization of cocaine.

Does the former Attorney General agree with his leader, Madam Speaker? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Minto, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, I asked this minister about prevention. He can talk about naloxone, and that's important, but that's for people who've already used a drug and who are at risk of death.

What I asked the minister about was preventing people from becoming addicted—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —to dangerous drugs like meth. And community leaders who are here today, the police, as well as those working in the health-care system, are crying out about the dangers of meth and the impact it's having on Winnipeggers and Manitobans.

The question is why this minister has done nothing to prevent people from getting hooked on meth in the first place.

Mr. Goertzen: In addition to the actions that I identified in the first answer, Madam Speaker, we've also increased the supports at Health Sciences Centre when it comes to beds for those who are dealing with meth, but other issues as well. There's been an increase of beds when it comes to Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, particularly in the women's facility, so there's been additional supports there.

I would repeat for the member opposite, his leader, yesterday, supported a report that came out that calls for the decriminalization of cocaine, the decriminalization of methamphetamine and the decriminalization of heroin.

I want to know if the former Attorney General agrees with this leader, Madam Speaker.

* (14:10)

Madam Speaker: I would remind everybody I was just up on my feet asking for co-operation. I'm hoping that you're all heeding my request. I'm asking very respectfully for that.

The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Swan: If this member wants to go back to asking questions, keep it up and he'll be doing that in two and half years, after the next election.

The question that I asked was about prevention, and even in his second answer—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Swan: Well, I'm surprised that the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) are making light of an issue which is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Swan: —killing Winnipeggers and killing Manitobans.

The question that I asked was about prevention. And we can talk about things that happen after

people become addicted to meth, and that's important.

The specific question I've asked this Minister of Health and I will ask again is what new steps he's taken in the past two years to stop people from using meth in the first place.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, my friend from Minto may have switched places in this House, but he's still not answering the questions. And he didn't answer them in government either, Madam Speaker.

I have a very specific question for the member. I've indicated to him the additional treatment resources that are in place, I've indicated to him the different—naloxone to try to reverse opiate overdoses, Suboxone to treat it. There are others measures that'll be taken as well, Madam Speaker.

But the Leader of the Opposition yesterday supported a report that called for the decriminalization of methamphetamines, that called for the decriminalization of heroin, that called for the decriminalization of cocaine.

I wonder if the Attorney General—the former Attorney General agrees with the Leader of the Opposition when he said yesterday those illegal drugs should be decriminalized, Madam Speaker.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Timeline for Plan

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): For a second year in a row, the minister has failed to announce or implement a poverty strategy, a strategy that aims to make life more affordable for low-income families. The minister promised for more than a year that he would present a new strategy that makes real change. So Manitobans waited and they waited, and they're still waiting. Still nothing. These consultants were closed three months ago and Manitobans are still waiting on this plan.

When will this minister release this poverty plan?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): What this government is doing is consulting with Manitobans. That's something that I know the opposition won't understand because they didn't do it when they released their poverty reduction plan. And that's probably why—the reason why they had some of the highest child poverty rates in the country under their government.

We are consulting with Manitobans. We're going to get it right and we're going to implement policies to make a difference for Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Smith: This government has had two years and they've done absolutely nothing. They've—they say this new 'proverty' reduction strategy, whatever it—whenever it's actually reduced—released, will use new economic indicators. This could be because this minister has failed to make any improvements on any of the existing indicators.

Let's break it down. So, indicator 1 is the number of social and affordable housing units built. Last year, this minister built zero. Indicator 3, the number of families in need of housing. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: Yesterday and today, this—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —our Premier (Mr. Pallister) stood up in this House and was so proud to admit that 3,000 more families need Rent Assist—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order.

Mr. Fielding: I notice that members opposite didn't answer the second part of the question, which was—missed a part of this. And that's the reasons why—and the questions that we have—of the reasons why food-bank use under the NDP spiked when they were there. The fact that low-income people were impacted the most by the PST increase that the opposition members put on the table.

This government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —will provide support for over 3,300 people on the Rent Assist. Those are the lowest income people that are a part of that. You could fit the amount of people that we're supporting, as opposed to the NDP government, in the Pan Am Pool twice over with the amount of people we're supporting.

That's what I call progress, Madam Speaker.

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

Mrs. Smith: I don't know why this minister is so proud about putting more people in poverty and having to support more people.

Let's go on with the indicators. Indicator No. 1: the 'mimumum' wage. This government froze it and then gave Manitobans two nickels. Wow, not even enough to buy a cup of coffee.

Indicator 14 is child care. This government let the wait list rise to over 17,000 kids—families waiting to go back to work that can't, that probably have to access this Rent Assist.

Madam Speaker, this minister's only poverty strategy is to attack those living in poverty.

When will he stop picking on the poor?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, Manitobans understand only too well that that former NDP government was no friend of the poor. They kept the lowest levels of taxation under any other jurisdiction. It's why this government is raising, in the space of two fiscal years, a historic amount to leave more money in the pockets of all working Manitobans, and this is real progress that we will continue to demonstrate.

Where they made no progress, we are committed to keeping our promises.

Poverty and Homelessness Government Priority

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the large rally at noon today emphasized how meth addiction, brain and mental illness, homelessness, child and family services and poverty are all closely related.

We heard of a pregnant woman who committed suicide because she was scared that CFS would take her baby away. We heard from a 14-year-old who'd already lost three friends, aged 12 and 13, to meth.

The Premier, in the 2016 election campaign, said addressing poverty was his highest priority.

Will the Premier tell those who are in the gallery today why it is that, once elected, poverty has become his lowest priority, so low that in two full years and three throne speeches he has not yet presented a plan to address poverty and homelessness in our province?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): First of all, Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member to stand up against the federal government's plans to take

\$2.2 billion away from Manitoba health transfers and support. The programs he claims he supports are funded by, in part, a partnership with the federal government that is now eroding. As a consequence of the federal government withdrawing significant support from health care, I would invite him to not be Ottawa-west but rather just to join with us and stand up for Manitobans.

As far as the circumstances around those who come from modest circumstances or live in them, Madam Speaker, we have in the past two years committed to making the largest tax reductions in the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —history of Manitoba, ever. We will fully reduce taxes on low-income Manitobans by 20 per cent more, in our first term, than the NDP did in four terms.

Madam Speaker, I recognize the member may not enjoy that while the federal government is raising taxes, we are lowering them, but that is the fact.

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

Methamphetamine Addiction Brain and Mental Health Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, at the noon rally, we heard of many parents living under a dark cloud, not knowing if their child, who is taking meth, will be alive tomorrow morning.

In opposition and in government, the Minister of Health has said repeatedly that addictions and brain and mental illness need to be addressed together.

Meth use in Manitoba has been called a crisis, an epidemic, a tidal wave, and now an apocalypse.

Why is it that the Minister of Health has not yet, in two full years and three full throne speeches, put forward comprehensive changes, including a meth detoxification centre, to address addictions and brain and mental illness together?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, when it comes to drug use, there is no question that it has a particular impact on the development of a person's brain, and it certainly has an impact on their life.

* (14:20)

We know that's even true when it comes to marijuana, Madam Speaker. Those who are 25 and

under who use marijuana suffer significantly from a diminishment of brain development. There is evidence that says those who are under 25 are particularly impacted by that. It's one of the reasons why we asked the federal Liberal government to provide more time before it went on legalizing this drug, before it went on legalizing marijuana. We asked for additional time so we could look at that impact and try to mitigate it. That member didn't say anything about that.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, we had many people in front of the Legislature today, calling out this government for its lack of effective action on the meth crisis, on brain and mental illness, on homelessness and poverty, CFS and on the trauma that many are being exposed to.

Those who live with these issues in Manitoba and those who are doing their best to help people with these issues know that after two years and three throne speeches of this government, we still lack meaningful and effective action to address these critical issues. Many are looking for help and not able to find it.

Why has this government, in two years, been irresponsible in neglecting those who are in difficulty and who are our most vulnerable?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, again, while there's been additional resources placed in treatment and there's been additional resources placed in front-line services for those who need that help, there are other things than simply the member going in front of a crowd.

He had an opportunity, maybe not in front of a crowd, but to stand with us when we asked the federal Liberal government to hold on legalizing marijuana, Madam Speaker. We knew there'd be a significant impact. We knew there'd be a significant impact for those young people who might otherwise think that this is behaviour that didn't have any harm.

We knew that there needed to be more information, there needed to be more time. When we asked that member to join with us, as we did all members of this House, to join with us in protecting children, yes, there wasn't a crowd there, and he said nothing, Madam Speaker.

Flooding 2018 Forecast Update

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, spring is just around the corner and these are anxious times for many Manitobans because of the risk of potential flooding. Farmers and residents along some of Manitoba's most important waterways and lakes know that conditions can change in the blink of an eye and that we all must be vigilant in the next little while.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure please update the Chamber on the government's April flood update and what this means for Manitobans?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Riding Mountain for this important question as hydrological forecasting indicates that the risk of 'widesped' major flooding remains low across most of the province, such as the Souris, Qu'Appelle and Pembina rivers, with continued moderate risks of some overland flooding of low-lying areas along the Red and 'asboine' rivers.

However, ice-jam-related flooding continues to be a possibility due to the thickness of the ice on some rivers and streams. However, ice-breaking activities have been completed at all past high-risk, high-jamming locations.

Madam Speaker, to all Manitobans: please remember to stay safe and stay away from the rivers and lakes during spring break-up. It may look fun, it may look safe, but it's not. It's dangerous. Please stay away.

Manitoba Employment Numbers Apprenticeships and Continuing Education

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, there are 7,500 less jobs in Manitoba than just a year ago and the results of this slowdown are all around us. According to the minister, more and more people are requiring Rent Assist, and we know that more and more people want and need training to upgrade their skills. Yet, the Minister of Education has cut staff supports through Apprenticeship Manitoba for each of his last two years.

Why is this minister cutting back on apprenticeship supports at a time when they are so very needed?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question, and I'm hoping that, if he's been following what's

been going in apprentice Manitoba, he's also been following the report that came from the Auditor General, which was very scathing for the previous government's management of the apprenticeship system here in Manitoba.

We've been restructuring Apprenticeship Manitoba so that we can be more efficient about it and that we are also putting in place a system so that we can help keep track of many of the apprentices that they lost track of.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, let's talk about this minister's restructuring.

Bill 10 sits before this Legislature; it proposes the repeal of The Certified Occupations Act. This act was put in place to bring government's focus to certification for in-demand professions and to help develop competency-based training for emerging sectors through classroom and on-the-job training. The act has been lauded for providing that greater quality and selection of skills training and for helping build a stronger labour market. Yet this cut comes at a time—at the same time that there are 7,500 less jobs in Manitoba.

Why is this government putting less focus on in-demand professions and cutting The Certified Occupations Act?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question.

The certified occupation was a duplication process. We've been able to work with the existing apprenticeship system and the certification system available through that and, in fact, the better connections that apply because of the New West Partnership connections that we have in this province, to provide better access for people that are training through the apprenticeship system. We're going to have more apprentices and more success for more Manitobans.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, it's one cut after another from this minister, and that includes the intention of this minister to cut the number of sector councils in Manitoba that provide valuable training for important industries in Manitoba. The most recent issue of the Manitoba Print Industry Association's newsletter, for instance, details their

concern that the specialized training that they provide may not be available in the future.

Again, this is all happening at the same time that there are 7,500 less jobs in Manitoba this year that there were at the same time last year.

Why is this government cutting the number of sector councils?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question.

We've put out a call for proposals to all sector councils in Manitoba to help modernize and restructure. Some of those sector councils have been around for more than 20 years. Some are very successful, and we certainly want to duplicate and expand on that, but some have certainly changed because the job—nature of the jobs that we're training people for have changed dramatically in that same 20 years.

We're trying to modernize the system. Given what they're—they want to do, they'd still be supporting buggy whip manufacturers. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Rail Line Repair in Churchill OmniTRAX Responsibility

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): For nearly a year, the people of Churchill have endured many hardships while this government has dithered, passed the buck and basically done nothing. We know what the only solution that matters is: to fix the rail line.

So we, the NDP caucus, filed an application with the Canadian Transportation Agency. That's because the agency has the power to hold OmniTRAX to account. The company that owned the rail line, profited from the rail line, should be held to account to fix the rail line. They should not be allowed to run away without living up to those obligations.

What has this government done to hold OmniTRAX to account, and what have they done to ensure OmniTRAX fixes the rail line? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): So, here's how the NDP held OmniTRAX to account, Madam Speaker: they subsidized it. They took money from hard-working Manitoba families and threw it over on the table so that a multinational rail company could get subsidies. Where they—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: –make profit everywhere else, a big corporation got handouts from the NDP.

They borrowed money; they wrote cheques on the accounts of children and poor families in the province and they took that money and they said, look at us, we're fixing a problem, and they made it worse.

We're going to address the solutions while they created the problem.

Let me correct the record on economic growth. Bottom of the barrel under the NDP; top, first or second in private capital investment, motor vehicle sales, international exports, capital spending in residential and industrial properties.

* (14:30)

And, Madam Speaker, most importantly, in this—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: –province, over the last year, we led the country in the improvement of average weekly earnings.

Manitobans are better off with this government than they ever were under the previous one, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition was signed by Sarah Chen, Denise Silva, Rebecca Lyss and many other Manitobans.

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

Medical Laboratory Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service.

It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

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

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

The creation of this monopoly has resulted in the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, daycare has engaged in anticompetitive activities where it has change the collection schedules of patients' specimens and changed some medical offices—charged some medical offices for collection services.

These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. The situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening based on their individual health situations.

Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all STAT's patients, patients with suspicious internal infections, be directed to its King Edward location. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. The new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health in the interest of higher profits. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice, which increases cost to the health-care system.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Signed by Lin Cripps, Gladys Morgan, Martha McDowell and many others.

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years old, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations to—of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the life of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

This is signed by Paolo Bacual [*phonetic*], Jhanelle Roque, Chelsea Cantar [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

University of Winnipeg–Campus Safety

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

And the reasons for this petition are as follows:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community, and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assaults, and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

* (14:40)

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg's students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional supports to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

And this petition has been signed by Kyra Swartz, Madison MacLean and Mahir Tach and many other Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

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(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

Madam Speaker, this petition has signed by Raquel Torres, Krisha Chaneco, Emma Anderson and many other concerned Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to the member that when ending reading the petitions, there's not to be any extra language added, such as concerned Manitobans. So you cannot be identifying Manitobans in that way.

So just a reminder to all members, when reading petitions.

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition.

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems, which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the

caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

Signed by Sasha Mark, Chris Satin [*phonetic*] and Danielle Kayahara and many more Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to alter the Estimates sequence for today only so that the Department of Families will be considered in room 255 instead of Executive Council?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to alter the Estimates sequence for today only so that the Department of Families will be considered instead of Executive Council in room 255? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, would you call Committee of Supply?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Estimates this afternoon. The House will now resolve itself into Committee of—oh, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I rise on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Madam Speaker: On a matter of privilege.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): So I think we've just been informed that the government intends to call the Executive Council Estimates this afternoon, but the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has indicated that he will not answer any questions of this session of the Estimates. Instead, the Government House Leader has indicated that other ministers with different portfolios will sit in place of the Premier and answer questions regarding their respective departments.

So, Madam Speaker, I rise on this matter for the entire House at my earliest convenience or—and

opportunity. I also rise this matter for the entire House to consider as it goes to the hearts of the Estimates process this House engages in when it considers government's budgets. It concerns the purpose of individual Estimates—of each individual Estimates committees and, consequently, the entire Committee of Supply.

*(14:50)

The House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Second Edition, at page 1,008, notes that the Committee of Supply generally examines, and I quote: the Estimates by hearing from the minister or parliamentary secretary responsible for the activities and programs dealt with in the votes. End quote, Madam Speaker.

The minister responsible for the activities and programs dealt with in the votes is the relevant section of this quote, I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the differences in forms and procedures between the House of Commons and our House. The attempt to replace the First Minister with perhaps a different minister for the Executive Council Estimates subverts this general principle.

The Executive Council Estimates process is unique, I think we can all agree. It concerns the affairs of the Executive Council, Madam Speaker, which necessarily encompasses the whole of government. As a result, the Executive Council Estimates are global and—in nature and covers all aspects of business of the government.

This is why the First Minister is responsible—is the responsible minister, Madam Speaker, for this set of Estimates process. His portfolio is, indeed, the whole of government. Ministers, however, by their very definition, have a very limited and specific set of responsibilities, the laws for which they are responsible are clearly listed; their mandates and powers are clearly set out. They are particular and specific, the very opposite of global. Their areas of responsibility and direction cannot extend beyond their portfolios. That is why there is an Estimates process for each department where the responsible minister is able to answer questions.

Madam Speaker, any particular minister is not an appropriate participant or substitute in the Executive Council Estimates, just as any minister cannot substitute for anyone else in respect of different departments' Estimate processes, and certainly this is because there is an order of precedent as set out in law.

The Executive Government Organization Act, Madam Speaker, sets out the first acting and second ministers for each portfolio. The government indicates this order of precedence via an order-in-council.

Madam Speaker, the proposal of this government is not to substitute the acting premier in Executive Council Estimates, but rather a different minister who is not responsible for the whole of the government portfolio.

So, certainly, I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that this fundamentally undermines the ability of the official opposition to examine what is, arguably, the most important bill before this House currently, the budget, and it certainly underlines this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) refusal to answer questions posed by him by the people's representatives, the representatives sent here to hold this Premier to account.

It is certainly worrisome and surprising that the Premier refuses so clearly to be held to account or to have truth spoken to power. It profoundly undermines our democratic traditions and the long-standing practices of this government—excuse me, Madam Speaker. The Premier's refusal to answer questions in the Estimates process undermines the privileges of all members to examine the Estimates of this government and their bill—the budget bill before the House.

So I move, Madam Speaker, seconded by my good friend, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that this matter be immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Rules of the House so that the Premier's subversion of the Estimates process can certainly be examined and, hopefully, rectified so that all members of the House can properly participate in the Executive Council Estimates process.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by honourable members are limited to strictly relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): I certainly look forward to your ruling on this matter. I know there's nothing in the rules that we have before the House that would not allow us to proceed in this

particular fashion, by supplying another member of Executive Council into this position.

Madam Speaker, I will say, certainly, we're trying to work through some scheduling difficulties in the process, and maybe this is a situation that we should be addressing through the rules committee as well.

So just having said those few words, you know, this is a negotiated process that we're working through, but I do look forward to how you interpret the rules.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I rise to support the—this is getting uncomfortable—the Leader of the Opposition—or House Leader of the Opposition—the House Leader of the Opposition. The member raises the issue—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —at her first opportunity and therefore—and this is certainly the first I've heard of this particular issue, so I think that supports the House leader in this regard.

And, on the larger issue of Estimates, Madam Speaker, what is happening would set a dangerous precedent. Estimates is the very—the most fundamental reason why we have our parliamentary system, is to examine the expenditures of the people's money.

The—we've already seen, in this Estimates process, the incredible situation where the schedule of Estimates changes the day of, the scheduled—so, you need leave to do that, and the problem, Madam Speaker, when these things happen is the people who are preparing themselves to ask the questions have no time to prepare if the government keeps on changing who is—which department is up to be discussed.

Now there's been a little bit of leeway last week, with leave, but if we're going to get into a situation where the minister responsible doesn't even have to show up to the Estimates, why not just have the bureaucracy run the Province? Why have elected officials?

Madam Speaker, the other observation, and this will be my last remark, is ministers have this terrible habit of saying, well, it's the department, ask the department. Well, in Estimates, you can't ask the department. It's the minister that is responsible. Like, do we have a system where there's ministerial responsibility or do we not?

Is there—and if the leader, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), is not willing to answer questions in the Estimates of Executive Council, why would anyone else in the ministry expect to answer questions? The Premier has to do his job and the other ministers have to do their job. The Premier delegates his job to someone else, and the ministers delegate their jobs.

Madam Speaker, this is not a delegated democracy, it's representative democracy and the representatives have to take responsibility. The Premier must be at Estimates so the representatives of the people can do their job.

* (15:00)

Madam Speaker: On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would like to inform the House that a matter concerning the methods by which the House proceeds in the conduct of business is a matter of order, not privilege.

Joseph Maingot, in the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, states on page 14 that allegations of breach of privilege by a member in the House that amounts to complaints about procedures and practices in the House are, by their very nature, matters of order.

He also states on page 223 of the same edition: A breach of the standing orders or a failure to follow an established practice would invoke a point of order rather than a question of privilege.

On this basis, I would therefore rule that the honourable member does not have a prima facie case of privilege. I would also say, in addition, if there are matters arising from the activities in Committee of Supply, the matter of privilege should've been first raised in the Committee of Supply and reported to the House, as the Speaker does not have procedural authority over committees.

Ms. Fontaine: With the utmost of respect, I challenge your ruling.

Madam Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

The question before the House is the ruling of the—shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

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

* (16:00)

The one hour–order, please. The one hour provided for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I am therefore directing that the division bells be turned off and the House proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Guillemard, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Pedersen, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fletcher, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 31, Nays 16.

Madam Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

* * *

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, would you call bills 17 and 14?

Madam Speaker: It is announced—it has been announced that the House this afternoon will deal with bills 17 and 14.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 17—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So I will start then with Bill 17, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 17, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules et le Code de la route, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Infrastructure, seconded by the honourable Minister of Crown Services, that Bill 17, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and a message has been tabled.

Mr. Schuler: I am pleased to present to you Bill 17, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act, which was 'intertused' to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly on March 16th, 2018.

As discussed when Bill 17 was first introduced, distracted driving is a serious, deadly road safety issue and the lead contributing factor to collisions causing serious injuries and fatalities in Manitoba.

When Bill 17 is passed, the following amendments will be made in legislation: The Highway Traffic Act will be amended to create tiered suspensions of three days for a first offence and seven days for a second and subsequent offence for use of hand-operated electronic devices, such as cellphones and smart phones while driving in Manitoba.

The Drivers and Vehicles Act will be amended to make careless driving a reportable offence, requiring police to immediately report charges to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. The registrar will

review the driver's record to determine if driver improvement and control measures are necessary.

Manitoba's licence-suspension regime will be administered at roadside to address the immediate road safety risk and ensure the greatest 'determent,' impact on driver behaviour.

Bill 17 will come into force on proclamation to allow time for the Manitoba government to develop a complimentary suite of regulatory measures dealing with the issue of demerits for careless driving and to provide public communication regarding the need for stricter legislative sanctions to prevent and reduce distracted driving. The Manitoba government looks forward to discuss—looks forward to further discussions regarding Bill 17 to address any questions or considerations that may arise and to work in collaboration with Manitoba Public Insurance, Manitoba Justice, law informant—'forcement' agencies and road safety advocates to change public perception and behaviour regarding distracted driving through public education and awareness, legislation and enforcement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to ask the minister how many accidents in 2017 were caused by distracted drivers in Manitoba?

*(16:10)

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Elmwood for that question. We do not have the full complement of numbers yet for 2017.

But I would like to point out to the Manitoba Legislature that from 2011 to 2016, accidents increased by 8,671 to a total of 11,086 by 2016.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister when he expects to get the statistics for 2017.

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, as these statistics are compiled by Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, as soon as they've compiled them, and one of the things that Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation does very well, through the leadership and the guidance of the Minister of Crown Services, they make sure that those numbers are accurate and correct before they publish them and we—as soon as we get them, we will make them public.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I wonder if the minister could tell us what would be the case if someone was holding a cigarette or a marijuana joint, if there would be penalties for that and/or when are the rules going to be coming forward for the marijuana limits for driving and all the other associated challenges with that?

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, it is contemplated under legislation, as the member will know, that you will not be allowed to smoke any kind of narcotic in your vehicle. For that matter, let's be very clear: you cannot consume any narcotic in your vehicle, whether it's smoking or otherwise, and insofar as a 'cigrate'—cigarette in your vehicle, if there are children present, that is also not allowed. Smoking a cigarette in a vehicle is not an offence; however, if the individual is trying to light a cigarette and is being dangerous in the way they're doing it, for instance, if they're on the curb or driving on a sidewalk, trying to light their cigarette, that probably will also trigger them being pulled over and charged.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister with—will the government invest in an education campaign against distracted driving? Think it's important that people have as much advance notice of this legislation as possible so that they can better understand it, and I guess that's why we're really interested in getting into committee so that people can come out and learn more about what is planned here.

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, the member's absolutely correct that there is going to have to be an education component to this, and even in the briefing we had that conversation. It is why that it will actually be a piece of legislation, that it will be on proclamation that it comes to an effect. We know there's going to be work that's going to have to be done. We will work with MPI and with the police forces. We will ensure that individuals know that this is coming. This is a very big and important step in enforcing not having hand-held electronic devices.

So member's absolutely correct; there will be a plan put in place to notify the public.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Yes, I will ask—like to ask the honourable minister, what about hand-held coffee and hand-held makeup stuff when you are driving?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, when we introduced the legislation, we had law enforcement officials, and they've seen some incredibly strange occurrences taking place in a vehicle. For instance, individuals grooming their pets while they're driving; we would strongly recommend against that. Again, first of all, the first sign that there is something that is unsafe when an individual is driving, it comes down to the behaviour of the driving. If you're weaving in and out and you're crossing the fog line, that would probably get you pulled over, and in anything that you do, you must do it safely. So a cup of coffee on its own is not an offence; however, if you're doing something like looking for the cup of coffee or you spilt it on yourself, please pull over and deal with the issue in a very safe manner.

Mr. Maloway: Well, I'd like to follow up with a question from member for The Maples. As the member will know, there are many truck drivers who drive with pets, dogs and cats. There are many people that decide at a certain point to take their dog to the groomer's, and the question is, what will happen to these people if they're out on the—if they're driving to the groomer's and they're stopped? Would that be an issue of distracted driving or careless driving, as the bill points out?

Mr. Schuler: And driving with your pet in the vehicle in and of itself is not an issue. Driving your pet to the groomer's is, in and of itself, not a problem. It's if you're driving and grooming your pet at the same time. That would probably constitute a problem.

I would like to point out to members that in everything that you do you should be doing it safely. There are pet carriers that you can put your pets into. Often people drive with their pets in the back seat. That's fine. However, the pet cannot be distracting you from your driving. That then becomes dangerous driving.

Mr. Maloway: And I thank the minister for that information—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to know what else can be done to ensure that there are less distracted drivers on the roads.

Mr. Schuler: Well, as the member will know, there was a time, not even that long ago, when we didn't even have hand-held devices. There wasn't such a thing as texting and this technology has changed very quickly. The legislation is written such a way that it will allow for any new devices or new electronics to come forward to be caught up in this legislation and we are certainly looking forward to see a decline in the kinds of incidents that we reported earlier. Over 11,000 accidents just because of distracted driving, and we are under the belief that this will help to mitigate that and these are measures that are being contemplated across country.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question for the minister is this: There was some discussion we had during the bill briefing and it's my understanding that under the phrase careless driving could be included drinking coffee or tea or water from a mug.

I wonder if the minister would clarify that.

Mr. Schuler: Right, and I'd also like to thank the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), the member for River Heights, for attending the briefing. We had an opportunity to have a good discussion.

Madam Speaker, driving must always be done safely. We all appreciate that we have a lot of rights. Rights do not include going into a theatre and screaming fire. There are limitations to rights. You have a right to drive but you must do so safely. Anything—anything that takes you away from driving safely can then become an issue where a police officer or law enforcement can pull you over.

We would suggest to individuals that they take the time to do a lot of things at home. When they're driving, focus on their driving.

Mr. Maloway: And, of course, we have communicated to the minister that we are all in favour of this bill, but we would like to see it based on some sort of proof that—of results in other jurisdictions, and the minister has been unable—I guess I would ask him if he could just give us the—an update on where things are at with other provinces, but I believe that he had indicated that there's no conclusive proof anywhere because it's still a work in progress. There's no conclusive proof anywhere that these measures are actually going to achieve what we want, and that is reduce the amount of injuries and

deaths as it—and accidents as related to careless driving.

Mr. Schuler: And as we know that the hand-held electronic devices or smart phones are a recent phenomena and that's what's being picked up in that study from 2011 to 2016. To do nothing is not an option. As many people are driving because—dying because of distracted driving as die from drinking and driving.

The member is absolutely correct. The science isn't in place yet. Across the province these measures are being put into place. It will take four to five years for us to see what kind of impact it does have, but to do nothing, Madam Speaker, is not an option. We must act. There are far too many accidents and far too many deaths because of distracted driving.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. I thank the minister for his comments and I take his answer to indicate that, yes, indeed, drinking coffee or tea or water in a mug could be considered careless driving.

My question now is: Increasingly, people are putting iPhones or cellphones or smart phones on a little holder up in front and using it to get the GPS co-ordinates of where they are and to follow the route in order to get to their destination, and they do that on their iPhone or smart phone.

I wonder if the minister can comment about this because we just need—

* (16:20)

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Schuler: And I thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for the question. He's absolutely right. For instance, if you have an integrated GPS system in your vehicle, as soon as you put it into drive and start driving, you can no longer work it. You must actually be pulled over; the vehicle must be put into park. The same thing would apply if you had an HOED—hand-held op—electronic device. If you have it on your dash, you may not use it. It can be on there; you can pre-program the address. I believe that it's—you're allowed to touch it one time. So, if you want to find your way to grandma's house, you put it on your dash, you program it, you get it going, and then you drive. You cannot be driving and program your GPS, and that goes for a Garmin or any other kind of device.

Mr. Maloway: I recall back in the 1990s, Manitoba had a problem with car thefts, and they reached record highs under the Filmon government, and it

wasn't until Gary Doer became the premier that we actually got a handle on the problem and reduced it. But there were several options that were being looked at. One was bait cars; they were being used in some jurisdictions. There was the suppression—the ignition suppression systems.

The end of the day, what worked was the ignition suppression systems. But in the beginning, there were more than one option for government to be looking at, and so that's why I asked the minister to look at all options.

Mr. Schuler: Well, I'd also like to point out to the member that from 2011 to 2016, the NDP were in office and did nothing, and the numbers were increasing.

I would like to say, Madam Speaker, that a lot of this legislation will in time become redundant because a lot of the new vehicles do have the integrated system, and there is now technology coming in that it will disable any phone in the vehicle, that you actually can't use it unless it is connected by Bluetooth to the vehicle.

So this is—while technology catches up, this is the best that we believe to reduce distracted driving.

Mr. Fletcher: The way many of us feel about electronics may be the way millennials feel about AM-FM radio. That still requires reaching out, changing the dial, even pressing a button. So I'm just wondering if there is a balance between what we have always done with the radios, which would be equivalent to touching a Garmin or a GPS thing or what. Like, where are we going to draw the line here, because now it's getting to be ridiculous. You can touch it once. You can't touch it twice. You can—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Schuler: The member's absolutely correct. When it comes to a cellphone or a Garmin, there is something different between them. In fact, there was a doctor on CJOB who said for some reason, when people get on their phone, they seem to switch off within their mind. They seem to switch off and focus on the phone, and there is a real different disconnect that happens when you're on your phone as compared to when you're drinking a cup of coffee.

I would suggest to members of this Chamber there is a difference between having—texting on a phone or watching a video or live streaming and a cup of coffee. There is a difference there. And, yes,

we have to protect the public from individuals who are on electronic devices.

Mr. Saran: I will—what about when a taxi driver, he wants to receive a call, maybe from the dispatcher, or looking at the screen, and he will be distracted at that time? What will happen in that situation?

Mr. Schuler: Yes, Madam Speaker, most cab drivers, as the member will know, are using integrated systems. And, basically, they just touch their screen and it tells them what's going to happen, or they just touch the screen and they answer a phone call.

The cab industry is well in advance of this issue. I'd like to also point out one other thing is that CB devices are not captured in this. They are allowed.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak to this bill today and congratulate the minister for getting the bill prepared and getting the bill ready.

This bill amends the driver and vehicle act to make the offence of careless driving under The Highway Traffic Act an offence that must be reported to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. And the report enables the registrar to proceed with driver improvement measures if warranted.

And I think a lot of people are familiar with that, that in the past when you have had driving infractions, at a certain point, when you get a number of points against you, you get a letter from somebody down at motor—in the old days, anyway, down at the motor vehicle branch, calling you in for an interview and you have to justify why you're—you shouldn't have to retake your licence or your licence should be suspended. I'm not saying here I'm speaking from any kind of experience; just that I've heard this is the—I've heard this has been the past practice.

So this is what we're doing here, is we're allowing the registrar—so once a person gets a ticket for careless driving based on all these possibilities that have been mentioned by the minister and other members here, the report is going to go to the registrar and then the registrar is going to make a decision. As a minister is listening, I think he would

agree, the minister—the minister—not the minister, he's not going to be doing anything with this. The registrar is going to be doing an assessment of this driver and deciding what sort of, you know, improvements need to be made.

And that's the best I think we could hope for because, you know, there's going to be a lot of challenges to this legislation, I guarantee you that. There's going to be a certain number of officers who interpret things differently, who make different sorts of judgements and so we are going to be hearing, as politicians, over the next—once the bill is proclaimed and implemented, we are going to be finding examples where somebody was drinking a coffee and eating a doughnut and they got pulled over and somebody else was maybe not eating the same doughnut, but having a coffee and a doughnut and didn't—you know, didn't get charged.

And so I really do think we are, you know, headed down a road here. We are going to have—I lived through the time of the government attempting to require motorcyclists to wear helmets, which seems like a common sense thing to me, but there were demonstrations down here on a regular basis, went on for several years before the motorcyclists accepted that legislation. Also, seat belt—in the early '80s, seat belt legislation, it seemed to me even then that it was a sensible thing to do but, you know, there were thousands of people who thought it was an infringement on their rights and debated the mortality statistics on accidents and so on and they saw themselves gathering in large numbers down here. We were in government at the time so we did see them in great numbers.

And so this is a similar type of, I think, experience that we're going to have here and that's why it's really important for the minister—and I think he will—to be very proactive and get an advertising campaign started so that people understand just the time—that the time has come that they cannot continue doing these things that they're doing. And we've heard lots of stories about people reading the paper and eating the doughnut and the coffee and meanwhile he or she is taking Fido to the groomer at the same time and the dog is running around the car. So you know that—those 'kond' of examples are pretty black and white, I would think, but there's going to be a lot of grey areas.

* (16:30)

And I think anybody, you know, sort of who looks at this is going to agree that there is going to be

a lot of reaction, one way or another, to this, and that's why I'm really encouraged that we're going to get this legislation passed; we're going to get it off to committee to allow the public to come out and get their views on the record. And, on that basis, I don't anticipate that there is going to be a problem here unless the government, you know, does not put enough resources into advertising the problem.

And even, I think, if you do put resources into advertising, you're still going to be finding a lot of people that are going to be getting stopped and getting ticketed who are going to say, oh, I didn't know that the minister was doing stuff like this. You know, it's all news to me. And so there's a certain percentage of people out there who are—

An Honourable Member: That Jimmy made me do it.

Mr. Maloway: —going to take—and he says he's—I know that's what he's going to say, and—*[interjection]*

Well, and, you know, he's got one of his neighbours who's calling me and wants a Concordia Hospital sign. And we're trying to—but—and he's looking forward to it. Keeps asking me, when's it arriving?

So—but the—also, Madam Speaker, the bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to require a three-day roadside licence suspension when a driver is charged with prohibited use of a cellphone or similar hand-held communication device while driving. Now, for the second or subsequent offence in a 10-year period, the suspension period is increased to seven days, that a driver whose licence is suspended requires a temporary driving permit valid until the end of the next day, and the suspension for that purpose takes effect once the temporary permit expires.

Now, the minister initially, I think, may have suggested or—may have suggested they were looking at the, you know, impoundment of vehicles. And thank goodness they are not doing that because that would be a much bigger problem if they were impounding them, so what they're doing is they're going to allow the people to drive their—hopefully, they won't be distracted anymore—drive their vehicles home. And that is a sensible thing for him to do.

And also, I think what's sensible is not, you know, having the people's vehicles being towed away because that's just going to make the towing companies—the towing industry rich. I'm sure they

would like to be able to do that, but that's going a little too far. And as the minister pointed out, the three-day roadside suspension, you know, is probably going to last a challenge in court. I'm sure there's somebody out there who will try to challenge it. But, if the minister were to go for, say, a 30-day suspension, then almost for sure that that would be challenged, and possibly successfully, in court.

So the government is being reasonably prudent here in making certain that they're being reasonable in the amount of days that they are taking away the licence.

But, having said all of that, it is still almost impossible to get a understandable answer from the minister about the statistics in other provinces. And I think he's got to do some more work on that. I think he's got to do some work on that because, as I mentioned what—you know, what happened back in the '90s with the auto theft, it was a case where auto thefts went to unprecedented highs in Winnipeg. And, you know, there were those—the Conservative opposition, actually—who were talking about bait cars. It might have been that—it might have even been that minister, the current minister. And because bait cars had worked in BC, they were totally supportive of having a bait car program here in Manitoba, and even when the police told him no.

And, at the end of the day, the bait car program had some success in BC, but at the end of the day, a different system worked. And the system was implemented by the NDP government of the day, which provided for these engine ignition suppression systems. And people, I think, were given, they—first of all, they identified types of cars that were high risk for thefts and very easy to steal. And I think it was about to—1995 when Ford, for example, started bringing in ignition systems that you could not, you know, you couldn't steal the vehicles.

So they identified vehicles that were high risk from prior to that period, and they also—well, they talked about doing it, and they—it wasn't until they brought in an insurance reduction to the public if they would come in with a suppression system, and cars were taken to a number of shops that were approved, and people were required to put in these suppression systems, ignition-suppression systems, and guess what? They—the solution worked, and we saw the numbers just drop dramatically.

You know, and this was so popular that I think other provinces may have looked into it as well. And the federal government of the day, they had some

rules on when these things had to become mandatory in new vehicles, and I'm—I just can't remember the exact dates now, but I think the government may have let the car manufacturers off for a couple of years, made the problem a little worse.

But, eventually, they locked it in and all new cars had to come equipped with the suppression systems, and the problem solved itself. It solved itself, not overnight, but over a couple of years the numbers started going down.

That's all I'm saying about this system, about what the minister is trying to do here. He's unable to point to any one program in any one province that can show that they've taken the number of accidents down by 10 per cent or 20 per cent over a year or two, and the reason he says that is because he says it's such a big problem everywhere. It's not just Manitoba.

He can reflect as much he wants on the previous government, but member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) is prone to point out to him that he's the government now. He's been there two years, and it's about time he got around to doing things and quit blaming the previous government for them.

So he's—he should do a little more work, I believe, on his figures, and they have—some provinces are doing one thing and some are doing another. Some are doing combinations, and all I'm asking is that if you could dig into those numbers a little more and find a jurisdiction that's actually getting results, then those are the—that's the jurisdiction that we want to follow.

And so—but the minister has decided, based on this incomplete information that he's got, that he has to get out in front of this because other provinces are moving forward and they're doing combinations and he's prepared to do this.

So I think that we're going to, once again, when we get to committee, we will be able to look at this a little more closely and we'll be able to get opinions from all those dog groomers out there and other interested parties who want to come and make presentations to the committees.

So we are—you know, I don't want to continue, you know, my goal here is not use my whole 30 minutes. I could, but I think there's probably other people want to speak to this bill. I would—I'm sure there are. Hands up. No? Nobody wants it. Well, we can continue.

But—you would—okay, so I'm, you know, I'm prepared to finish a little early and let the member for River—oh, no?

An Honourable Member: More, more, more.

Mr. Maloway: Oh, you want to hear more.

An Honourable Member: What happened in the 1890s?

Mr. Maloway: Well you know, my colleague wants to know about the 1890s, and, you know, it's just a accident of history that I'm still here after all these years.

* (16:40)

So, you know, the point is that Manitoba's facing a big issue due to the distracted driving and—he calls it distracted, but the bill calls it careless driving. And I think the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and I, we're interested in knowing, you know, what these definitions are because, when you're a police officer and you're out on the road and you have your own interpretation of what the rules should be, you may be applying them differently than the—you know, your other colleague. And I can tell you that, certainly, Mr. Eastoe over at POINTTS will certainly have an interest in this as well. And he has certainly pointed out in the past that, if you have a cellphone in your vehicle, that—if it's in—within reach, you are—you can be charged. And most people don't know that because they're driving around with cellphones in those little holders where they can reach them. And, in fact, the only safe place for the cellphone is, like, left at home or put in the back seat somewhere, according to Mr. Eastoe.

And I'm sure he will be there—I'm not going to speak for him, but I'm sure he will be there at committee to explain all of this and we'll get into those questions that we're going to have to deal with. They're going to happen, and we're going to have to deal with them. And that's why I like the idea of the minister doing a campaign of information on this and that we proceed and see, you know, how we can work this through. And, you never know, his approach might work better than other provinces, but that remains to be seen.

So I would certainly be willing to hear from the member for River Heights. I'm sure he'll have many good comments.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): This bill addresses two different aspects. One is distracted driving, and one is careless driving. And the distracted driving deals with addressing what is commonly agreed to be a major problem, and that is that, with smart phones in particular, that when they are used, that it appears that the brain kind of switches on to focusing on the smart phone and doesn't do an adequate job of focusing on the driving. And the result from this, if one interprets the evidence that the minister presented at the briefing, was an increase to something like 11,000 accidents where there was driving—distracted driving in Manitoba. I think that was last year.

An Honourable Member: No, that was over a period of years.

Mr. Gerrard: Oh, is that—more—over a period of years? Well, all right. Over several years, thank you.

So I think that this is clearly an aspect which needs to be addressed, that we need to be able to send a pretty strong signal to people in Manitoba about what is happening and that we need to figure out a way to change behaviour. This will, of course, affect a large number of people, and so it will be important that we have a vigorous discussion at the committee stage and that people with various points of view are there to have that discussion.

One of the aspects which is important is really what is the evidence. And a part of this is what is the evidence that a specific intervention actually decreases the problem. And we haven't seen from the minister yet specific evidence that this solution will actually decrease the problem.

It is interesting that different jurisdictions in Canada are trying different approaches. Some, you know, impounding vehicles, for example. You know, others doing fines. This approach, which focuses on suspension of driver's licences. And I think that, you know, what's going to be important is that we get the best possible evidence in terms of each of the several approaches that are being used and what the results are, you know, even if they are relatively short term, because this is happening with enough frequency that it should not have to even—you know, we should be able to start getting results if they are there to be had within a month or two of changing the law and so we should be start to be able to get evidence from other jurisdictions whether those jurisdictions are in Canada or anywhere else around the world.

Now, the second category of offence which is created here is for careless driving, and this bill makes an amendment so that it will make careless driving a reportable offence. The expectation is that police will immediately report charges to Manitoba Public Insurance to rapidly invoke driver improvement and control measures if necessary.

In the discussion which we had at the briefing, it was made very clear to us that drinking coffee or tea or water in a mug was a careless driving.

Now, it may be that the police might, you know, not give you an offence if they find you drinking coffee, but they might need both a coffee-drinking plus, you know, doughnut-eating or evidence of careless driving, like driving up on a curve or doing—wandering over the road or something.

But, nevertheless, I think it is important that people know that under the interpretation that we were given, that drinking coffee and tea and water in a mug would be under the parameters of careless driving and it would be possible for an individual to get a—to be reported for careless driving.

This, I think, is an attempt to diminish anything which takes away focus from driving, but I think that when you're drinking coffee and/or tea that, in fact, particularly on long-distance driving out in rural areas, driving at night, I suspect that there may actually be fewer accidents when people are drinking coffee because they are more alert and they're watching more closely.

And so I think that what we don't have is any evidence, in spite of the fact that people have been drinking coffee and driving for a long, long time, there's no evidence at this point that that has any comparable effect on the number of accidents, and I think that it is important that we note that. It is important that individuals who are living in Manitoba and who drive cars or other vehicles should be aware of what this situation is and should be ready to make comments when this bill comes to the committee stage.

I also want to comment on one other aspect, and that is something that Senator Murray Sinclair has talked about, that we need to be very careful that, in the application of this law, there is not racial profiling. Senator Murray Sinclair, I read, was pulled over several times within—I'm not sure how long a period—by police as he was driving along and he checked with other senators and he found that none of them had had similar experiences, and he was

concerned that there was an element of racial profiling.

* (16:50)

And I think that we have to be very careful in the application of this law that there is no racial profiling, that there is no automatic assumptions based on the race of the individual, that some people are more likely to be targeted with offences based on how they look or other aspects. And I don't see measures within this legislation, as were presented, to ensure that there's some safeguard against that. And maybe given the history that we have had here that we know, from experience in Toronto and other places, that this is something that we need to be looking out for and figuring out a way to make sure that people are not being targeted based on their physical appearance or physical characteristics in any way, because that, I believe, would be a significant problem and one that we need to be very careful about.

So I would suggest that the minister take his officials and look at what can be done to make sure that there is not an unfair or inequitable use of this legislation. And, you know, it could apply inequitably to people based on age, right. And, you know, it could be based on type of car, right. Somebody's got a beat up old car and somebody's got a nice shiny new car, that—you know, we have to be careful that this is applied in a fair way. And I would ask the minister to, you know, use his office and the resources that he's got to look into this matter and see what can be done, in terms of this bill, to make sure that we have a fair application of the law and that it is not used to target certain types of individuals based on whatever.

So, with those remarks, I am very keen to hear what people have to say at the committee stage, and I look forward to the lively discussion at that level and to some 'portant' input in terms of evidence. Thank you.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I look forward to discussing this matter for a period of time less than 30 minutes. And I would like to—my—first say, to the minister, that—certainly, support the bill, the intention of the bill, and I, certainly, want it to be clear that, although it would seem through the debate that the member from Elmwood is promoting doughnuts, I think the minister and I agree that people are more important. When it comes to comparing people to doughnuts, I'm on the side of the people. The minister's nodding. I can't see the

member—I can only imagine what the member from Elmwood is doing.

Madam Speaker, this is a serious issue, and there are some areas that I hope the committee will be able to look at, and they arise out of the Q & A and the minister's statement. But simply because the minister has been asked questions here, or in other places, does not mean that there is some sort of lack of—they're just questions; nothing more should be read into it. And all we want are answers, and sometimes, in this place, neither the questions nor the answers seem to be in—synchronized with the topic, and the topic today is driving while distracted. It is distracting, in this place even, when people are talking while other people are talking, but in—at least, in this place, we don't have to worry about our personal safety.

And when people—and let's—are texting and driving, that is problematic and it kills, like drinking and driving. However, Madam Speaker, I'm not going to make all the cases against texting and driving. I think we all agree.

However, there was a boundary that was mentioned, dealing with GPS and other modern gizmos and gadgets, that if you touch a gizmo once, that's okay; but if you touch it twice, that's not okay. Now, that seems pretty prescriptive and it may not be consistent with common sense or the real world. Again, I'm not—it's not a criticism of the drafters of the legislation or the minister, it's just an observation, that even before these gizmos and gadgets, there were other things like turning the vent on to get your heat, you know, do you want defrost or do you want, you know, your windows cleared, like whatever. There are other things that distract people in some way from the full attention of the automobile ride. So where do you draw the line?

Another gizmo—it's not a gizmo to any of us, but it would have been 100 years ago, and that's the car radio. Now, if you take a millennial and explain to them that there is a radio in their car, many would be surprised. They'd be even more surprised, in some cases, to learn that there's FM and AM radio, that satellite radio is not the only thing that's on that dial.

Now, imagine for a moment—and I know the minister would—wouldn't make this mistake, but maybe it—but it could happen—that his—he was in the backseat with his son or daughter and he asked them to turn on the radio and they started on FM and the minister said, well, can you put it on AM, and the son—well, what's the AM dial? So he reaches over,

they're driving down Springfield Road and turns it down—the child or the driver changes it from FM to AM and puts it on CBC, and I think the minister would say, please, don't leave it on CBC, change the dial to CJOB. So the driver changes the dial to CJOB.

Is that distracted driving? He's certainly touching the dial more than once and on a gizmo that he's not familiar with, an AM/FM radio, the way—and maybe in the same way that someone who is experienced

with smartphones and then elderly—or an older person would have trouble going through that. Like—so, and then that goes into what the minister—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 23 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

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